

THE LAKE JUNALUSKA AFFIRMATION

of Scriptural Christianity for United Methodists

PREAMBLE

In a time of theological pluralism, Good News and other evangelicals within United Methodism have thought it necessary to reaffirm the historic faith of the Church. Our theological understanding of this faith has been expressed in the Apostles' Creed, Nicene Creed, and in John Wesley's standard Sermons and the Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament. We affirm in their entirety the validity and integrity of these expressions of Scriptural truth, and recognize them as the doctrinal standards of our denomination.

We also recognize that our situation calls for a contemporary restatement of these truths. The merging of two great traditions, the Evangelical United Brethren and the Methodist, with their two authentic witnesses to the historic faith, The Confession of Faith and The Articles of Religion, gives further occasion for such a statement. Moreover, we recognize the mandate that the doctrinal statement of the 1972 General Conference has placed upon "all its members to accept the challenge of responsible theological reflection."

Consequently, we offer to the United Methodist Church this theological affirmation of Scriptural Christianity.

THE HOLY TRINITY

Scriptural Christianity affirms the existence of the one Eternal God who has revealed Himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three equal but distinct Persons, mysteriously united in the Godhead which the church historically has described as the Holy Trinity.

GOD THE FATHER

Scriptural Christianity affirms that the first Person of the Holy Trinity, God the Father, is the Eternal One and reigns supremely. He has provided a covenant through which His creatures can be redeemed and through which His creation will be liberated from all evil and brought to final righteousness at the end of the age.

GOD THE SON

Scriptural Christianity affirms that the second Person of the Holy Trinity, the Eternal Son, became incarnate as Mary's virgin-born Child, Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ. In His unique Person, He revealed to us both the fullness of deity and the fullness of humanity. By His life, suffering, death, resurrection and ascension He provided the only way of salvation. His sacrifice on the cross once and for all was to reconcile the Holy God and sinners, thus providing the only way of access to the Father. Now He intercedes as High Priest before the Father, awaiting the day when He will return to judge every person, living and dead, and to consummate His Kingdom.

GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

Scriptural Christianity affirms that the third Person of the Holy Trinity, the Holy Spirit, was active from the beginning in creation, revelation and redemption. It was through His anointing that prophets received the Word of God, priests became intermediaries between God and His people, and kings were given ruling authority. The Spirit's presence and power, measured in the Old Testament, were found without measure in Jesus of Nazareth, the Anointed. The Spirit convicts and woos the lost, gives new birth to the penitent, and abides in the believer, perfecting holiness and empowering the Church to carry out Christ's mission in the world. He came to indwell His Church at Pentecost, enabling believers to yield fruit and endowing them with spiritual gifts according to His will. He bears witness to Christ and guides God's people into His truth. He inspired the Holy Scriptures, God's written Word, and continues to illuminate His people concerning His will and truth. His guidance is always in harmony with Christ and the truth as given in the Holy Scriptures.

HUMANITY

Scriptural Christianity affirms that man and woman are fashioned in the image of God and are different from all of God's other creatures. God intends that we should glorify Him and enjoy Him forever. Since the Fall of Adam the corruption of sin has pervaded every person and extended into social relationships, societal systems, and all creation. This corruption is so pervasive that we are not capable of positive response to God's offer of redemption, except by the prevenient, or preparing, grace of God. Only through the justifying, regenerating and sanctifying work of the Triune God can we be saved from the corruption of sin, become increasingly conformed to the image of Christ, and restored to the relationships which God has intended for us.

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

Scriptural Christianity affirms as the only written Word of God the Old and New Testaments. These Holy Scriptures contain all that is necessary for our knowledge of God's holy and sovereign will, of Jesus Christ the only Redeemer, of our salvation, and of our growth in grace. They are to be received through the Holy Spirit as the guide and final authority for the faith and conduct of individuals and the doctrines and life of the Church. Whatever is not clearly revealed in, or plainly established as truth by, the Holy Scriptures cannot be required as an article of faith nor be taught as essential to salvation. Anything contrary to the teachings of the Holy Scriptures is contrary to the purposes of God and must, therefore, be opposed. The authority of Scripture derives from the fact that God, through His Spirit, inspired the authors, causing them to perceive God's truth and record it with accuracy. It is evident that the Holy Scriptures have been preserved during the long process of transmission through copyists and translators, and we attribute such accurate preservation to the work of the Holy Spirit. These Scriptures are supremely authoritative for the Church's teaching, preaching, witness, identifying error, correcting the erring, and training believers for ministry in and through the Church.

SALVATION

Scriptural Christianity affirms that God offers salvation to a sinful humanity and a lost world through Jesus Christ. By His death on the cross the sinless Son propitiated the holy wrath of the Father, a righteous anger occasioned by sin. By His resurrection from the dead, the glorified Son raises us to newness of life. When we appropriate by faith God's atoning work in Jesus Christ we are forgiven, justified, regenerated by His Holy Spirit, and adopted into the family of God. By His grace He sanctifies His children, purifying their hearts by faith, renewing them in the image of God, and enabling them to love God and neighbor with whole heart. The fullness of God's great salvation will come with the return of Christ. This cosmic event will signal the resurrection of the saved to eternal life and the lost to eternal damnation, the liberation of creation from the Adamic curse, God's final victory over every power and dominion, and the establishment of the new heaven and the new earth.

THE CHURCH

Scriptural Christianity affirms that the Church of Jesus Christ is the community of all true believers under His sovereign Lordship. This Church, the Body of Christ, is *one* because it shares one Lord, one faith, one baptism. It is *holy* because it belongs to God and is set apart for His purposes in the world. It is *apostolic* because it partakes of the authority granted to the apostles by Christ Himself. It is *universal* because it includes all believers, both living and dead, in every nation, regardless of denominational affiliation. Its authenticity is to be found wherever the pure Word of God is preached and taught; wherever the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion are celebrated in obedience to Christ's command; wherever the gifts of the Holy Spirit upbuild the body and bring spiritual growth; wherever the Spirit of God creates a loving, caring fellowship, and a faithfulness in witness and service to the world; and wherever discipline is administered with love under the guidance of the Word of God. The Church, as the Bride of Christ, will ultimately be joined with her Lord in triumphant glory.

ETHICS

Scriptural Christianity affirms that we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works. These works are the loving expressions of gratitude by the believer for the new life received in Christ. They do not earn one's salvation nor are they a substitute for God's work of redemption. Rather, they are the result of regeneration and are manifest in the believer as evidence of a living faith.

God has called us to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with Him. In the Scriptures are found the standards and principles that guide the believer in this walk. These ethical imperatives, willingly accepted by the believer, enable us to be a part of God's purposes in the world. Moreover, in this we are called to an obedience that does not stop short of our willingness to suffer for righteousness' sake, even unto death.

Our life in Christ includes an unstinting devotion to deeds of kindness and mercy and a wholehearted participation in collective efforts to alleviate need and suffering. The believer will work for honesty, justice and equity in human affairs; all of which witness

to inherent rights and a basic dignity common to all persons created in the image of God. Such contemporary issues as racism, housing, welfare, education, Marxism, capitalism, hunger, crime, sexism, family relationships, aging, sexuality, drug and alcohol, abortion, leisure, pornography, and related issues call for prayerful consideration, thoughtful analysis, and appropriate action from Christians, and must always be a matter of concern to the church. Thus, we remember that faith without works is dead.

July 20, 1975 Lake Junaluska, North Carolina

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Methodism's Silent Minority," an article by Charles W. Keysor in the July 14, 1966 issue of the Christian Advocate was the beginning. This article, prepared in response to the editor's invitation to write about the beliefs of Methodist evangelicals, brought a flood of positive response: evangelical theology was not dead in Methodism.

However, the theological password abroad was "secularism." Its slogan was: "Let the world set the agenda." Such an approach to theology could hardly be accepted as a modern-day restatement of the theological distinctives of a Wesleyan, Reformed theological tradition. A confusing uncertainty surrounded any public statement by evangelical Methodists about their beliefs. Herein was a theological mandate. In April, 1974 the "Good News" Board of Directors appointed a "Theology and Doctrine Task Force" to prepare an affirmative statement of Scriptural Christianity for "Good News."

My task force colleagues, united by God's Holy Spirit, shared in this labor of love: The Rev. Riley Case, Pastor, Wesley UM Church, Union City, Indiana; Rev. Dr. James V. Heidinger, Pastor, The UM Church, Cadiz, Ohio; Rev. Dr. Charles W. Keysor, Editor, Good News, Wilmore Kentucky; Rev. Dr. Dennis F. Kinlaw, President, Asbury College, Wilmore, Kentucky; Mr. Lawrence Souder, layman, Centerville, Ohio; Rev. Dr. Frank B. Stanger, President, Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, Kentucky; and initially, Rev. Bob Stamps, Chaplain, Oral Roberts University, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

On July 20, 1975, the statement, "An Affirmation of Scriptural Christianity for United Methodists" was adopted by the Board of Directors of "Good News" during the 1975 Convocation of United Methodists for Evangelical Christianity meeting at Lake Junaluska, North Carolina; hence, the title, "The Junaluska Affirmation."

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