

## DOCTRINAL STATEMENTS AND THEOLOGICAL OPINIONS (DSTO)

### VOLUME 1

#### A. THESES OF AGREEMENT

## II: Joint prayer and worship

*Resulting from the discussions on the basis of papers read to the Jindera Pastoral Conference (May 1948) by Dr Hamann on 'Prayer Fellowship', by Dr A Mackenzie on 'Romans 16:17, 18, An Examination', and Dr J Darsow, 'A Doctrinal Treatise on Romans 16:17, 18', and on the basis of several resolutions of the Jindera Pastoral Conference, the following theses on Joint Prayer and Worship were discussed at joint meetings held on August 12 1948, November 11 1948, and adopted in their present form on April 19 1949.*

*Reviewed August 2001, unedited.*

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1. We acknowledge that on the basis of Scripture and of the Confessions, joint prayer cannot under all circumstances be identified with unionistic prayer or church fellowship.
2. We agree that when joint prayer shows the marks or characteristics of unionism, it must be condemned and avoided. Such marks and characteristics of unionism are:
  - a. failure to confess the whole truth of the Divine Word (*in statu confessionis*);
  - b. failure to reject and denounce every opposing error;
  - c. assigning to error equal right with the truth;
  - d. creating the impression of unity in faith or of church fellowship, where it does not exist.
3. We agree that joint prayer is not unionistic, and hence permissible, when it arises from some external circumstance and is yet based on a common Christianity, i.e. the common acceptance of Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Lord and only Saviour. Then it is not only the privilege but may become the duty of Christians to pray together (cf Matt 6:9; Col 3:17 and Phil 4:6 re: general Christian conduct). This is the case, for instance
  - a. when Christians meet in private life; relation of guest and host; family ties; grace at table, family worship; other private contacts into which God leads us;
  - b. when members of different Christian churches —Lutherans and others — meet to bring about unity on the basis of God's Word and jointly ask for God's blessing.

4. We agree to the general rule that Lutherans, pastors and lay people, should avoid services conducted by Churches not in fellowship of faith since loyalty to Christ and obedience to His Word require a Christian to avoid promiscuous worship. 1 Tim 6:3–5; 5:22; Gal 5:8; 1 Cor 3:10–15; John 8:31,32. If, however, a Lutheran attends services outside of his own fellowship for some legitimate reason, e.g. Church weddings, funeral services, for reasons of personal investigation and intellectual or theological interest, or for the purpose of testifying to a common duty of worshipping God, his attendance on such occasions is not due to unionistic indifference and the circumstances will have to decide whether he can join in the prayers and to what extent he can take part in the worship.
5. When Lutherans, representing their Church, find it necessary or desirable to attend mixed meetings with unionistic implications, they may have to endure joint prayer without being necessarily obliged to withdraw for conscience' sake.
6. When Lutherans find it necessary or desirable to attend interdenominational meetings called for a definite purpose without unionistic implications and where there is unanimity on the object of joint prayer, it may be possible for them to join in that prayer with a good conscience. Matt 18:20.
7. Always provided that the marks of unionism are absent and no offence is given to weak consciences, attendance at specially arranged services of an ecumenical nature is quite compatible with the above principles.
8. When a special service, whatever its nature (ecumenical, interdenominational, national, civic, etc.) is in principle and in purpose unionistic, a Christian should by his refusal to take part, bear witness against such unionism.
9. While cooperation of different Churches in externals (e.g. Charity, relief work, united defence against laws harmful to the Church) is not necessarily unionistic, we dare not shut our eyes to the fact that many inter-church and ecumenical meetings, bodies or organizations proceed from unionistic thinking and rest on a unionistic basis. Lutherans, while ready to cooperate in such externals, cannot condone such unionism nor cease their witness against it.
10. Since much of this whole matter lies in the sphere of casuistics, something will have to be left to individual consciences. Care must, however, be taken not to create offence or to weaken the witness of the Church against sinful unionism.