the Concordia Lutheran

"The Scripture cannot be broken." John 10:35.

"Thy Word is a Lamp unto my feet, and a Light unto my path" Ps. 119:105.

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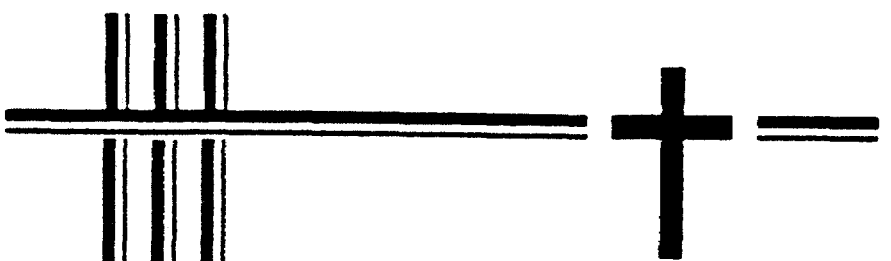

Send Out Thy Light and Thy Truth !

Psalm 43:3

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STATEMENT of PURPOSE

To set forth in simple and plain language the pure doctrine of God's Word as taught by the true Lutheran Church in full accordance with the **Book of Concord of 1580** and the **Brief Statment of 1932.**

To show, **on the basis of Scripture,** what true Christians are to believe and how, out of love for their Savior Jesus Christ, they are to lead godly lives.

To furnish aids for Bible study and articles for Scriptural devotion and meditation.

To demonstrate, by our Scriptural stand, that our **Concordia Lutheran Conference** is not a sect or a false church body but that the congregations which form it confess, teach, and practice the Word of God in its full truth and purity and use the Sacraments according to Christ's institution. All who do this are the true visible Church on earth.

To seek out all who truly share our Scriptural position in doctrine and practice, and to urge the mutual public acknowledgment of such God-given unity. Thus we shall be able thereafter to practice a God-pleasing Church fellowship with them.

To show that we do not have among us a mixture of divergent teachings but that we are, by God's grace, "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

To set forth pertinent historical information which has a bearing upon the Church and to expose modern philosophical thought and the so-called scientific theories which contradict the Word of God.

To expose particularly the false teaching and practice of the various so-called "Lutheran" church bodies by comparing their teachings and practices with what is plainly recorded in the Word of God, in the Lutheran Confessions, and in the old orthodox Lutheran writings.

To expose false teaching and practice wherever it makes its appearance and to keep abreast of the current happenings in the church and among the nations as signs of the times.

To be truthful and factual in our reporting and freely to correct any misinformation of which we are not aware and which has been called to our attention. Also to clarify any information or statement of doctrine or practice which may be unclear to our readers or which may create a wrong impression.

The President's Column

"SEND OUT THY LIGHT AND THY TRUTH"
Psalm 43:3a

This prayer of King David's is one that is repeated throughout the Scriptures. Not only does God's Word tell us that it is the Lord's will that all men hear His Truth, the Savior Himself commands His Church to take His Light and His Truth into all the world. Indeed, mission work is one of the **chief reasons** for our existence as a Conference.

With this in mind, our Conference called a Missionary-at-Large and, at his request, the chairman of the Mission Committee, Pastor David T. Mensing, wrote a brief tract in 1986 for just this purpose, namely, for spreading God's Light and Truth through the written Word by our Missionary-at-Large. This was to be a tool which he could use to witness as to where our Conference stands with regard to the true faith and the pure Word of God.

Pastor Mensing, after writing the tract, thought that it could be a worthwhile tool for all of the members of our Conference and submitted it to our Editirial Committee for review. However, because of its breadth and detail, the Editorial Committee was of the opinion that this "Brief Sketch of the Doctrinal Position of the Concordia Lutheran Conference" should be read and studied by our Pastoral Conference before publication. And that is exactly what happened. Over a period of three years and six pastoral conferences, our pastors read, re-read, added and deleted material from the original "Sketch." All the pastors recognized that this "Sketch" could be a valuable asset in the work which each Christian is commanded by the Lord Jesus Himself to do, namely, to make disciples of all nations by "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you," Matthew 28:20a. After the pastors of our Conference carfully reviewed and studied it, the "Sketch" was no longer a small "tract" but a rather large pamphlet.

Finally, the pastors of our Conference took the "Sketch" to their respective congregations for review in Bible Classes and Voters' Assemblies and, again, suggested changes were incorporated into the "Sketch." Finally, in the fall of 1989, the pastors of our Conference unanimously approved the "Sketch" for printing by our Publishing House. In the next two issues of our Concordia Lutheran, you will see the fruits of these labors over a three year period. Here, our readers will be able to review for themselves the "Sketch" of our doctrinal position which will be available in booklet form at our coming Convention or from our publishing house shortly thereafter.

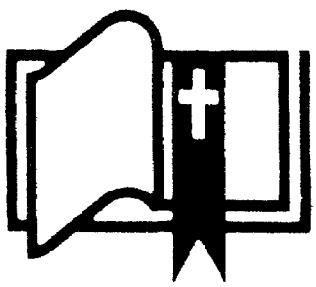
But the history of the "Sketch" aside, let us remember the purpose for which Pastor Mensing originally submitted this document to the Conference, namely, in answer to the prayers of faithful Christians and the Lord's command to send out His Light and His Truth. That remains its utmost purpose today! This "Sketch" is a tool with which we can send out God's Light and Truth to others, to show the precious truths of God's Word in a brief and succinct form to those with whom we come into contact on a daily basis. If the "Sketch" is not used for this purpose--and by you, then, a great deal of work over several years will be to little avail.

We, you and I, are to spread God's Light and Truth. One of the most common complaints which pastors so often hear from their parishioners is that they are not able to talk to other people about their Savior and to explain their faith to them. If you review this "Sketch" thoroughly, not only will you be better able to talk about your Savior and His Word with others, you will also have a summary of the chief doctrines of the Chistian faith which you can hand them including the Scripture passages on which those doctrines are based.

Brethren, I have written twice before in this space about the importance of our being faithful witnesses of our Savior. Now, by God's grace, our Conference is supplying us all with a valuable tool to make this task easier for us as individuals as we work in God's vineyard. Let us make use of it, each and every one! Do not let this "Sketch" grow dusty on your shelves but use it for the purpose for which it was intended. May we all diligently fulfill our Lord's command and receive with thanksgiving this tool which, by His grace, will help

answer our prayer that our heavenly Father would **SEND OUT HIS LIGHT AND HIS TRUTH!**

Your servant in Christ,
Mark W. Dierking, President



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A SKETCH
of
THE DOCTRINAL POSITION
of the
CONCORDIA LUTHERAN CONFERENCE

THE BIBLE:

We teach that the Bible is in all its parts and words the Word of God Himself (**Verbal Inspiration**). As such it contains no errors or contradictions, stands forever as the infallible and unchangeable truth, is perfectly clear in and of it**self**, and contains everything necessary to be known for man's eternal salvation and to train Christians in holy living. The Holy Scriptures are the only Source from which all teachings in the Christian Church must be taken, and they are the only Standard by which all religious teachings, doctrines and practices are to be judged.

(**Bible References:** I Cor. 2:13; Matt. 5:18; John 10:35; 17:17; Ps. 119:105; II Peter 1:19-21; Luke 16:29-31; II Tim. 3:16-17.)

GOD:

We teach on the basis of the Holy Scriptures that the only true God is the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost--three distinct but co-equal Persons in one indivisible, divine Being or Essence. Thus, to deny even <u>one</u> Person of the Trinity is to disavow the entire Godhead. While the existence of God can be known from nature and from man's own conscience, only the Holy Scriptures reveal <u>who</u> the true God is and <u>what</u> He has done for man's salvation.

(**Bible References:** Deut. 6:4; Matt. 28:19; 3:16,17; John 10:30; Romans 1:19,20; John 5:23 & 39.)

MAN:

We teach that man is not the product of an alleged evolution, but was specially created by God in His own image as the foremost of His visible creatures; that man was given a rational and immortal soul, was originally created holy and endowed with a perfectly free will; that man voluntarily yield-

ed to the temptation of Satan and sinned against God by disobeying His command; that he thereby lost the image of God entirely, namely, his holy estate, his free will in spiritual matters, his perfect knowledge of God, and his happiness in such knowledge. Thus he deprived himself of loving communion with his Creator, became totally corrupt in body and soul, and brought upon himself God's just punishment in spiritual, temporal and eternal death; and that he cannot by any powers of his own reestablish a right relationship with God and escape His just wrath.

(**Bible References:** Gen. 1:27,31a; 2:7; Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10; Gen. 3; Rom. 5:12,18; 6:23; Ps. 51:5; John 3:5,6; I Cor. 2:14.)

GOD'S LAW:

We teach that the Law of God tells us what we are to do and not to do, how we are to be and not to be; that it demands perfection in thoughts, desires, words and deeds; and that it condemns all who transgress it in even the slightest detail as being guilty of all, and therefore deserving of everlasting punishment in hell. God's Law serves a threefold purpose: As a curb, it checks to some extent the coarse outbursts of sin in the world, both for the unconverted and for Christians in their sinful flesh; as a mirror, it shows man his sin, his hopelessly depraved and lost condition before God, and his desperate need for a Savior--this being its CHIEF purpose; and, as a rule or straightedge, it shows Christians how to lead a God-pleasing life in proof of their faith. (This third use of the Law is not for unbelievers since, without faith in Christ, they cannot please God, Heb. 11:6.) The Law, however, cannot save sinners, not because of any defect in itself, but solely because no man, not even a Christian, is capable of fulfilling its demands perfectly. We reject all notions that the Law of God is not intended for Christians, or that men can come to a knowledge of their sins not only by the Law but also by the Gospel. (**Antinomianism**)

(**Bible References:** Lev. 19:2; Ex. 34:11a; Matt. 5:48; James 2:10; Gal. 3:10; I Tim. 1:9,10; Rom. 3:20; Ps. 119:9,105; 14:3; Is. 64:6.)

SIN:

We teach according to Scripture that sin is the transgression of God's Law. Since the fall of Adam and Eve, every

human being is conceived and born in sin and deserves to spend eternity in the punishment of hell. The natural man, that is, the unconverted person, is completely corrupt in body and soul, desires only that which is evil, opposes all that is good in the sight of God, cannot by his own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ His Lord or come to Him, and is therefore unable to please God in the slightest degree. The original or inherited sin manifests itself in acts against God's Law--acts of commission and omission, whether one is conscious of them or not. All evil in the world, including not only crime and violence but also sorrow, poverty, wearisome work, and even so-called "natural" calamities which ravage mankind, is the result of sin; and the ultimate consequence of sin, the Bible tells us, is death--spiritual death, temporal death, and eternal death in hell.

(**Bible References:** I John 3:4; Gen. 5:3; Ps. 51:5; Eccl. 7:20; John 3:6; I Cor. 2:14; Rom. 8:6-8; Heb. 11:6; Matt. 15:19; James 1:15; 4:17; Gen. 3:16-19; Rom. 6:23a.)

THE GOSPEL:

The Gospel in not a new or higher law, but that doctrine of the Bible which reveals what God in His perfect love and mercy has done and still does for the salvation of mankind. It requires nothing of the sinner, but simply announces to all men the free gift of God's grace in Christ Jesus, the Savior, **"that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life,"** and the blessed assurance that God earnestly desires the salvation of every soul. The Gospel is also the means by which God makes people believers, changes their hearts and lives, and keeps them in the true and saving faith. While the Law of God must be preached to all men, this Gospel of comfort and peace with God through Christ should be preached only to penitent sinners, those who have already been struck down and terrified by the Law on account of their sins. (See also **THE SAVIOR** and **JUSTIFICATION** below.)

(**Bible References:** I John 4:9; Eph. 2:8,9; John 3:16; I Tim. 2:4; Rom. 3:23,24; Mark 1:15; Luke 24:47; Rom. 1:16; Matt. 7:6; II Tim. 2:15; Rom. 5:1; John 14:27; Col. 1:20.)

THE SAVIOR:

We teach that Jesus Christ is not only true God, begotten of the Father from eternity and co-equal with His Father and

the Holy Spirit in every respect, but that He is also true man, conceived in the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Ghost and born in the fullness of time a true human being; that He was made man in order to redeem the world from sin; that He perfectly satisfied the demands of God's Law in man's stead (**Active Obedience**), crediting this perfect righteousness to our account with the Father; and that He bore the punishment which we deserve because of our sins by suffering and dying vicariously, that is, in our place as our Substitute (**Passive Obedience**). He rose bodily from the dead on the third day as He had promised, ascended visibly on high to reign in His exalted state, for the benefit of His Church, and will come again visibly for the second and last time at the end of the world to judge the living and the dead.

(**Bible References:** I John 5:20; Matt. 17:5; John 1:1-3,14; 10:30; Luke 1:35,38; Gal. 4:4,5; Matt. 5:17; Rom. 5:19; Is. 53:4,5; Heb. 2:9; I Cor. 15:20; Eph. 1:20-23; Phil. 2:5-11; Rev. 1:7; Matt. 25:31-46.)

JUSTIFICATION:

We teach that, because of Christ's entire work of redemption, by both His active and passive obedience, God declared all mankind righteous in His sight, not charging their sins against them, and thus, reconciled the whole world unto Himself. This judicial act of general or objective justification is proclaimed to men in the Gospel and becomes the personal property of the individual by faith in the merits of Christ--faith which simply lays hold on God's gracious forgiveness like the hand of an unworthy beggar. Only those who thus are personally or subjectively justified by faith are the saints of God.

(**Bible References:** Rom. 5:18,19; Is. 53:11; II Cor. 5:19; Rom. 3:21-24; Eph. 1:7; Rom. 4:5-8; 3:28; Acts 10:43; Gal. 3:26; Rom. 5:1.)

REPENTANCE:

We teach that true repentance consists in a person's humble acknowledgement of and heartfelt sorrow over his sins (**Contrition**), together with the sure confidence that for Christ's sake, all his sins have been forgiven (**Faith**). All who thus truly repent of their sins are assured by the Gospel of God's free and full pardon. True repentance, of course,

assumes willingness thereafter to bring forth the fitting fruits thereof.

(**Bible References:** Ps. 51:17; II Cor. 7:10; Acts 16:31; Mark 1:15; Matt. 3:8.)

SAVING FAITH:

We teach that justifying or saving faith is nothing else than confidence of the heart in the gracious promises of the Gospel. In faith the penitent sinner gratefully acknowledges and humbly clings to Jesus Christ alone as his personal Savior, disclaims any merit or worthiness of his own, and trusts the assurance of the Gospel that all who remain in this faith to their earthly end will be eternally saved. Saving faith is not a personal achievement or an act of human merit, but it is a work of the Holy Spirit of God, who works in the hearts of men through the Gospel both to <u>will</u> and to <u>do</u> of His good pleasure.

(**Bible References:** John 1:12,13; Rom. 4:20-25; 4:1-5; Gal. 3:26; Eph. 2:8,9; John 3:16; 17:3; Matt. 19:25,26; Phil. 2:13; Matt. 24:13.)

CONVERSION:

We teach that conversion is the gracious operation of God the Holy Ghost in which sinful men, recognizing from the Law of God their hopelessly lost condition, their inability to please God, and their prospect of eternal damnation because of their sins, are brought to saving faith in the Gospel. Conversion is not a mere reformation of one's conduct or character, nor one's self-determination to turn to God or to "make a decision for Christ." It is neither in whole nor in any degree whatsoever the work of man, but is solely the gracious and powerful work of God Himself, apart from any work, cooperation, right attitude, or lesser resistance on the part of man. This gracious work of the Holy Spirit, known also as <u>regeneration</u> (or "new birth"), <u>enlightenment</u>, and <u>quickening</u> is wrought in the heart of man, alone through the precious Means of Grace, specifically the Gospel and the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, and not apart from these God-ordained external means, as the "enthusiasts" (those who rely on human emotions and feelings) teach.

(**Bible References:** Col 1:12,13; Acts 26:18; II Cor. 4:6; I Pet. 2:9; Eph. 2:1; I Pet. 1:23; Tit. 3:5.)

SANCTIFICATION:

While Scripture uses the term "sanctification" in a wider sense, referring to the entire work of the Holy Ghost in the hearts of men (I Cor. 6:11), nevertheless, Scripture also speaks of sanctification in a narrower sense, namely, with reference to the Christian life. We teach that sanctification or Godly living follows justification as the result and necessary fruit of saving faith. It never precedes faith, for the Bible states plainly: **"Without faith it is impossible to please (God),"** Heb. 11:6. Sanctification, however, is not a self-produced and self-motivated process of renovation in the believer, but the creation of a new man within him who is able, by God's grace, to avoid sin and do works pleasing to God, walking in the fruits of the Spirit, moved by the Spirit, led and enabled by the Spirit of God through the Means of Grace. Good works in Christian sanctification cannot be produced by compulsion of the Law, but only by the sweet urgings of the Gospel, which remind us of God's great love for us in Christ Jesus. It is that love which "constrains" us to be rich in good works, walking in accordance with His holy Law, as evidence of our love for Him. Sanctification is progressive in the Christian, but perfection in sanctification will not be attained until he enters eternal life.

(**Bible References:** Col. 2:6; I Thess. 4:3; Matt. 5:16; I John 4:19; Rom. 6:22; 8:13,14; II Tim. 3:16,17; II Cor. 5:17; Eph. 4:24; 2:10; Rom. 12:1; 7:18-25; Phil. 1:9; 3:12-14; II Pet. 3:18; **Eph. 4:13; I John 1:8.**)

THE SACRAMENTS:

We teach on the basis of Scripture that there are only two sacred acts instituted by Christ, in which, through visible elements connected with His command and promise, He offers, gives and seals to believers the forgiveness of sins and the strength to walk in newness of life. We call these acts "Sacraments," namely, the Sacrament of Holy Baptism and the Sacrament of the Altar or the Lord's Supper.

Baptism is the divinely-instituted application of water by any convenient mode, according to Christ's command and connected with His Word. As a **"washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost"** (Titus 3), Baptism is the only Means of Grace revealed by God for little children who, like all men, are conceived and born in sin. Since they are too

young to be taught the saving Gospel, faith cannot be worked in them by telling them of Christ; but they are received into the kingdom of God's grace by the washing of Baptism, are brought to saving faith in Christ, and thereby become the children of God and heirs of eternal life. In the case of adults who are brought to faith by the hearing of the Gospel (Rom. 10:17), Baptism confirms and seals to them the blessings of the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation merited for them by Christ and apprehended by faith.

(**Bible References:** Matt. 28:19; John 3:5,6; Acts 22:16; I Pet. 3:21; Gal. 3:26,27; Mark 10:14; Matt. 18:6; Acts 2:38,39.)

The Lord's Supper is that Sacrament in which the Savior gives, in, with and under the visible elements of bread and wine, His true body and blood for the remission of sins. While all communicants receive the body and blood of Christ in the Sacrament, the Bible teaches that only true believers receive this precious food to their everlasting blessing as a visible seal of the forgiveness of sins and for strength to amend their sinful lives. Hypocrites, on the other hand, and those who are not properly prepared to partake of this Holy Sacrament, receive Christ's body and blood to their condemnation. We reject the doctrine of transubstantiation taught by the Roman Catholic Church that the visible elements of bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ by the officiant and are to be adored as such, and that the Sacrament of the Altar is a real but unbloody sacrifice of the body of Christ for the sins of the living and the dead. We also reject the Romanizing notion, taught in some Lutheran bodies, that the body and blood of Christ are present in any way apart from the eating and drinking of the consecrated elements by the communicants (Formula of Concord, Thorough Declaration, VII, Triglot, p. 1001, para 83 and 84). We also reject the Reformed teaching that the Lord's Supper is merely a memorial observance in which the body and blood of Christ are only symbolically present as representations. Communing together with one's fellow Christians serves externally as a testimony of oneness in faith and confession and a public acknowledgement that no unremoved offense exists between those who commune at the same altar.

(**Bible References:** Mark 14:22-24; I Cor. 10:16; 11:24-29; Heb. 7:27; 9:25,26; 10:14; I Cor. 10:17.)

THE CHURCH:

In Scripture, the word "church" is used in TWO different religious senses. On the one hand, it is used to designate the Communion of Saints, Christ's spiritual body, consisting of all and only true believers in Him as their Savior. Since true faith in the heart cannot be seen, the membership of this Church is invisible to men and known only to God. Hence the Communion of Saints is often called the INVISIBLE CHURCH.

(**Bible References:** Eph. 1:22,23; Col. 1:18; Eph. 2:19-22; 5:25-27; II Tim. 2:19; Luke 17:20,21.)

The Bible also uses the word "church" in speaking of local Christian congregations. This, of course, does not mean that there are two different kinds of churches; for the local congregation, as God sees it, consists only of the believers in it. But the word "church" in Scripture, also designates local congregations as MEN see them, that is, where immediate membership is determined (and can only be determined) by the profession of faith. In such VISIBLE CHURCHES or congregations there may, of course, also be hypocrites or pretend-Christians who masquerade as believers. This mixed body is the "church" with which we mortals must deal when, for example, we preach, teach, exhort, admonish and comfort. It is this church, this visible local congregation, to which the Savior refers when He says, "**Tell it unto the church,**" Matt. 18:15-17.

(**Bible References:** I Cor. 1:12; II Cor. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Matt. 13:47,48; 22:2,11; Rev. 1:11; Matt. 18:17; III John 9,10.)

According to Scripture, it is God's will and ordinance that Christians establish and maintain local churches **a)** for the regular hearing and learning of His Word as it is proclaimed by their divinely-called pastors; **b)** for the regular celebration of the Lord's Supper under the loving watchfulness of the flock's own overseer (inasmuch as the Holy Supper according to Scripture is to be celebrated only in the context of the local congregation; **c)** for the continuous exercise of the duties of Christian fellowship and love, and **d)** for the careful, evangelical exercise of church discipline in obedience to Christ's command.

(**Bible References:** Tit. 1:5; Acts 20:28; I Pet. 5:2,3; I Cor. 11:23-29; Heb. 10:23-25; Col. 3:15,16; Matt. 18:15-17.)

Scripturally speaking, therefore, the "church" in the local sense is NOT just any chance gathering of Christians, nor a gathering of Christians at different places, nor gathering of Christians without the specific and consistent public function of the Keys. (Examples of such gatherings are: Fellowship socials, ladies' societies and youth groups, summer camps, conventions, pastoral conferences, and so on.) The Church, that is, the local visible congregation) may gather together regularly and consistently in various ways for the preaching, teaching, hearing and learning of God's Word, the administration of Sacraments, and the carrying out of the business of the church including the final stage of church discipline. If such gatherings are, by their very nature, intended only for a certain group within the local congregation, such as, certain Bible classes, confirmation instruction classes, even seminary classes, or whatever other form such gatherings may take, these must not be confused or identified with the local congregation itself, neither do they in themselves constitute local congregations or churches. However, in the light of Holy Scripture, it must be understood that the Voters' Assembly, as the decision-making body within the congregation, composed only of men, is rightly called "the church" because Christ Himself has committed the leadership and decision-making power to the men of the congregation. In the local sense the word "church" is used only of the LOCAL CHRISTIAN CONGREGATION, which, in its visible form, is the only divinely-ordained external fellowship.

All other uses of the word "church" are of human origin and usage, such as the designation of a building, a denomination, a synod or conference, and a non-Christian cult (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, The Church of Christ Scientists, etc.). Synods and conferences, therefore, are not so-called "super-churches" with the combined church-power of all their member congregations, nor are they churches at all in the Scriptural usage, but are rather humanly-devised organizations OF churches, established BY local churches in their liberty for the purpose of carrying out joint endeavors and projects which may be difficult for an individual church to handle locally.

(**Bible References:** Titus 1:5; Acts 20:28; I Pet. 5:1-3; Rev. 1-3; Matt. 18:15-17; I Tim. 2:11-14; I Cor. 14:34ff.)

THE MINISTRY:

We teach in accordance with Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions that the PASTORAL OFFICE of the local congregation is the only divinely-ordained office in the Church. Synonymous terms for this office in the Scriptural usage of our orthodox fathers are: "Public Ministry," "the Ministry," "Bishop" (overseer), "Elder" -- laboring in the word and doctrine. (It is a purely human, ecclesiastical use of the term "elder" when it is applied to offices in the church other than that of the pastor; also the distinction without Scriptural basis between "ruling" and "teaching" elders as well as the hierarchal distinction between "bishops" and "local pastors." These distinctions are used to pervert the Scriptural doctrine of the ministry.) Incumbents of this sacred office must have very specific qualifications according to God's Word, among which are the requirements that they be men, properly equipped, and apt to teach, faithful in doctrine and practice, and examples to the flock, both in their own life and conduct and also that of their families.

When the Holy Spirit, through the unanimously-issued Divine Call of the local congregation, makes a man its pastor, He makes him the overseer of the work of all other offices which the congregation in its liberty may establish and of their incumbents. Thus, all other offices in the Church are auxiliary or offices of help to the office of Pastor. The congregation may in fact create or dispense with any auxiliary office through the appointment or release of their incumbents as it sees fit according to time, circumstance and need by a simple majority vote, since these are not God-ordained offices but adiaphora. (See **ADIAPHORA**, below.) But the office of PASTOR must be established in accordance with God's own ordinance through a call issued by unanimous vote of the congregation (I Cor. 1:10). Likewise, the incumbency of a man in the pastoral office may be terminated only by unanimous vote for proper Scriptural reasons, namely, persistence in false doctrine and/or practice, willful neglect of official duties, or scandalous life. Example of auxiliary officers in a local congregation are: Assistant pastors, church officers and members of committees, Sunday School teachers and Christian day school teachers, organists, directors of music, and the like.

Especially in view of their high responsibility in the

Church, pastors are cautioned in Holy Scripture not to lord it over God's heritage; for there is no difference between pastors and laymen in rank, but in office. This office is conferred upon its incumbents by the Holy Spirit of God, mediately, through the call of the local congregation. It is that call, after it has been accepted, which makes a man a Christian Pastor, and not humanly-devised albeit commendable churchly customs and ceremonies like ordination and installation.

(**Bible References:** Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:17; I Thess. 5:12,13; Acts 6:1-6; I Pet. 5:3; Matt. 23:8-10; I Tim. 3:1-7; 2:11,12; I Cor. 14:34,35; Titus 1:5-9.)

SHEEPSTEALING or PROSELYTIZING:

Sheepstealing or proselytizing is the targeting of active members of other Christian congregations for recruitment into one's own flock simply to increase its numbers, or the flagrant interference by a pastor in another pastor's flock by ministering to his sheep without his knowledge and consent (John 10:1; I Pet. 5:2; Acts 20:28; Rom. 15:20), or a coarse, unsolicited party agitation in the assembly of another congregation or among its membership (I Pet. 4:15). These unscrupulous practices are not to be confused with the proper testimony to the truth required by God's Word (Matt. 28:19,20; Mark 16:15; I Pet. 3:15,16). Accordingly any Christian pastor or laymen should confess his faith when called upon to do so or whenever proper opportunity presents itself. Out of love and concern for souls for whom the Savior died and not merely for the purpose of building a church organization or adding to one's outward membership, Christians should not hesitate to confess the truth and to give an account of their faith and to seek proper opportunity to do so. When such testimony has been made and a person becomes convinced in his own mind to join one of our congregations out of obedience to Christ's Word, this is, of course, not sheepstealing, but the result of the Holy Spirit's work through the Means of Grace (John 10:27; II Thess. 2:14; Rom. 1:16; 10:17).

PRAYER:

We teach that, while God speaks to men today through His Word, Christians speak with their heavenly Father through prayer. Prayer is an act of worship in which we bring our petitions before God and offer up praise and thanksgiving to

Him for His blessings. Christians are to pray in the Name of Jesus, that is, with faith in Him as their Redeemer, and with confidence that, for His sake, their prayers are heard and will be answered in God's own best way and time, according to His Will, and always for their spiritual and eternal welfare. Prayer is NOT a Means of Grace, nor an act by which merit or reward is earned; but it is divinely commanded and a special privilege which God has bestowed upon His children and should therefore be regularly practiced by every Christian for his own sake, for the benefit of others, and as an opportunity to thank God for His gracious blessings. Since at the time of death the souls of men are judged by God and are either immediately in heaven or in hell, it is futile and a vain use of God's Name to pray for the dead.

Since prayer is an act of worship, Christians should not engage in joint-prayer with those of a different faith or profession, lest they become guilty of the sin of religious unionism, or ecumenism contrary to the Word of God. (See also **FELLOWSHIP**, below.)

(**Bible References:** Ps. 65:2; 19:14; 50:15; I Tim. 2:1-8; I Thess. 5:17; James 1:6-8; Heb. 9:27; Phil. 4:6; Amos 3:3; Rom. 16:17.)

THE DEVIL and HELL:

We teach that powerful evil spirits called by the Bible "devils" were originally created as holy angels, but that they sinned against God, lost their blessed estate, and are forever rejected by Him. These personal spirit-beings have been condemned to spend eternity in hell, a place of unspeakable torment, everlasting regret and despair. Until the Last Day, however, the devils still move about freely in the world, endeavoring to destroy the works of God and especially to lead men to reject Jesus Christ as their Savior and so to join the ranks of the damned. Chief among these devils is Satan, also called "the devil," "Beelzebub," "the prince of darkness." When Christ died on the cross, He crushed the power of Satan to claim all mankind as His own (Gen. 3:15) and thereby enabled true Christians of all times to resist and overcome his temptations. Now only those who in unbelief reject the Savior will suffer Satan's own fate and be consigned to hell forever at the Last Day. The Scriptures teach that hell is a real place of torment and complete desertion by God from

which there is no reprieve and no escape.

(**Bible References:** Eph. 6:12; Mark 5:9; II Pet. 2:4; John 8:44; I Pet. 5:8,9; James 4:7; Jude 6; I John 3:8; Heb. 2:14; Matt. 25:41; Is. 66:24; II Thess. 1:8,9; Matt. 10:28.)

THE ELECTION OF GRACE:

We teach that God has in eternity specially elected or chosen some to eternal life. Nothing good in us, not even the fact that God foreknew our faith, but only His grace in Christ, moved Him to do this. We are to know He has elected us, that in time He has also brought us to a saving knowledge of Jesus, our Savior, sanctified our lives, still preserves us in the faith, and assures us of eternal salvation. God has elected NO ONE to damnation. This idea is completely foreign and opposed to God's own revelation of His will that ALL come to repentance and be saved eternally. Since the doctrine of election is pure Gospel, it should be used for the comfort of true believers who are troubled by their sins; but it is not to be regarded as a sort of "pillow" for the impenitent and carnally secure to sleep upon.

The Election of Grace is the CAUSE why men are brought to faith in Christ and are saved eternally. It is NOT, however, a cause why men remain unbelievers after having heard the Gospel. The Bible clearly teaches that men are lost forever because they judge themselves unworthy of everlasting life, stubbornly resist the Holy Ghost by rejecting the Gospel in unbelief, and so are damned by their own fault.

Human reason, not bound by the Word of God, considers the two doctrines of Universal Grace and the Election of Grace to be contradictory; but we must impose silence on our sin-darkened reason as being incapable in this life of completely comprehending the mysteries of God. The seeming disharmony between these Scripture truths will disappear in the perfect light of knowledge in heaven. Until that time, we must trustingly accept both teachings and not try to speculate as to how we might reconcile them according to reason.

(**Bible References:** Eph. 1:3-6; II Thess. 2:13,14; Acts 13:48; Rom. 8:28-30; Ezek. 33:11; I Tim. 2:4; I Pet. 1:1-5; II Pet. 1:3-11; 3:9; I Cor. 10:12; Acts 7:51; Matt. 23:37; I Cor. 13:12; Rom. 11:33-36.)

TEMPORAL DEATH and LIFE THEREAFTER:

We believe that temporal death is the separation of the soul from the body. At death the Christian's soul is immediately in the presence of God in the bliss of heaven, while his body is laid to rest to await the resurrection at the Last Day. Thus, for the Christian, temporal death should hold no fear; for it is the entrance of his redeemed soul into the glory purchased and won for him by his Savior.

For the unbeliever, however, the prospect of death is one of terror and dread. For at the time of death he faces the judgment of a holy and just God; and, without the righteousness of Christ to cover his guilt, he faces "**the wages of sin,**" eternal damnation in hell. Already, at the moment of death, his soul will find itself forever forsaken by God, overwhelmed by regret and despair, and consigned to everlasting torment.

At the Last Day, the souls of believers and unbelievers alike will be reunited with their bodies in the resurrection of the flesh. The believer's body will be changed and purified from all imperfections and received with the soul into everlasting glory. The unbeliever, body and soul, will be sent to spend eternity in the fires of hell. According to Scripture, the wicked will not merely be annihilated and thus be spared lengthy torment; but they will be punished with endless suffering.

(**Bible References:** Eccl. 12:7; Phil. 1:23; Luke 23:43; Rev. 14:13; Luke 16:23,24; Matt. 10:28; John 5:29; 11:24; Job 19:26,27; Phil. 3:21; I Thess. 4:14; Is. 66:24; Matt. 25:46.)

THE LAST THINGS:

We teach on the basis of clear Scripture that Christ's kingdom on earth will remain under the cross until the end of this world, that up to Christ's Second Coming spiritual conditions in the world and even in outward Christendom will grow ever worse, but that, nevertheless, true Christians are assured for their comfort that Christ, at the right hand of God, rules everything for their spiritual and eternal welfare. We hold that the time of the Last Day is and will remain unknown, and that the purpose of Christ's Second and Final Coming will be to judge the living and the dead and to receive His beloved Church into heavenly glory. This present earth and universe will be destroyed by fire.

We reject every form of Millennialism or Chiliasm (i.e. the teaching that Christ will come again to rule on earth for a thousand years) as being in direct contradiction of and opposition to God's Word, that it fosters a false conception of the true nature of Christ's kingdom, turns the hope of Christians to earthly goals, and preys upon the emotions of sincere but unwary Christians and thus deceives the hearts of the simple.

(**Bible References:** John 15:18-21; Matt. 24; Acts 14:22; John 16:33; Rom. 8:28; Acts 17:31; Mark 13:32; Matt. 25:31; II Cor. 5:10; John 14:3; 18:36; II Pet. 3:10.)

(This **Sketch of the Doctrinal Position of the Concordia Lutheran Conference** will be concluded in the next issue.)

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Around the World

with editorial comment

by M. L. Natterer

Ann Humphry's pale blue eyes betray a sense of anguish and fear as she welcomes a visitor to her rustic farmhouse in Monroe, Oregon. At age 47, facing a life-threatening disease, Ann found herself suddenly abandoned by her husband, Derek Humphry, 59, who had telephoned home during a business trip to say he was leaving her. Since the removal of a cancerous tumor from her breast last September, Ann has lost more than 20 lbs., and suffered chronic anxiety about her health. By walking out on his wife, Derek also appeared to be acting inconsistently for a man with his chosen role: he is co-founder and leader of a humane "right-to die" group dedicated to people with terminal illnesses. Ironically, Humphry's first wife, Jean, was also a victim of breast cancer and died in his arms in 1975 after she drank a cup of coffee that she knew he had laced with secobarbital and codeine to end her suffering. A year later he married Ann with whom he co-founded the Hemlock Society to crusade for voluntary euthanasia and for legislation that would allow doctors, without fear of prosecution, to assist patients who wish to commit suicide. Both Derek and Ann now seem bent on destroying each other's reputation.

Following in the footsteps of their father of all lies, the devil,

the members of the Hemlock Society set themselves up as God. What is that other than sinful pride! God has made us, giving us our bodies and souls. Since God is the Author of our life, He alone has the right to terminate it. His commandment is plain: "**Thou shalt not Kill.**" God's Word allows a life to be taken by the government or in self-defense, Rom. 13:1-4; Deut. 19:4-6. It does not, however, allow us to terminate our own lives simply because we may be afflicted with a terminal illness and do not want to endure the suffering that may be connected with it. King Saul committed suicide. His reason? He did not want to fall into the hands of the Philistines, I Samuel 31:4,5. Judas Iscariot committed suicide. Why? He was tormented with an accusing conscience for having betrayed innocent blood and had fallen into the pit of despair, Matthew 27:3-5. How different it was with Job! That sorely afflicted man did not take his own life in his pitiful condition. He declared, "**Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him**", 13:15. It is the devil who contradicts God and who seeks to destroy our trust in Him and His word which assures us of His love for us in Jesus, our dear Savior.

The slayings were horrifying - a couple and their two children bound hand and foot, shot in the back of the head, doused with gasoline and set on fire in their suburban dream house in Dryden, N.Y. The robbers took a pair of women's sneakers and some underwear, diamond earrings, a television and VCR and $200 cash. A young man and his 54- year-old mother were responsible for the crimes. "More and more we see criminals who are willing to use lethal force if necessary," said James Alan Fox, professor of criminal justice at Boston's Northeastern University. Jack Levin, a sociologist at Northeastern and co-author with Fox of a book on mass murder, said the brutality and precision of the Harris slayings suggests a killer who took pleasure in causing pain. FBI statistics show the incidence of violent crime has climbed by 18 percent during the past five years. Much of that increase is drug-related, though police say drugs apparently were not a factor in the Harris killings. Officials also blame other factors - violence on television and movies and the disintegration of societal restraints. Fox and Levin say the pop psychology messages of "guilt is bad" and "be assertive" have led to a more sociopathic society in which people feel little concern for others.

The above tragedy is multiplied many times over throughout our country as statistics verify. The complete indifference to human life and the almost unbelievable callousness on the part of those who perpetrate such violent acts certainly reveals the power of the prince of this world - the devil. For

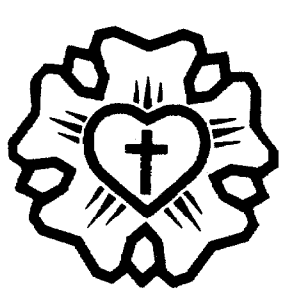
who else delights and takes such fiendish pleasure in torture and destruction! The Lord Jesus declares that the devil "**was a murderer from the beginning**", John 8:44. Now in the last evil days of the world this abominable destroyer "**must be loosed a little season**", until the Lord returns in the clouds of heaven to cast him "**into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever**", Rev. 20. The murderers display such violence because they follow in the footsteps of their father - the devil. Their lack of even natural compassion and sympathy also reveal to us that we are living in the last times because "**men shall be lovers of their own selves...without natural affection...fierce**", II Tim.3:1-4. We pray that our dear Lord Jesus would soon come and put an end to the insatiable rage and fury of this wretched foe of God and man!

In Hildale, Utah, and Colorado City, Arizona, the average man has two wives - and fifteen children. These twin towns have no hotel, one gas station and one small restaurant. Residents eye visitors warily; if you ask for directions, people stare suspiciously and refuse to answer. This isolated section is the home of a group of Mormons who claim that they are simply continuing in the teaching of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. Those who say they are happy here describe their towns as crime-free refuges for the morally upright. Others, who have become disillusioned with the group, say it is a cult, in which little girls, some as young as nine and ten, are given as rewards to men in their fifties and sixties. This sect of fundamentalists is just one of many splinter groups that broke off in 1890, believing that they must continue to live under the doctrine of plural marriage. Estimates say that there are as many as fifty thousand people living in such sects throughout the West. Although polygamy is a third-degree felony in Utah, the last time a group of polygamists was prosecuted there was in 1960, and no one was convicted.

The above account was taken from a very informative article in the Ladies Home Journal, February 1990. Why did the Mormons practice polygamy? First of all, because a revelation approving the practice was given by Joseph Smith on July 12, 1843 and which was also printed in the **Doctrine and Covenants**, one of the four sacred books of the Mormon religion. Like his predecessor, Brigham Young not only practiced polygamy - he had twenty-seven wives - but he even brazenly stated, "If any of you will deny the plurality of wives and continue to do so, I promise that you will be damned", **Journal of**

Discourses, III, Page 266. Secondly, the highest level of the Celestial Kingdom - the lower kingdoms are the Terrestrial and the Telestial - is offered only to men who have more than one wife. According to Mormon teaching the women are completely dependent upon their husbands for their salvation, since only their husbands have the authority to grant them entrance into their conception of the heavenly kingdom. A Mormon wife can only be resurrected if her husband calls her from the grave!!!

As long as the Mormons continued to practice polygamy, the United States refused to grant statehood to Utah. In 1890, however, the **practice** of polygamy was forbidden by President Wilford Woodruff's new "revelation" so that Utah could be admitted to the Union as the 45th State (Jan.4,1896).



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