

STATEMENTS FROM THE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

Distributed by the
COMMISSION ON THEOLOGY AND CHURCH RELATIONS
The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod
June 1973

Foreword by CTCR

The statements below were produced by a church body with whom our Synod has enjoyed a warm and fraternal relationship for several years.

The Lutheran Church of Australia came into being in 1965 as the result of a merger of two Lutheran bodies, one of which had been affiliated with The American Lutheran Church and the other with The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod. The merger came after many years of discussions had resulted in doctrinal agreement and the adoption of a document entitled *Theses of Agreement*.

The Lutheran Church of Australia has not officially established fellowship relationships with other Lutheran bodies, because it wanted to resolve certain internal difficulties first. Considerable attention was therefore given to the subjects of Biblical inerrancy and the interpretation of Genesis 1 to 3. Eventually statements on these subjects were prepared by the Commission on Theology and Inter-Church Relations and then discussed throughout the church. With the adoption of these two statements in their October 1972 convention, our Australian brethren are apparently ready to consider the establishment of fellowship with other Lutherans.

On this account the Commission on Theology and Church Relations adopted the following resolution and asked President J. A. O. Preus to present it personally to President Leslie Grope in connection with his February 1973 visit to Australia:

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church of Australia has expressed its desire "to enter into discussions with Lutheran Churches at home and abroad to determine with which of these fellowship in Word and Sacrament exists or can be reached" ("Document of Union," 13); and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod feels a close kinship with fellow Lutherans in Australia; and

WHEREAS, Our synodical President will be meeting the leaders of the Lutheran Church of Australia in the near future; therefore be it

Resolved, That the CTCR act upon the Resolution 3-03 of the Denver convention, expressing

the desire of The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod to enter into discussions leading to altar and pulpit fellowship with the Lutheran Church of Australia; and be it further

Resolved, That the President of Synod convey the fraternal greetings of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations to the Lutheran Church of Australia as he visits there.

Although the Lutheran Church of Australia has not had an opportunity to respond officially to this resolution, President Grope has indicated that it was received with considerable appreciation. Our CTCR has asked our 1973 synodical convention to "express its continued desire to establish altar and pulpit fellowship with the Lutheran Church of Australia."

As our Synod looks forward to even closer relationships with the Lutheran Church of Australia, the recently adopted Australian statements are of considerable interest to us, not only because they help familiarize us with the theological stance of our Australian brethren but because they deal with issues under discussion in our own Synod as well. For these reasons the Commission on Theology and Church Relations is happy to make these statements available to The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod.

Both Australian statements should be read against the background of earlier Australian documents on Holy Scripture. Accordingly, the section on Holy Scripture from the *Theses of Agreement* of 1951 is included as Appendix A. Subsequent statements on Biblical inerrancy and Genesis 1 to 3 adopted by the 1968 convention of the Lutheran Church of Australia are printed as Appendix B.

May the Holy Spirit use these statements to increase our appreciation and understanding of Holy Scripture and to deepen our bond of fellowship with the Lutheran Church of Australia.

DR. RALPH A. BOHLMANN, *Executive Secretary*
Commission on Theology and Church Relations
The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod

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STATEMENTS FROM THE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

The Theses of Agreement and Inerrancy

The Theses of Agreement in applying the term "inerrancy" to Scripture mean to stress its full authority while taking into account the rich complexity of the Holy Scriptures as Word of God in all its parts and aspects and also word of man in all its parts and aspects. Accordingly, while understanding inerrancy in the normal sense of freedom from all error and contradiction, "factual" as well as "theological", the Theses state that this inerrancy "cannot be seen with human eyes nor can it be proved to human reason; it is an article of faith, a belief in something which is hidden and not obvious".

This understanding of inerrancy implies that, although error may appear to be present in the Scriptures, it is not really so. Some such cases are directly mentioned in the Theses: errors which found their way into the sacred text through deliberate or inadvertent alterations made by copyists, as well as the absence of verbal accuracy and uniformity in parallel accounts. In addition to these, the Theses likewise make reference to apparent errors in other directions: seeming deficiencies relating to and caused by the fact that the holy writers retained the distinctive features of their personalities, that they used contemporary methods of historiography and used the terminology of contemporary views of nature and the world. These evidences of the limitations of the human mind in no way invalidate the inerrancy of God's written Word, but illustrate the servant form of the written Word of God, which is interested not in technical precision for its own sake but in a popular, intelligible presentation which best serves the saving purposes of God.

It must be borne in mind that a proper and adequate description of the written Word of God with its unity of the human and divine is beset with great difficulties. Since this is the case, pastors, teachers, and members of the Church should take great care not to violate the Church's declared confessional position on inspiration and inerrancy. On the other hand mere inadequacies of understanding or expression in this difficult area should be treated with brotherly forbearance. Responsible clarity and charity must go hand in hand here, so that the Body of Christ may build itself up among us in love and peace, through the truth.

Some ways of speaking or teaching in the matter of inerrancy which are contrary to the sound doctrine of the Scriptures and of the Theses of Agreement are herewith specified:

1. to speak of "errors" in the Holy Scripture;
2. to hold that what according to clear biblical statements "actually is or actually happened" may be regarded as what actually is not or actually did not happen;
3. to adopt uncritically and to propagate all the claims of historical criticism which often rest on or lead to an unbiblical scepticism as to the historical bases of the Christian faith;
4. to use modern knowledge as a means to judge any biblical statement and attack the authority of Scripture;
5. to make faith in the inerrancy of Scripture in any way depend on the human certainty attained by rational argument and demonstration;
6. to regard all statements of the Scripture as being of equal value and importance;

7. to treat the Bible in such a way as though its divine authority rendered historical investigation unimportant or irrelevant.

(Adopted by the Lutheran Church of Australia, October 1972)

Genesis 1—3: A Doctrinal Statement

After thorough and prayerful consideration of important issues regarding the interpretation of Genesis, chapters 1—3 in particular, the Lutheran Church of Australia and her public teachers accept the following statements as a God-pleasing, biblically and confessionally sound agreement, and reject all contrary teaching.

There exists today in Christendom a wide variety of approaches to the problems and issues involved in the interpretation of Genesis 1—3. Since the L. C. A. confesses the doctrine of the inspiration and inerrancy of Holy Scripture, it is self-evident that she cannot permit within her ranks the same wide range of interpretations as that tolerated by churches which have abandoned any serious confession of the authority of the Scriptures.

In approaching the awesome realities revealed in the opening chapters of Genesis we do so with deep reverence and with a sense of the utter inadequacy of human wisdom before these mysteries. It is therefore not the purpose of the present statement to formulate one standard interpretation of Genesis 1—3, to resolve all problems and issues arising in this connection, or to settle all sorts of exegetical details. This is neither possible nor desirable. Our purpose is rather to confess the dogmatic substance of Genesis 1—3 in opposition to certain widely-held approaches and interpretations which run counter to the declared biblical-confessional commitment of the L. C. A. This in no way curtails legitimate exegetical freedom, but on the contrary safeguards its rightful boundaries.

We approach the whole matter from a biblically and confessionally determined

Basic Perspective:

The Christian approach to Genesis is and must be determined by obedient and joyful confidence in Christ as God and Creator (John 1:1-4; Colossians 1:15-20) and in Scripture as His truthful Word.

Consequently we reject from the outset all approaches not based on this faith. We therefore find ourselves opposed to many assumptions of "higher" criticism, assumptions which have increasingly shaped the methods and conclusions of biblical scholarship in the last two hundred years. Some of these assumptions are:

- (a) That the biblical documents must be treated in principle like all other historical documents, without regard to their claim to inspiration and authority;
- (b) That science, history, and other disciplines are valid and legitimate norms and standards by which the truthfulness and reliability of biblical statements can and must be judged;
- (c) That the miraculous aspects of the witness of the biblical writers may be discounted as an element of primitive culture;
- (d) That the Apostles' and even our Blessed Lord's own understanding and interpretation of particular texts of Scripture may in principle be regarded as de-

fective or questionable, and as subject to progressive correction by subsequent biblical scholarship.

Such assumptions as these constitute an attack not only on the *apostolicity* of the Church (Eph. 2:20), but on the very Lordship of Christ. For this reason we reject them unconditionally.

This does not mean that we reject either reason or scholarship. Quite on the contrary. We hold that it is the function of biblical interpretation to understand and apply the Bible as a whole and in all its parts. But everyone who takes the Reformation's *sola Scriptura* seriously must insist that the proper function of reason, and thus of scholarship, is in every respect *under* and not *over* Scripture — as handmaid, and not as mistress. As emphatically as we reject any use of reason as master or judge over Scripture, so we affirm the fullest use of reason, with all its scholarly tools, as a servant, to understand and make clear what the sacred text says and means.

1. Literary-Historical Aspects and Sources

In keeping with the statement made earlier it is not the intention of this section to assert dogmatically what interpretation of these difficult chapters or what approach to an interpretation is alone possible within the Church. And the Theses of Agreement in Section I show how differences of interpretation must be distinguished from church divisive differences over doctrine.* It is however, necessary to state and confess what these chapters teach:

1. The creation *ex nihilo* — a creation from nothing — as a six-day work on the part of God.
2. The creation by God of the first man, Adam, and the first woman, Eve; and the creation of man as a mature, rational, moral and responsible being in the image of God, that is, in true righteousness and holiness, endowed with a perfect knowledge of God's will and in blissful relationship with his Creator.
3. The Fall of man through an act of disobedience and unbelief, the consequent loss of the image of God, and the corruption of his nature (original sin).
4. The promise of the Saviour.

The statements of the chapters themselves are supported and confirmed especially by the whole thrust of the New Testament and many individual passages of it (Rom. 5:12-21; 1 Cor. 15:21 ff. and 45 ff.; 1 Cor. 11:7-12; 1 Tim. 2:13 f.). Clearly therefore the factual-historical framework of the Genesis narrative is the indispensable foundation not only for the history of the People of God which follows, but for the very Incarnation and Redemption. Within this framework figurative elements are no doubt to be found. But we must reject all interpretations which in any way undermine the facticity of the framework itself, e.g. the suggestion that the creation and fall of Adam and Eve may be taken to represent not actual persons and events, but timeless myths or parables of what happens to every man.

Whether the events of Genesis 1-3 should be called "historical" depends on how that term is used. If "historical" refers to what actually happened, then Genesis 1-3 is historical. But if "historical" is taken to refer to what can be established in terms of human observations and reports, then Creation obviously stands outside the realm of the "historical". Since, however, the term "unhistorical" usually has the sense of "not having happened", it would be very misleading, and hence not in

keeping with the form of sound doctrine, to declare Creation and Fall to be unhistorical.

Sources of one kind or another undoubtedly lie behind the material of the Pentateuch, and the endeavour to isolate and examine these is part of the work of the Old Testament scholar. So also he must reckon with the fact or the possibility of post-Mosaic developments or additions. However, it is contrary to the form of sound doctrine

- (a) to deny the revealed character of Israel's faith and to assume that Israel's "religion" developed like any of the religions of surrounding and contemporary peoples;
- (b) to reduce the stature of Moses, in opposition to the New Testament (John 1:17; the Transfiguration), by holding that the Pentateuch is not essentially Mosaic, or by questioning the historical value of what the Pentateuch attributes to him, or by denying that he wrote of Christ (John 5:45, 46);
- (c) to throw doubt in general on the historicity of the persons and facts mentioned in the Pentateuch.

Teachers of the Church are referred to the statement The Theses of Agreement and Inerrancy, especially to rejections 2, 3, and 7 for the boundaries of their theological thinking and teaching.

* The proper understanding of the seven days of Genesis 1, which has been much discussed over the years is involved here. However, it is invalid to interpret the days in the interests of the evolutionary schemes ruled out in section 2. Evolution below.

2. Evolution

Apart from other meanings irrelevant in this connection evolution can mean these three things:

- (1) In the broadest sense it is an all-embracing worldview, which regards the universe as self-existing and self-explanatory.
- (2) Usually evolution means the alleged development, by natural processes, of all forms of life, including man, from some common, primitive ancestral form. This "amoeba-to-man" transformism is also known as macro-evolution.
- (3) Micro-evolution, by contrast, refers to changes within definite limits without any transformation of one basic type (e.g. reptiles) into another (e.g. birds).

For the sake of clarity, this statement will use the terms "evolutionism" for (1), "evolution" for (2), and "genetic variation" for (3).

It is clear that evolutionism is an anti-Christian way of looking at the world. It is atheistic and basically materialistic, and expresses sinful man's instinctive flight from God (see Rom. 1:18 ff.). It relativises all moral absolutes, and inspires various philosophies, including demonic ideologies which have brought untold misery upon millions of human beings in our time.

Genetic variation, this is also clear, has to do with indisputable facts and poses no problem to the Christian faith.

The situation is different with evolution. This theory of origins is part of the scientific enterprise of our day, and as such must be judged by scientific principles and adequate scientific knowledge. Qualified experts, however, continue to disagree whether evolution is an adequate interpretation of the relevant facts or whether it even contradicts them or whether science is capable of

settling the question of origins at all. Further, it must be pointed out that the exposition of evolution is usually associated with an anti-supernatural bias. Any activity of God in the origin of the world, creation in any shape or form, is ruled out from the very outset. In this sense evolution and creation are opposites. This means that evolution as generally understood has much of the character of evolutionism about it, and its popularity is not unconnected with the widespread modern turning away from the Christian faith. In this view the God of the First Article of the Creed, "who has made me and all creatures and still preserves them", is irrelevant. There is no fall of man into sin, which would make necessary an act of redemption by the Son of God whom we confess in the Second Article. And the Spirit of the Third Article, "the Lord and Giver of Life" becomes simply the power inherent in matter.

While evolution as usually understood is therefore clearly contrary to Scripture, it may be asked whether each and every form of evolutionary speculation must be ruled out on biblical grounds. Actually Scripture says very little about the mystery of the "how" of creation, and where Scripture is silent the Church cannot dogmatise. If in such areas Christian thinkers suggest the possibility of some forms or aspects of evolution as God's means of creating, then differences of opinion about such views should be treated as non-doctrinal and therefore not divisive of church fellowship. The clear limits of this sort of speculation are the authority of Scripture generally, and the historicity of Adam and Eve in particular, as these doctrines are spelt out in some detail in the present document and in the statement *The Theses of Agreement and Inerrancy*.

It is clearly the duty of public teachers of the Church to help Christian students and others who are struggling with these far-reaching and perplexing issues. They must therefore equip themselves adequately, so that they "can be counted on for both expounding the sound doctrine and refuting those who argue against it" (Titus 1:9JB). In this confused age the Church must reflect serene confidence in Genesis as the Creator's own account of what happened in the beginning.

(Adopted by the Lutheran Church of Australia, October 1972)

APPENDIX A

From the *Theses of Agreement*

VIII. THESES ON SCRIPTURE AND INSPIRATION

On 14th December, 1950, the Joint Intersynodical Committees resolved to interrupt the discussion on Eschatological Matters by taking up the doctrine of the Scriptures and Inspiration. The seven Joint Meetings and many more sub-committee meetings during 1951 busied themselves with this doctrine. On 13th December, 1951, the Joint Committees adopted the following ten Theses.

1. We solemnly reaffirm the Scriptural principle of Luther and the Lutheran Church that "the Word of God shall establish articles of faith and no one else, not even an angel" (Smalc. Art. Pars II, ii, 15; Trigl. p. 467) and declare with the Formula of Concord: "We believe, teach and confess that the sole rule and standard according to which all dogmas together with all teachers should be estimated and judged are the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures of the Old and

the New Testament alone" (Epit., de compend. regula 1; Trigl. p. 777).

We therefore accept the Scriptures, i. e., the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as the only source and ultimate judge, rule and standard of all doctrine of the Church, also in the doctrines on the Holy Scriptures and on inspiration. In so doing we reject all attempts which have been made ever since the Reformation, or may still be made, to introduce into the Church under whatever name other sources of doctrine besides Holy Scripture.

cf. *Theses on Principles Governing Church Fellowship*, 1-3.

2. We teach that the Holy Scripture is the Word of God in writing. As the written Word, the Bible is inseparably bound up with the Word Incarnate and the oral Word (Smalc. Art. III, 8, Trigl. p. 497; Sol. Declaratio, XI, 17, Trigl. p. 1068-1069, II, 55-56; Trigl. p. 903). Its proper and essential content is the Eternal Son of God, the Word who was made man in the person of Jesus Christ (John 1:1, 14; 1 John 1:1 f.; Rev. 19:13; Heb. 1:1 ff.; John 20:20; Luke 24:27; Acts 10:43; 2 Tim. 3:15 ff.). This content it has in common with the oral Word either preceding or following the written Word. Although, therefore, the Word of God in its totality is wider than Scripture, Holy Scripture is, without limitation, God's Word. Everything which Scripture says is God's Word. On the other hand nothing can be proclaimed as Word of God which is not taught in Scripture.
3. We believe and confess that Holy Scripture does not only contain the Word of God, but that it is God's Word as a whole and in all its parts. We reject all attempts made to distinguish between that which is Word of God in the Scripture and that which is not, whether this be done on the plea that Scripture consists of various writings: Old and New Testaments; Law, Prophets and Holy Writings; Euangelion (gospels) and Apostolos (other New Testament writings); or on the plea that a fundamental distinction must be made in the whole of Scripture between the Law and the Gospel.
4. We confess that in the entire Holy Scripture, both in the Old and in the New Testaments, even where it is not immediately apparent, God the Father through God the Holy Ghost proclaims the Son, Jesus Christ, as Saviour and Lord (John 3:34; 17:6, 14; Matt. 22:44 f.; John 5:39; Heb. 1:1 ff.; Acts 10:43; John 16:13 f.; 1 Cor. 2:3; 2 Tim. 3:16). Our belief in the Bible is faith in the Triune God, Who speaks to us in the Scripture.
5. We teach with the Confession of the Lutheran Church that Holy Scripture can be rightly understood only by those who believe in Jesus Christ as the Saviour of sinners. We believe that only the sola fide (by faith alone) leads to the right understanding of the sola scriptura (the Scripture alone), that justification by grace through faith in Christ, the "chief topic of the Christian doctrine . . .", is of special service for the clear, correct understanding of the entire Holy Scriptures, and alone shows the way to the unspeakable treasure and right knowledge of Christ and alone opens the door to the entire Bible" (Apol. IV, 2 German text; Trigl. p. 121; cf. *Theses on Principles Governing Church Fellowship*, 5).

6. We teach with the Nicene Creed and with the whole true Christian Church that Holy Scripture is given by inspiration of God the Holy Ghost ("theopneustos"), 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:19 ff. Inspiration in this sense was the unique action by which God the Holy Ghost gave His Word of revelation to men, whom He chose, for oral proclamation or for written recording, so that of this their spoken or written word it must be said without limitation that it is God's own word. 1 Thess. 2:13.
7. We teach inspiration in this sense not only of the individual words of the prophets (2 Peter 1:19 ff.), of the apostles (1 Cor. 2:13; 1 Thess 2:13), of the psalms (Matt. 22:43; Heb. 3:7) and of the Law (Matt. 5:17 ff.), but of "all Scripture" (2 Tim. 3:16), i. e., the Scriptures as a whole (John 5:39; 10:35; 2 Tim. 3:15) and in all single passages (John 2:22; 7:38; Acts 1:16; 8:32) and words (1 Cor. 2:13) of the Old and New Testaments (2 Peter 3:16).
8. We teach the verbal and plenary inspiration of the Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21; Rom. 3:2; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Thess. 2:15; 1 Cor. 2:13; 1 John 1:1-4; Rev. 2:7, 11, 17; Jer. 1:9), but we reject the various theories (e. g., mere divine enlightenment, mechanical dictation, etc.) which have been offered as an explanation of the "how" of inspiration, or by which the verbal and plenary inspiration is in any way limited or denied. Scripture teaches the fact of inspiration, but is silent on the "how," i. e., on the manner or method. The latter has not been revealed and therefore remains an inaccessible divine mystery; we cannot know how God the Holy Ghost worked the miracle that human words are His Word.
9. We confess that Holy Scripture as the Word of God written by men is at the same time both divine and human. In defining the relationship between the divine and human side of the Bible we could use the analogy of the divine and human nature of Jesus Christ, the Word Incarnate; of the divine and human word in absolution; of the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in, with, and under the bread and wine in the Sacrament of the Altar. But we limit ourselves to what Scripture clearly teaches about the divine and human character of the prophetic Word. God is the prime and absolute source and origin of all revealed truth. But it pleased Him to give His Word through "holy men" who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Peter 1:21). Thus it is God Who chose certain men, whom He knew before He created them (Jer. 1:5; cf. Isa. 6:8 ff. and Ezek. 2:1 ff.), to be His prophets at a certain time and to certain people. It is God Who for that purpose sanctified (Jer. 1:5; Isa. 6:6 f.) sinful men and put His Word into their heart and mouth (Isa. 6:7; Jer. 1:9; 15:16; Ezek. 2:8; 3:2 f.). The fact that God dealt with each of the prophets in a different way shows that the personality, character, way of thinking and speaking of the individual man were not extinguished. It is God again Who gave the command to write (Ex. 17:14; Jer. 30:2; 36:2; Rev. 1:11; 14:13) and inspired the holy writers. But they retained their individuality and were not exempt from the labour, methods and responsibility of human authorship (Luke 1:1 ff.; John 21:24; Acts 1:1; Rev. 1:11; Pauline epistles; Psalms). Thus the Bible has a truly human side. We therefore teach and confess that it pleased God to give us His Word

under, or in the garb of, the human word of the Biblical writers.

10. Because Holy Scripture is the Word of God, it is the perfect (Psalm 19:7), authoritative (John 10:35), sufficient (Gal. 1:8 f.; Rev. 22:10), and essentially clear (2 Peter 1:19; Psalm 19:7 f.; Psalm 119:105) revelation of divine truth (John 17:7). Holy Scripture, being God's Word written by men and for men, presents this truth in such a way that it can be appropriated by men. With the whole true Church of God we confess the Bible to be the inerrant Word of God. This inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures cannot be seen with human eyes, nor can it be proved to human reason; it is an article of faith, a belief in something that is hidden and not obvious. We believe that the Scriptures are the Word of God and therefore inerrant. The term "inerrancy" has no reference to the variant readings found in the extant textual sources because of copyists' errors or deliberate alterations; neither does it imply an absolute verbal accuracy in quotations and in parallel accounts, such absolute uniformity evidently not having been part of God's design. We believe that the holy writers, whom God used, retained the distinctive features of their personalities (language and terminology, literary methods, conditions of life, knowledge of nature and history as apart from direct revelation and prophecy). God made use of them in such a manner that even that which human reason might call a deficiency in Holy Scripture must serve the divine purpose. Furthermore, it pleased the Holy Ghost to employ authors possessing various gifts for writing on the same subject. How in such cases it is possible that differing accounts of the same event or the same saying are the true and inerrant report of one and the same fact cannot and need not always be shown by rational harmonization. We must believe it until "that which is in part shall be done away" and "that which is perfect is come" (1 Cor. 13:10). We reject the attempts of modern religious liberalism to make man the judge of the Word of God. None of the natural limitations which belong to the human mind even when under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost can impair the authority of the Bible or the inerrancy of the Word of God; for Holy Scripture is the book of divine truth which transcends everything called truth by the wise men of this world (1 Cor. 1:17 ff., 27; Col. 2:8) and is therefore able to make us "wise unto salvation" (2 Tim. 3:15).

(The *Theses of Agreement* were adopted by the merging churches in their 1956 and 1959 conventions).

APPENDIX B

1968 Convention Statements

Inspiration and Inerrancy

An Explanation of Paragraphs Dealing with Inspiration and Inerrancy in the *Theses of Agreement*

1. In the exercise of their teaching function, whether dealing with a group or a congregation or with individuals, pastors of the L. C. A. should not run counter to the letter and the spirit of the *Theses of Agreement*.
2. The *Theses of Agreement* use the term "inerrancy" in its normal sense of freedom from all error and contradiction, "factual" as well as "theological." The only "errors" in the Scriptures acknowledged by the

Theses of Agreement are those which found their way into the sacred text through deliberate or inadvertent alterations made by copyists. Of course, this inerrancy "cannot be seen with human eyes, nor can it be proved to human reason; it is an article of faith, a belief in something that is hidden and not obvious. We believe that the Scriptures are the Word of God and therefore inerrant. The term 'inerrancy' has no reference to the variant readings found in the extant textual sources because of copyists' errors or deliberate alterations; neither does it imply an absolute verbal accuracy in quotations and in parallel accounts, such absolute uniformity evidently not having been part of God's design." (Theses VIII, 10)

The Theses carefully avoid the use of the term "error" in such cases, since that term would contradict the terms "inerrant" and "inerrancy" which are so often used in the Theses, and would assume what is not true either in doctrine or in logic. Similarly, members of the L. C. A. should avoid speaking of errors in the Scriptures.

3. It should be recognized that the Theses of Agreement carry a very difficult subject to the limits of human cognition and linguistic expression, without either violating the character of the Sacred Scriptures as the inspired Word of God, or stripping the holy writers of human thought, feeling, and activity.
4. As regards interpretation, it is necessary to adhere to the old, and incidentally the only reasonable, hermeneutical rule that the literal sense of the Scriptures must be regarded as the intended sense unless a figurative meaning is clearly demanded by the nature of the text itself, or by the context, or by the so-called *analogia fidei*, that is, by a Biblical article of faith. It must be admitted, however, that the decision on what is literal and what is figurative may at times be difficult to determine.
5. The hermeneutical principle that Scripture interprets Scripture must not be abandoned. One who regards as a mere allegory or symbol what the Scriptures clearly recognise as historical truth or fact, in effect denies the authority of the divine Word and cannot consistently maintain that it is the voice of God speaking through men.
6. To make rationalistic considerations, as well as scientific theories, the reason for departure from the clear sense of the Word of God is to set aside the authority of the Word and leads, at least in principle, to the rejection of all supernatural and miraculous elements in the Bible, including the supreme miracle of the incarnation of the eternal Son of God, the vicarious atonement, the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ, etc.

NOTE: This paragraph, when pointing to the danger incurred by those who depart from the meaning of Scripture because of some objection raised by human

reason, does not say or imply that all who are thus motivated carry their principle to its logical conclusion.

7. The Theses of Agreement, the fruit of prayerful labours extending over many years, have been adopted in all seriousness and in good faith by both the former U. E. L. C. A. and E. L. C. A. as a unifying document. They should be respected and treated accordingly. Should amendments become desirable in the course of time, such amendments would have to be submitted to the entire Church after thorough theological examination and discussion. Meanwhile, a deliberate disregard of the Theses in teaching and preaching would appear as evidence of bad faith, and would constitute a serious threat to the unity of the Church. There may, of course, be inadvertent disregard of the Theses due to ignorance of their content.

Interpretation of Genesis 1 to 3

We believe and teach that the work of Creation as described in Genesis was a creation *ex nihilo* — a creation from nothing — and that it was a six-day work on the part of God as endorsed in Exodus 20. We acknowledge, however, that together with the Church of all ages, we should not dogmatise about the length of these days of the unique week of Creation.

We furthermore believe and teach the following:

1. The creation by God of the first man, Adam, and the first woman, Eve, in special and immediate acts of creation, distinct from the creation of other creatures; and the creation of man as a mature, rational, moral, and responsible being in the image of God (Gen. 1:17), that is, in perfect righteousness and holiness, endowed with a perfect knowledge of God's will and in blissful relationship with his Creator.
2. The Fall of man through an act of disobedience and unbelief, the consequent loss of the image of God, and the total corruption of his nature (original sin) (Genesis 3; Romans 5).
3. The promise of the Saviour (woman's seed, Abraham's seed, etc.) Who would take upon Himself the guilt and punishment of man's disobedience and by His sacrificial death make complete atonement for man's sin, and thus God the Creator is also God, our Saviour and Redeemer.

While there are important issues regarding the interpretation of Genesis which urgently require discussion and settlement among us, our pastors and teachers should in the meantime not teach anything which contradicts the above or which in any way suggests or allows for an animal ancestry of man. It is naturally understood that pastors and teachers are not prevented by anything stated here from dealing with the subject of evolution in as full and complete a manner as is demanded by their office.

(Adopted by the Lutheran Church of Australia, October 1968)