

DOCTRINAL STATEMENTS AND THEOLOGICAL OPINIONS (DSTO)

VOLUME 1 A. THESES OF AGREEMENT

The permanent status of Theses of Agreement

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As the name of the document indicates, the Theses of Agreement were written and adopted to bring about a consensus, in those doctrines of the Church and in those areas of churchly practice in which there had been actual or supposed disagreement and division between the two former Lutheran Churches in Australia. The theses are therefore the official record of the outcome and the conclusion of the dialogue and debate between those two Churches as they sought a solution under the guidance of the Word of God to those doctrinal differences that divided them. They were therefore the instrument through which church fellowship and fraternal relationships between the two Churches were established.

However, in many respects the Theses of Agreement exhibit the marks of confessional statements as Lutherans understand them. The Theses claim to be a fair and accurate exposition of the Word of God and in particular of the doctrine of the Gospel, as it is understood and preached and taught in the Lutheran Church of Australia. At the same time they explicitly express a complete consensus with the Lutheran fathers and reaffirm their exposition and understanding of God's Word as contained in the Book of Concord, and together with them also reject **all** heresies that are condemned in the Lutheran Confessions.

Like all confessional statements, the Theses of Agreement are always under the authority of the Word of God, and therefore there must always be a readiness to submit them to the critical scrutiny of God's Word and accordingly confirm them, or amend or repudiate them when further study of God's Word shows them to be inadequate or in error. In that sense their permanent status and authority are entirely determined by the faithfulness and accuracy with which they reflect the teaching of God's Word, in particular the doctrine of the Gospel.

All this, however, does not elevate the Theses of Agreement to the level of the Lutheran Confessions. A Church cannot claim to be Lutheran if it does not subscribe to the Book of Concord, or at least hold to the Confessions in the manner referred to in Theses of Agreement IX 9; on the other hand, the absence of subscription to the Theses of Agreement certainly cannot call into doubt the Lutheran character of a Church that subscribes to the Book of Concord. The purpose and intention of the Theses of Agreement is related specifically to the Lutheran Church of Australia, and the permanency of their status therefore rests with this Church.