

1 **RESOLUTION 2-05B**
2 **REFERENCE - OVERTURE 2-05**

3
4 **To Call the Rev. Dr. Matthew Becker to Repentance, Implore the Rev. Paul**
5 **Linnemann to Exercise Ecclesiastical Supervision and Thank and Encourage**
6 **President Matthew Harrison**

7
8 Rationale

9 At the recent North Dakota District Convention, Synod President Matthew
10 Harrison was questioned about the status of the Rev. Dr. Matthew Becker, a
11 rostered and ordained member of the Synod and a professor at Valparaiso
12 University. President Harrison reported to that convention that the results of a
13 complaint filed against Dr. Becker have left him remaining in good standing as a
14 member of the Synod. This was confirmed by Dr. Becker:

15
16 “The matter of the case against my teaching was terminated by three
17 LCMS circuit counselors from the Great Northwest (whose identities
18 are unknown to me), who acted at the behest of the NW District
19 President. After reviewing all of the available evidence, they
20 concluded that it is perfectly acceptable for an LCMS pastor to make a
21 public argument in favor of the ordination of women to the pastoral
22 office and that such a public argument is not grounds for expulsion
23 from the roster of pastors in the LCMS”.

24 <http://www.alpb.org/forum/index.php?topic=5768.0> – accessed 1-30-
25 2015

26
27 Some days later, President Harrison posted the following to the Witness, Mercy
28 and Life Together blog on the Synod’s website, not referring to the Becker Case
29 specifically, but speaking in general,

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31 “When a public teacher on the roster of Synod can without
32 consequence publicly advocate the ordination of women (even
33 participate vested in the installation of an ELCA clergy person),
34 homosexuality, the errancy of the Bible, the historical-critical method,
35 open communion, communion with the Reformed, evolution, and
36 more, then the public confession of the Synod is meaningless. I am
37 saying that if my Synod does not change its inability to call such a
38 person to repentance and remove such a teacher where there is no
39 repentance, then we are liars and our confession is meaningless. I do
40 not want to belong to such a synod, much less lead it. I have no

1 intention of walking away from my vocation. I shall rather use it and,
2 by the grace of God, use all the energy I have to call this Synod to
3 fidelity to correct this situation.”

4 [http://wmltblog.org/2015/01/regarding-a-recent-decision-of-a-panel-](http://wmltblog.org/2015/01/regarding-a-recent-decision-of-a-panel-not-to-proceed-with-charges-regarding-a-public-false-teacher-in-the-lcms/)
5 [not-to-proceed-with-charges-regarding-a-public-false-teacher-in-the-](http://wmltblog.org/2015/01/regarding-a-recent-decision-of-a-panel-not-to-proceed-with-charges-regarding-a-public-false-teacher-in-the-lcms/)
6 [lcms/](http://wmltblog.org/2015/01/regarding-a-recent-decision-of-a-panel-not-to-proceed-with-charges-regarding-a-public-false-teacher-in-the-lcms/) - accessed 1-30-2015

7
8 Dr. Becker filed an official dissent regarding the synod’s practice of restricting the
9 office of pastor only to men and from the synod’s position of interpreting the first
10 two chapters of Genesis to mean that God created the universe over the course of
11 six twenty four hour days, and that the natural law of evolution must be rejected.
12 The Commission on Theology and Church Relations responded to Dr. Becker’s
13 dissent which not only exposed his false teaching on those subjects, but also
14 revealed his rejection of the inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures. The Commission
15 wrote,

16
17 “Dr. Becker’s dissent does not provide a sufficient scriptural or
18 confessional basis to support his claim that the doctrinal position of
19 the Synod is in need of revision on the issue of the ordination of
20 women to the pastoral office or on the issue of creation and evolution.
21 The theological basis for the CTCR’s determination is the evidence
22 provided in Dr. Becker’s essays that he is operating on the basis of an
23 understanding of the authority and interpretation of Scripture that is at
24 odds with the Lutheran Confessions (see, for example, the Preface to
25 The Book of Concord; FC Ep Summary, 2; FC SD Summary, 9, 20;
26 Ap XXIII, 71; Ap VII, 27; Ap XII, 106, etc.) and the scripturally and
27 confessionally-based position of the Synod as set forth in the Brief
28 Statement (see paragraphs 1-3) and A Statement of Scriptural and
29 Confessional Principles (see especially “The Infallibility of Scripture”
30 and “Historical Methods of Interpretation”). Statements such as the
31 following in Dr. Becker’s essays reflect a view of and approach to
32 Scripture that are clearly incompatible with the Synod’s doctrinal
33 position on the authority and interpretation of Holy Scripture”,
34 <http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=1676> - accessed 1-
35 30-2015

36
37 the Commission quoted Dr. Becker and then responded,

38
39 “Of course a “figurative” interpretation of Genesis 1-9
40 (not to mention the many other passages in Scripture that

1 speak of God as creator, of the world as God’s creation,
2 and of the new creation) does entail a revision of the
3 traditional “creationist” manner of articulating the
4 doctrines of creation, anthropology, and sin, and many
5 Christians are deeply uncomfortable with such a
6 prospect. This “discomfort” is at least as great as the
7 discomfort many 16th-Century Christians must have felt
8 in view of the revision to traditional teaching that the
9 Copernican Theory entailed. As then, however, so also
10 now: such modification would not necessarily undermine
11 an orthodox understanding of creation, human beings,
12 sin, and grace. For example, scientific data about the
13 reality of physical death in the animal and plant
14 kingdoms prior to origin of human beings (e.g., fossils of
15 animals that lived long before the origin of human
16 beings) must lead those who interpret the Bible in light of
17 scientific knowledge to restate the nature of God’s good
18 creation prior to the advent of human sin (e.g., such a
19 good creation must have included the reality of death
20 prior to the existence of human beings) and the character
21 of the historical origin of sin (e.g., the advent of sin is to
22 be traced to the first hominids who disobeyed God’s will
23 but not necessarily to their having eaten from a tree in an
24 actual place called the Garden of Eden several thousand
25 years ago). (*SLM*, 12)

26
27 Statements such as these by Dr. Becker speak for themselves in
28 conveying his understanding of the authority and interpretation of the
29 Scriptures. As noted above, this understanding is clearly incompatible
30 with the Synod’s doctrinal position on the authority and interpretation
31 of Scripture. For this reason, the Commission affirms once again its
32 determination that Dr. Becker has not provided sufficient basis for his
33 claim that the position of the Synod is in need of
34 revision, and expresses once again its conviction that Dr. Becker is in
35 dissent from the position of the Synod not only on the specific issues
36 of the ordination of women to the pastoral office and the issues of
37 creation and evolution, but also on the more foundational position of
38 the Synod on which these positions are based: namely, the authority,
39 infallibility, and faithful interpretation of the Holy Scriptures
40 themselves.

1
2 The CTCR therefore appeals to Dr. Matthew Becker, by the mercies
3 of God, to reconsider his dissent and to reexamine, on the basis of
4 Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, his positions on the authority
5 of Scripture and the two issues concerning which he has expressed
6 dissent, even as the Synod expects him to honor and uphold the
7 doctrinal positions of the Synod.”
8 <http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=1676> - accessed 1-
9 30-2015

10
11 While the CTCR appealed to Dr. Becker by the mercies of God to reconsider his
12 positions on the basis of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, it is clear that he
13 has not done so. In addition to those matters, Dr. Becker contends that the
14 Lutheran Confessions themselves contain theological ambiguity and error, to wit,
15 the Athanasian Creed. As stated by comments on his blog in discussion with two
16 pastors of the Southern Illinois District,

17
18 “**The Rev. BT Ball** February 9, 2013 at 5:28PM
19 Dr. Becker-

20
21 "Whoever desires to be saved must, above all, hold the catholic faith.
22 Whoever does not keep it whole and undefiled will without doubt
23 perish eternally...This is the catholic faith; whoever does not believe it
24 faithfully and firmly cannot be saved."

25
26 Do you confess that to be true or not?

27
28 Pastor Benjamin Ball
29 St. Paul, Hamel, IL

30
31 **Matthew L. Becker** February 9, 2013 at 8:09PM
32 Pr. Ball,

33 The Athanasian Creed errs when it implies that one is saved by a
34 mental work of believing this creed's humanly-devised dogmatic
35 statements "faithfully and firmly."

36
37 No Eastern Orthodox Christian will accept all of the formulations
38 within this historic western creed. Many statements in it need careful
39 clarification. Its conclusion is simply incorrect. The Athanasian Creed
40 muddles the gospel at precisely this point.

1
2 **Pr. H. R.** February 9, 2013 at 8:45 PM
3

4 Dr. Becker,
5

6 Members of our Synod agree to accept the Athanasian Creed "without
7 reservation" (Art. II of our Constitution). We are pretty up front about
8 that and have been for a long time. Perhaps it came up at your
9 ordination. If it didn't (for example, if you wrote your own ordination
10 vows and didn't use the ones in the TLH or LW Agenda), it certainly
11 did when you signed the Constitution.
12

13 I understand that you have deeply held convictions that run contrary
14 to this Confession of the faith. But I struggle to understand why you
15 continue to put yourself forward as a representative of our Synod
16 when you so clearly do not hold to our Confession on so many
17 weighty issues. It is not as though you are struggling with one or two
18 peripheral issues, unsure of where you stand, or sure the Synod has
19 erred in its stance on life insurance or gambling. You just flat out [sic]
20 deny what we require our ministers to swear to at their ordination.
21

22 I'll give you this: it's bold.
23

24 +HRC
25

26 **Matthew L. Becker** February 9, 2013 at 10:35 PM
27

28 HRC,
29

30 I was ordained on July 14, 1989. In that service I was asked the
31 following question, among several:
32

33 Do you accept the three Ecumenical Creeds...as faithful testimonies to
34 the truth of the Holy Scriptures, and do you reject all the errors which
35 they condemn?
36

37 I answered affirmatively. The three creeds (only one of which is truly
38 ecumenical) are faithful testimonies to the truth of the Holy
39 Scriptures, that is, the doctrinal truth of the Scriptures. I reject the
40 errors that the three creeds condemn.

1 They are faithful witnesses to the doctrinal truth of the Scriptures, but
2 they are not without theological ambiguity and error.

3
4 Our ordination vow is strictly limited to the doctrinal teaching of the
5 Holy Scriptures, that is, the doctrine of the gospel and all its articles.

6
7 THAT doctrine of the gospel, the doctrine of faith, is contrary to the
8 kind of legalistic approach to dogma and confessional writings that
9 you and Pr. Ball and other LCMS pastors seem to be asserting.

10
11 Pastors who serve churches of the Augsburg Confession are not bound
12 to many items that are taught or asserted in the confessional writings.
13 This includes the concluding paragraph of the Athanasian Creed. That
14 paragraph, literally understood, is contrary to the doctrine of the
15 gospel.

16
17 Our quia vow is to teach in accordance with the doctrinal content of
18 the Holy Scriptures, as that content is exhibited in the historic
19 confessions.

20
21 I continue to preach and teach in accordance with my ordination vow,
22 and I ask God to help me.”

23 [http://matthewlbecker.blogspot.com/2013/02/one-more-response-to-](http://matthewlbecker.blogspot.com/2013/02/one-more-response-to-hrc.html)
24 [hrc.html](http://matthewlbecker.blogspot.com/2013/02/one-more-response-to-hrc.html) - accessed 1-30-2015

25
26 Dr. Becker has stated regarding homosexuality,

27
28 “• I too affirm the authority of the Scriptures, but the seven biblical
29 texts that are frequently cited on the issue of homosexuality are not
30 directly pertinent to the 21st-century discussion because some of them
31 condemn specifically homosexual rape, deal with questions of “clean
32 and unclean” that are not normative in the Christian community, do
33 not take into account issues like “sexual orientation,” and presuppose
34 that all would agree with a particular interpretation of what “nature”
35 teaches.

36 • Both heterosexual and homosexual persons are expected to express
37 sexual intimacy within publicly accountable, lifelong, and
38 monogamous relationships. This has long been the expectation for
39 heterosexual couples, and therefore is an appropriate expectation for
40 homosexual couples as well.

1 • I recognize that the unity of the church is based on one Lord, one
2 faith, and one baptism, and that within this unity, faithful members
3 may disagree on individual items of theology and Christian ethics.”
4 <http://gottesdienstonline.blogspot.com/2010/12/useful-discussion.html>
5 - accessed 1-30-2015
6

7 Synod Bylaw 4.4.5 states, “Each district president, in accordance with the
8 Constitution of the Synod, shall supervise the doctrine, the life, and the
9 official administration on the part of the ordained or commissioned ministers
10 who are members through his district or are subject to his ecclesiastical
11 supervision”. As such, the President of the Northwest District of the LCMS,
12 the Rev. Paul Linnemann, is charged with the ecclesiastical supervision of
13 Dr. Becker. While Dr. Becker’s public teaching, writing and dissent are
14 publicly known, there is no public evidence that President Linnemann has
15 exhorted Dr. Becker to repentance for his false doctrines. Dr. Becker, an
16 Ordained member of the Synod, has publicly advocated for the ordination of
17 women to the Pastoral Ministry. He has participated in the installation of an
18 ELCA clergy person. He has taught that committed homosexual
19 relationships are not sinful. He rejects the inerrancy of the Bible. He does
20 not affirm the creation account in the Scriptures as a historical event.
21 President Linnemann as the ecclesiastical supervisor of Dr. Becker is to
22 assist the Synod at large with fulfilling its first objective which is to
23 “Conserve and promote the unity of the true faith (Eph. 4:3–6; 1 Cor. 1:10).
24

25 WHEREAS: The Rev. Dr. Matthew Becker, an Ordained member of the
26 Synod, has publicly advocated for the ordination of women to the Pastoral
27 Ministry. He has participated in the installation of an ELCA clergy person.
28 He has taught that committed homosexual relationships are not sinful. He
29 rejects the inerrancy of the Bible. He does not affirm the creation account in
30 the Scriptures as a historical event, and
31

32 WHEREAS: Dr. Becker is a member of the Northwest District of the LCMS
33 under the ecclesiastical supervision of the Rev. Paul Linnemann, and
34

35 WHEREAS: It is the President of the Synod’s duty to see to it that all
36 District Presidents “act in accordance with the Synod's Constitution, to
37 admonish all who in any way depart from it, and, if such admonition is not
38 heeded, to report such cases to the Synod”, (Article XI.B.2) and
39

1 WHEREAS: The President of the Synod “has and always shall have the
2 power to advise, admonish, and reprove. He shall conscientiously use all
3 means at his command to promote and maintain unity of doctrine and
4 practice in all the districts of the Synod”, (Article XI.B.3) and
5
6 WHEREAS: We confess, “All this has been said regarding secret sins. But
7 where the sin is quite public so that the judge and everybody know it, you
8 can without any sin avoid him and let him go, because he has brought
9 himself into disgrace, and you may also publicly testify concerning him. For
10 when a matter is public in the light of day, there can be no slandering or
11 false judging or testifying; as, when we now reprove the Pope with his
12 doctrine, which is publicly set forth in books and proclaimed in all the
13 world. For where the sin is public, the reproof also must be public, that every
14 one may learn to guard against it.” (Large Catechism, 8th Commandment,
15 para.284), and
16
17 WHEREAS: Our Lord Jesus Christ said, “I have not come to call the
18 righteous, but sinners to repentance” (St. Luke 5:32). Therefore, let it be
19
20 RESOLVED: That those with public knowledge of the Rev. Dr. Matthew
21 Becker’s false and divisive doctrines call him to repentance, and
22
23 RESOLVED: That in faithfulness to God’s Word and in Christian love the
24 Southern Illinois District of the LCMS in convention call the Rev. Dr.
25 Matthew Becker to repentance of his false and divisive doctrines and that
26 this be communicated to him through the Southern Illinois District
27 Secretary, and let it be further
28
29 RESOLVED: That the Southern Illinois District implore the Rev. Paul
30 Linnemann, President of the Northwest District, to exercise ecclesiastical
31 supervision of Dr. Becker, if he is not already doing so, seek Dr. Becker’s
32 repentance for false teaching, and lacking such repentance, begin the process
33 of Dr. Becker’s expulsion from the Synod in accordance with the Synod’s
34 Constitution and Bylaws, and that this be communicated to the Rev.
35 Linnemann by the Southern Illinois District President and let it be further
36
37 RESOLVED: That the Southern Illinois District encourage President
38 Matthew Harrison to exhort President Linnemann to do his duty for the sake
39 of our common confession of faith and our walking together as members of
40 the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, and be it further

1
2 RESOLVED: That the President of the Southern Illinois District, on behalf
3 of the Southern Illinois District, thank President Matthew Harrison and
4 commend him for his faithful leadership of the Synod, and give him such
5 encouragement, and be it finally

6
7 RESOLVED: That the Convention Chaplain lead the Convention in prayer
8 for a godly resolution to these matters.

9
10 Respectfully Submitted,
11 Floor Committee #2
12 Adopted 14 February 2015
13 79 Yea
14 19 Nay