

DOCTRINAL STATEMENTS AND THEOLOGICAL OPINIONS OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

VOLUME 2

FOREWORD

This collection of documents has been published so that members of the Lutheran Church of Australia may have ready access to significant theological statements of the church. Some of these statements were made by the church in Convention. Others were produced by the Commission on Theology and Inter-Church Relations, or the Commission on Social and Bioethical Questions, or the Commission on Worship in response to questions raised in and by the church. One statement was prepared by the faculty of Luther Seminary, Adelaide. The date and status of each document is included under its heading.

Documents adopted by a commission are to be seen as the considered view of the commission appointed by the church to give advice on these matters. The church may use these documents for the guidance of its pastors and congregations. Subsequently the church may adopt a document – amended or unamended – as expressing the official position of the church. This happens when the document is adopted by General Synod, or by the General Church Council on behalf of the church.

Like all doctrinal statements, the documents contained in this volume are subject to the authority of the word of God. The church must always be ready to submit the documents to the scrutiny of God's word, and then confirm them, amend them, or repudiate them if further study of God's word shows them to be inadequate or in error.

The church has made a clear and important distinction between public doctrine and pious opinion (see DSTO I, I 4). The Holy Scriptures alone *establish* the public doctrine of the church. Doctrinal statements of the church *define* public doctrine. Pious opinion, however, may be based on traditions and interpretations which may differ from time to time and age to age. Pious opinion can indeed enrich the church, but it must always be subjected to the ongoing scrutiny of the word of God.

Volume I of *Doctrinal Statements and Theological Opinions* was first published in 1980, with subsequent editions in 1985 and 1989. Volume II provides additional recent material, including statements on church-school issues, and worship.

This volume should be seen, not as a compendium of doctrine, but as a set of historical guideposts as the church confronts the world in its journey this side of the great Day of the Lord.

November 1996

Lance G Steicke
President of the church

[*edited November 2001*]

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All but one of the documents in the 1996 edition of *Doctrinal Statements and Theological Opinions, Volume II* are published in this edition. Each document is identified by a code on the top right hand corner of the first page of the document. This corresponds to the page number in the 1996 edition.

Every document (with the exception of C4) in the 2001 edition has been edited. The General Church Council appointed the undersigned as editor, and Dr L.G. Steicke and Dr V.C. Pfitzner as consultants and advisors. The editor's instructions were to simplify as much as possible the language and form of the original documents, while remaining faithful to their essential content, spirit and intent.

November 2001

John G Strelan (editor)