



# DOCTRINAL STATEMENTS AND THEOLOGICAL OPINIONS (DSTO)

## VOLUME 1

### A. THESES OF AGREEMENT

#### I: Principles governing church fellowship

*Resulting from the discussions on 'Minimum Requirements for Church Fellowship' submitted by both Committees in 1942 and from the discussions of Dr Hamann's paper, 'Church Fellowship Presupposes the Common Acceptance and Confession of All Doctrines Revealed in Holy Scripture', and of Dr Hebart's paper, 'Principles Governing Church Fellowship', the following theses on the Scriptures were discussed at joint meetings held on 18 December 1947, 4 March 1948, 29 April 1948 and 17 June 1948, and adopted in their present form on 12 August 1948.*

*Reviewed July 2001, unedited*

1. We believe that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the infallible Word of God, written by inspiration of God, 2 Tim 3:16, by the holy men of God, 2 Pet 1:21, as the Spirit gave them utterance, Acts 2:4.
2. We believe that the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments are the infallible and only source and norm of Christian doctrine and the sure and authoritative guide for life and practice. 2 Tim 3:15–17; 1 Cor 14:37; Psalm 119:160, etc.
3. We agree that for church fellowship the uniting Churches must be one in the acceptance of the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as the inspired Word of God and as the only and true source, norm, rule and standard of all teaching and practice in the Christian Church.
4. We believe that the formal and the material principles must not be brought into opposition to each other, for the Scriptures are the Word of Christ and they testify of Him. Loyalty to Christ requires loyalty to His Word, and loyalty to the Scriptures requires loyalty to Christ, His person, His work, His means of grace. We dare not stress the material principle at the expense of the formal principle, or vice versa. Churches uniting should make their pledge of loyalty to both Christ and His Word (cf Eph 4:1–16).
  - a. We believe that where differences in teaching and practice exist or arise between Churches uniting, these differences are to be removed by willingly submitting to the authority of the Word of God. Where a difference in teaching or practice is a departure from the doctrine of the Bible, such difference cannot be tolerated, but must be pointed out as an error, on the basis of clear passages of Holy Writ; and if the error is persisted in, in spite of instruction, warning and earnest witness, it must at last lead to a separation.
  - b. We believe that all doctrines of Holy Writ are equally binding; nevertheless not all things in Scripture are of the same importance, when viewed from the centre and core of the Scriptures, Christ and justification by Him through faith.

- c. We admit that there are some things hard to be understood in Holy Writ, 2 Pet 3:16; but no doctrine can be based on Scripture passages that are not clear, especially if no light is thrown upon them by clear passages.
  - d. Differences in exegesis that do not affect doctrine are not church divisive.
  - e. In case of differences in exegesis that affect doctrine, agreement on the basis of God's Word must be sought by combined, prayerful examination of the passage or passages in question.  
If this does not lead to agreement, because no unanimity has been reached on the clarity of the passage or passages in question and hence on the stringency and adequacy of the Scriptural proof, divergent views arising from such differences of interpretation are not divisive of church fellowship, providing that
    - i. there be the readiness in principle to submit to the authority of the Word of God;
    - ii. thereby no clear Word of Scripture is denied, contradicted or ignored;
    - iii. such divergent views in no wise impair, infringe upon, or violate the central doctrine of Holy Scripture, justification by grace through faith in Jesus Christ;
    - iv. nothing be taught contrary to the *publica doctrina* of the Lutheran Church as laid down in its Confessions;
    - v. such divergent views are not propagated as the *publica doctrina* of the Church and in no wise impair the doctrine of Holy Writ.
5. We believe that it is a solemn obligation of the Church to teach the whole counsel of God, rightly dividing the Word of Truth, feeding milk or meat as the case may demand, but never compromising the truth of Scripture, never permitting reason or feeling to undermine the authority of the Word, or substituting for it any form of subjectivism.
6. In the application of these principles, particularly in the holding of such divergent views as are mentioned in Theses 4 (e), the material principle, agreement in which constitutes the fundamental unity in Christ, is not to be ignored contrary to the law of Christian love, but is to be upheld and applied in full agreement with the formal principle.

## VOLUME 1

### A. THESES OF AGREEMENT

## VI: Theses on the office of the ministry

*On the basis of theses drawn up by Prof. Blaess and Dr Hebart after discussions by the Sub-Committees, the doctrine of the Office of the Ministry was discussed at joint meetings held on 13 April and 4 May 1950, and adopted in the following form at the joint meetings on 4 May and 25 May 1950.*

*Reviewed July 2001, unedited*

1. The New Testament ministry is the office instituted by Christ for the public administration of the means of grace, that is, the preaching of the Gospel and the administering of the Sacraments, through which as through instruments the Holy Ghost works saving faith in the hearts of men. Matt 10; Matt 28:18–20; Luke 9:1,2; 1 Cor 3:5–8; Augsburg Confession V; Form.Conc., Sol.Decl. XI,29.
2. The office of the ministry is therefore an office instituted not by man, but by God. 2 Cor 5:18–20; Eph 4:11; Acts 20:28; Apology XIII,11.
3. Since it is Christ's will that His Gospel be preached and the Sacraments administered, and since the use of the means of grace is essential to the existence of the Church on earth, and since according to the Lord's promise the Church on earth is to remain until the end of time, Matt 16:18, the office of the ministry is an office, which is simultaneous with the Church and to which the Church is bound from its beginning to the end of time. Matt 28:18–20; Mark 16:15,16; Rom 10:8–17; 1 Cor 1:21; Rom 16:25,26; Augsburg Confessions XXVIII, 8–10, 20,21.
4. Though the power to remit or retain sin, to make known the Law and the Gospel, was originally and immediately given by the Lord of the Church to all Christians, that is, to the whole Church and also to the individual congregation, and though all believers are a spiritual priesthood, yet the office of the ministry is not identical with the spiritual priesthood of all believers in Christ. But there is a vital connection between the two inasmuch as the ministry by the institution of the Lord necessarily exists within the Church which is the royal priesthood and the people of God. Matt 16:15–19; Matt 18:15–20; 1 Pet 2:9; John 20:19–23; Luke 24:33–36; Rev 1:6; 5:10; 1 Cor 12:28,29; Rom 10:15; Smalc. Art., Tractatus: 24, 67–69.
5. The office of the ministry is essentially an office of service to the Lord and His Church with the Word and the Sacraments, which office the ministers of the Church must exercise in obedience to their Lord and the directions given in the Word. Therefore, the office of the ministry does not give to those who bear it, arbitrary power over Christians, nor does it deliver the ministers of the Word up to the arbitrary directions and commands of men. Likewise, it is not a Levitical priesthood of the New Testament (Apol. XIII,7–11; XXIV, 58,59); nor are those who bear it an exclusive class distinct from Christians generally; nor do they possess a peculiar sanctity or an indelible character; nor does the ministry possess the power of self-perpetuation. Matt 23:8–12; 1 Cor 3:5; 4:1,2; 2 Cor 4:5; Col 1:23–25; 1 Pet 5:1–3; Matt 20:25–28; Apol.XXVIII, 13,14; XXII,9; XXIV, 86 (German and English text re Liturgia); Smalc. Art., Pars II, IV, 9; Form.Conc., Sol. Decl. XII, 30; XI, 29.
6. According to the New Testament the spiritual functions of the Apostolate are continued only in the ministry of the Word and Sacraments. Acts 6:1–4; Acts 24:23; Acts 20:28; Phil 1:1; Col 4:17; 1 Tim 3:1ff; 5:17; Titus 1:5ff; 1 Pet 5:1; Heb 13:17; Apol.XV, 42 (44); Smalc. Art. Tractatus: 10, 13–15, 60–65; Smalc. Art., Pars II, IV,9; Form. Conc., Sol. Decl. X.10.

7. 'No-one should publicly teach in the Church or administer the Sacraments unless he be regularly called' (C.A. XIV). The Lord calls individuals into the office of the ministry through the Christian congregations, Acts 13:1–4; and the Christian congregation, either alone or together with other congregations, or through properly appointed representatives, calls qualified persons (1 Tim 3:1–7; Titus 1:6–9; 2 Tim 2:24,25; Acts 1:24) into the office of the ministry publicly to exercise the functions of this office. The minister of the Word is thus called by the Lord through His Church, and by the Church as through human agency and authority, but in obedience to the command of the Lord. He is therefore the servant of the Lord Jesus, a minister of the New Testament, a steward of the mysteries of God, called to serve by publicly administering the means of grace. 2 Cor 4:5; Rom 10:15; 2 Cor 5:18; 1 Thess 5:12,13; Augsburg Confession XIV; Apol.VII, 28 (end of paragraph); Smalc. Act. Tractatus: 14, 15, 24, 26, 67-69.
8. Ordination, though not a Sacrament, is the solemn ecclesiastical rite in which a duly qualified person (1 Tim 3:2–7; Titus 1:5–9), having accepted a call by a congregation or the Church, is received by the Church as a gift from the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph 4:11; Titus 1:5) and publicly declared to be a minister of the New Testament, his call thereby being ratified and publicly acknowledged, and the blessing of the Lord is invoked upon him with the laying on of hands. The laying on of hands is an old and biblical rite, but it has no divine command and is not essential for the validity and efficacy of the office. Acts 6:6; 8:17; 13:3; 1 Tim 5:22; 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6; Num 27:18; Smalc. Art. Tractatus: 70.
9. Although the office of the ministry is the only office ordained by Christ for His Church of the New Testament, yet the Christian congregation has the authority to establish auxiliary offices (elders, deacons, teachers, Sunday school teachers and superintendents, trustees, wardens, etc.) after the example of the apostles and the early Christian Church (e.g., diaconate). Acts 6:6; Rom 16:1.
10. Similarly the Church at large has the liberty and authority from Christ to establish various ecclesiastical and administrative offices for the common prosecution of various undertakings in obedience to the Lord's command to make disciples of all nations. 1 Cor 12:4–13, 26–28; Acts 11:21–23. This necessitates proper guidance and direction, spiritual and otherwise, 1 Cor 14:40; 2 Cor 8:18–21; 9:5, because the Lord has commanded that everything be done decently and in order and in accordance with the law of love. Such arrangements may vary according to time and circumstances. All external arrangements in congregations and in church bodies and all ranking of the ministers are purely of human right and the efficacy of the ministry of the Gospel is not bound to any human institution. Matt 23:8; 1 Cor 3:21–23; Augsburg Confession XV; XXVIII, 5–29; Smalc. Art. Tractatus: 10, 11, 61–65.
11. Though women prophets were used by the Spirit of God in the Old as well as in the New Testament, 1 Cor 14:34,35 and 1 Tim 2:11–14 prohibit a woman from being called into the office of the public ministry for the proclamation of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments. This apostolic rule is binding on all Christendom; hereby her rights as a member of the spiritual priesthood are in no wise impaired.