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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"Hallowed be Thy Name"

--Matt. 6:9

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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 Statement 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, 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 fellowship with them.

To show that we do not have among us a mixture of divergent teachings but that we are "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

Can a Christian be perfect? There are those within visible Christendom who really believe that a Christian can attain to the state of perfection. We find such an attitude especially among the Holiness Bodies (Assemblies of God, etc.). Many within these denominations claim that once a Christian has experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit, then he is able to speak in tongues, perform healings, even attain perfection. Such a man-made doctrine of perfection is a most pernicious teaching which ultimately lands a person either in the pit of despair or in Pharisaism. Whoever honestly examines himself in the light of God's Law must observe that the Law demands more than a mere outward compliance. Such an aroused conscience makes him realize that he has not kept and cannot keep God's Law. ***"By the Law is the knowledge of sin"*** (Rom. 3:20). What often happens is that the individual who follows such a self-constructed doctrine of perfection falls into the pit of despair, believing that the Christian religion is not for him since he cannot be perfect. On the other hand, there are others who stifle their consciences and imagine that they have kept God's Law since they have not been guilty of gross sins (murder, stealing, adultery, etc.). They consider sinful thoughts as being insignificant. The Lord does not! (See Matt. 5:28 and I John 3:15) No wonder such fall into the pit of Pharisaism which declares, ***"God, I thank Thee, that I am not like other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers"*** (Luke 18:11). These are the disastrous consequences of following a doctrine which is spun out of man's puny wisdom.

To justify their teaching concerning perfection, an appeal is made to a specific Bible passage which, they hold, plainly supports their teaching. The verse is found in the 1st Epistle of John, chapter 3, verse 9: ***"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."***

"There you have it," we are told, "what further proof do you want?" Very well, let's examine this passage and allow Scripture to interpret itself. The Apostle John who wrote this passage by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit also writes in the first chapter of this same Epistle, ***"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us"*** (vv. 8-10). Now does this mean that there is a contradiction in Scripture? ***"God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar"*** (Rom. 3:4). Every true Christian has two natures: the new man which God created in him at the time of his conversion, and the old man which still clings to him. According to his new nature the Christian cannot sin ***"because he is born of God."*** According to his sinful flesh, however, he still sins. There is, therefore, a constant warfare going on within the Christian as the Apostle Paul emphasizes in his Epistle to the Romans, chapter 7, verses 14-25 and his Epistle to the Galatians, chapter 5, verses 16-18.

Look at the example of Christ's disciples. They did not attain unto perfection in their lives. The Apostle Peter attempted to walk on the water to go to Jesus, ***"but when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me."*** The Savior ***"stretched forth His hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"*** (Matt. 14:29-31). The fact that Peter was filled with great fear was an outcropping of his sinful flesh for which the Lord Jesus reprimanded him. In the 16th chapter of Matthew we hear the Savior rebuking the Apostle Peter because he was once again yielding to his sinful flesh by attempting to hinder the very purpose for which the Savior had come into the world. Turning to Peter the Lord declares, ***"Get thee behind Me, Satan: thou art an offence unto Me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men"*** (vv. 22,23). Then when we follow the Apostle Peter into the courtyard of the high priest, what do we behold? We see this disciple of Jesus surrendering to his sinful flesh and shamefully denying his Lord and Savior (Matt. 26:69-75). The other disciples were certainly not exempt from yielding to their sinful flesh. We observe the spirit of jealousy and anger manifesting itself on the part of the disciples as they argued among themselves ***"which of them should be accounted the greatest"*** (Luke 22:24) (See also Matt. 20:20-24). Remember when the Savior was in the Garden of Gethsemane? He

had asked His disciples to watch with Him, but they fell asleep. The Savior rebuked them saying, ***"Could ye not watch with Me one hour?"*** He then goes on to state, ***"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak"*** (Matt. 26:36-41). And when the disciples asked the Savior, ***"Lord, teach us to pray,"*** He taught them the Lord's Prayer which includes the petition, ***"forgive us our sins"*** (Luke 11:1-4).

What shall we say about all those admonitions in Holy Writ which are directed not to the unbelievers but to us as Christians? Read the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5-7, and note the fact that Jesus' ***"disciples came unto Him: and He opened His mouth, and taught them, saying..."*** (5:1,2) Thereupon we observe how the Savior warns His disciples and us that we must be on our guard lest we succumb to our sinful flesh. When we turn to the epistles, who can begin to count all of the admonitions aimed directly at Christians? And right here in his 1st Epistle the Apostle John writes, ***"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not"*** (2:1); ***"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world"*** (2:15); ***"And now, little children, abide in Him"*** (2:28); ***"Little children, let no man deceive you"*** (3:7); ***"My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth"*** (3:18); ***"Beloved, believe not every spirit"*** (4:1); ***"Beloved, let us love one another"*** (4:7); ***"Little children, keep yourselves from idols"*** (5:21). Why the need for such admonitions and exhortations if the Christians were perfect!

God's Word teaches us that even though we are Christians, because of our sinful flesh, we still sin in thought, word, and deed.. We must confess with the great Apostle Paul, ***"...I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do"*** (Rom. 7:14-19). This is something for which we lament and cry with the Apostle, ***"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death"*** (7:24). Were it not for the perfect obedience and sacrifice of our dear Lord Jesus Christ whose righteousness is imputed to us by faith, we would be forever lost!

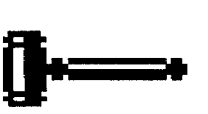
For God demands perfect obedience to His holy Law in thought, desire, word, and deed. We have no righteousness of our own, for ***"there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not"*** (Eccl.7:20). We Christians confess with the Apostle, ***"not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith"*** (Philippians 3:9).

The fact that this warfare goes on between our new nature and our sinful flesh assures us Christians that we are still the dear children of our heavenly Father through faith in Christ. Once this warfare ceases and our sinful flesh becomes our master, then we are no longer Christians but have reverted to our former condition from which God had delivered us. Therefore ***"take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin"*** (Heb. 3:12,13). And he who would seek to excuse and even justify his living in sin by stating that he has no control over his sinful flesh is surely no true Christian. ***"For sin shall not have dominion over you."*** (Rom. 6:14) The Lord has also given us His Word, ***"the Sword of the Spirit"*** that we ***"may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil"*** (Eph. 6:10-17). The believers in Christ can now declare, ***"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me"*** (Philippians 4:13). We Christians must ***"lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and...run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith"*** (Heb. 12:1,2). As good soldiers of the Lord Jesus Christ we must guard against being ensnared by the things of this world if we are to please Him who hath chosen us to be soldiers (II Tim. 2:4,5).

Like the Apostle Paul we Christians seek to forget those things which are behind and reach forth unto those things which are before, pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:13,14). Only in heaven, however, will that perfection which our first parents lost in the Garden of Eden be fully restored.

Your servant in Christ,
Pastor M. L. Natterer

CONVENTION DIGEST



MOTTO: "Hallowed Be Thy Name!" --Matthew 6:9

Appropriately named for the large tracts of native oak trees for which the area is known, the city of Oak Forest, a southern suburb near Chicago, Illinois, was the site of this year's **Forty-Second Annual Convention** of the Concordia Lutheran Conference. Hosting the convention was Peace Ev. Lutheran Church, the Rev. David T. Mensing, Pastor. Nestled among those oaks, the congregation's church building and recently-added Christian education facility provided ample room for the convention services and sessions, for the delicious meals served by the ladies, and for wholesome recreational activities during "off-hours". Guests from afar were welcomed by the members into their homes; and the loving, cheerful and generous hospitality of the local brethren contributed significantly to the success of the convention. The Convention was preceded by a two-day **Pastoral Conference** (June 22 and 23) and the annual meeting of the Conference **Board of Directors** (June 24).

The **Convention** itself opened on Friday, June 25th, with a service of convocation in which the local pastor served as liturgist and the Conference President, the Rev. Paul R. Bloedel, delivered the keynote sermon based on II Timothy 3:12-14. His theme was the exhortation: **Let Us Hallow God's Name by Continuing in the Things Which We Have Learned and Have Been Assured Of!** And, in two parts, he provided the reasons why we should do so, namely, **I. Because we should be well aware of whom we have learned them**, and **II. Because evil men and seducers will wax worse and worse**.

Following the service, the first session of the convention was called to order with a brief devotion conducted by the President. Ad hoc committees for convention business were appointed by the chair, and the initial report of the Committee on Registration and Excuses was heard to determine the proper seating of delegates. Thereafter came the Annual Report of the President, which was accepted pending the customary review by a special committee appointed by the Vice President. The Convention Agenda was then adopted with one addition: The hearing of

a report by the ad hoc **Committee to Investigate Alternative Methods of Printing the CONCORDIA LUTHERAN**. Following the report of the Press Committee, the morning session adjourned for the noon meal.

The afternoon session opened with a brief devotion conducted by Pastor Mensing of Oak Forest. This session was then highlighted by the presentation of the **Convention Essay, Part I**. The essay, delivered by the Rev. E. R. Stallings, Jr. of San Antonio, was entitled: **"The Proper Interpretation and Use of the Holy Scriptures."** He divided his paper into fifteen sections, each one setting forth a principle of Bible interpretation (hermeneutics), explaining the rule itself, and then giving one or more practical examples of how the principle is applied. The principles were selected and adapted from Dr. Ludwig Fuerbringer's classic classroom text on Theological Hermeneutics used still today in our own seminary program. (The entire essay will be serialized in the CONCORDIA LUTHERAN so that our people can make use of these fine principles in their own Bible study.) Before the afternoon recess, several recommendations from the Board of Directors were presented and acted upon by the delegates.

Following the recess, the **Treasurer's Report** concerning the past fiscal year was heard and adopted, as was also the **Initial Report of the Finance Committee** with its proposed budget for fiscal year 1993-94. Thereafter came the **Report of the Editorial Committee** concerning primarily the production of the CONCORDIA LUTHERAN; the **Report of the Publishing House Board of Control** charged with the printing of all official Conference publications; the **Report of the Business Manager of SCRIPTURAL PUBLICATIONS**, consisting mainly of his financial report for the fiscal year; and the **Report of the Special Ad Hoc Committee to Investigate Alternative Methods of Printing the CONCORDIA LUTHERAN** which updated the convention on the new system in which our official organ is now being computer-generated almost exclusively and is being typeset on a laser printer. Also heard on Friday afternoon was the **Report of the Committee on Missions**, which included a subsidy request from our sister congregation in Wilmot, South Dakota. Details of all these reports, as well as the reports themselves in their entirety, will be found in the convention PROCEEDINGS, to be published later this year.

The Saturday morning sessions were opened with a devotion conducted

by Pastor Mark Dierking of Wilmot, whereupon Pastor Stallings continued the presentation of his essay. The essay throughout was interspersed with lively discussion from the floor, indicating that the practical nature of the topic was greatly appreciated by all in attendance. The essay continued even after the mid-morning recess, and the **Report of the Committee on Theological Education** was postponed to Sunday afternoon to accommodate this.

The afternoon session began with a devotion conducted by Pastor Stallings. There followed then the **Report of the Committee on Lutheran Union** concerning our efforts to seek out others who truly share our Scriptural position; the report of the Committee to Review the President's Annual Report; and the report of the convention's Auditing Committee which had examined the books of both the Conference Treasurer and the Business Manager of "Scriptural Publications". Also heard was an updated report of the **Finance Committee** concerning its budget proposal, incorporating into it the latest information on anticipated receipts and expenditures. And Mr. Ray Kusumi reported on the **1992-93 Conference Statistics**.

Thereafter, the **Election of Officers and Standing Committees** yielded the following results:

PRESIDENT: Pastor M. L. Natterer
VICE PRESIDENT: Pastor Mark W. Dierking
SECRETARY: Pastor David T. Mensing
TREASURER: Mr. Victor K. Bloedel

BOARD MEMBERS-AT-LARGE:
Midwest: Mr. David A. Steinke
Far West: Mr. Raymond S. Kusumi

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:
Pastor Stallings, Editor; Pastor Dierking, Asst. Editor; and Mr. John Steinke.

COMMITTEE ON THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION:
Pastor Bloedel, Chairman; Pastor Mensing; Mr. Ray Kusumi; and Mr. Phillip Martin.

COMMITTEE ON MISSIONS:

Pastor Stallings, Chairman; Pastor Redlin;
Mr. Dan Bloedel; Mr. Phil Martin; and
Mr. John Steinke.

COMMITTEE ON LUTHERAN UNION:

Pastor Dierking, Chairman; Pastor Mensing;
Pastor Bloedel; and Mr. Lloyd D. Martin.

FINANCE COMMITTEE:

Mr. Victor Bloedel, Chairman;
Mr. John Steinke; Mr. Phillip Martin; and
Mr. Mark Natterer.

PUBLISHING HOUSE BOARD OF CONTROL:

Pastor Stallings, Chairman; Pastor Mensing;
Mr. Phillip Martin; Mr. David Steinke; and
Mr. John Steinke.

At the Sunday morning service, the host pastor again served as liturgist, and Pastor David G. Redlin of Tucson preached the sermon on Matthew 6:9, the **Convention Motto: "Hallowed Be Thy Name!"** which was also the sermon's theme. It contained two parts, following the presentation of the First Petition in our Catechism, namely, **I. How is God's Name hallowed?** and **II. How is God's Name profaned?** Delegates and visitors from the congregations of our fellowship then partook of the Lord's Supper together as guests of Peace Congregation -- for the remission of their sins, for the strengthening of their faith, and in testimony of their blessed unity in the Word of their Savior.

After a sumptuous dinner served by the ladies of the host congregation, sessions reconvened with a devotion conducted by Pastor Natterer of Lebanon, Oregon. The first order of business was to hear the remaining portion of Pastor Stallings' essay in which he covered Principles #9-15 governing the interpretation and use of Scripture and read a special concluding section. The essay was adopted pending final review by the praesidium before its publication in the PROCEEDINGS.

After a brief recess, the remainder of the session was taken up with the

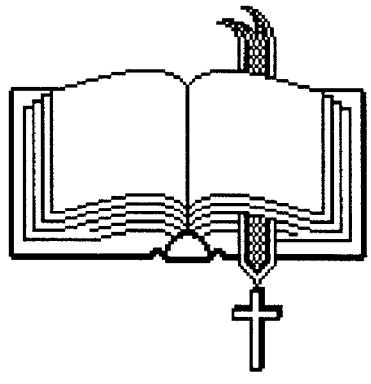
Report of the Committee on Theological Education, highlighting the pressing need for future pastors in our beloved conference and our efforts to prepare well-trained candidates for this holy office; also the final adoption of the **1993-94 Budget** with projected expenditures of $19,525.00; the final report of the Committee on Registration and Excuses; and the report of the Resolutions Committee, which had drafted the customary resolutions of thanks. **Time and place of the 1994 Convention** was determined as the convention accepted the kind invitation of St. John's Lutheran Church in Lebanon to host the 43rd Annual Convention on June 24, 25 and 26 in the beautiful Willamette Valley of Oregon--at "strawberry time". Finally, after approval of the minutes of the Sunday sessions, the Convention adjourned just prior to the scheduled supper hour with the customary closing devotion conducted by the new President, Pastor M. L. Natterer. All in all, it had been a most brotherly and fruitful meeting; and the delegates and visitors returned to their respective homes and congregations edified by the Spirit and determined by God's grace to hold fast to His Word in its truth and purity and with His help to live according to it, to the hallowing and to the glory of His holy Name.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. David T. Mensing, Secretary

(The following is the first segment of a serialized presentation of this year's Convention essay.)

The Proper Interpretation and Use of the Holy Scriptures



(Presented to the 42nd Annual Convention of the Concordia Lutheran Conference, held at Peace Ev. Lutheran Church, Oak Forest, IL
June 25-27, 1993)

Introduction

The subject of this essay, The Proper Interpretation and Use of the Holy Scriptures, by its very nature is crucial to true Christian theology. Unless the Bible is properly interpreted, the Word of God in its truth and purity actually and really cannot be taught and practiced. If the Bible is not being interpreted properly, then at the very least false doctrines will be promulgated, and the Gospel and justification will be distorted. Ultimately and at worst the Gospel and justification will be denied. Therefore, even in those denominations and church groups which publicly and officially confess the Bible to be the Word of God, in most cases, the Word of God and the Gospel in particular are not actually being taught, at least not in their truth and purity.

Today, not only the Roman Catholics and the Protestant bodies do not teach the Bible properly, but sadly most of so-called Lutheranism is not teaching the Word of God. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (E.L.C.A.), the largest Lutheran synod in the world, cannot possibly interpret and properly use the Holy Scriptures because this body no longer believes the Bible to be in all its words and parts the inerrant Word of God. As soon as the inerrancy and the divine authority of the Scriptures are denied, any interpretation of the Bible is strictly human and no longer God's own. In fact, once the inerrancy of the Bible is denied, there is no need for hermeneutics or rules of interpretation. Interpretation is left to the whim of every man's reason. Should a correct

and true interpretation of a particular doctrine result, it would result purely by chance or coincidence. Hence even fundamental doctrines are sure to be denied.

Witness what is being taught in the E.L.C.A. today. Most, repeat, **most**, of their seminary professors and a large number of their pastors deny the very bodily resurrection of Christ. Therefore, according to what we all hear in our churches each Easter, namely, ***"If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins"*** (I Cor. 15:17), is what now exists in the E.L.C.A. These E.L.C.A. professors and the pastors they train are no longer Christian teachers. If the people believe what their pastors are teaching, their faith is also vain and they are yet in their sins! To deny the resurrection of Christ is to deny the entire Christian faith.

But where did this shocking denial begin? It began with the denial of the fact that the Bible is the fully inspired, inerrant Word of God. Without question, what the Apostle Paul prophecied in II Timothy 4:3-4 has come to pass. Paul prophesied, ***"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."*** The E.L.C.A. would bring no more harm to its people if its pastors were to read and teach from Aesop's Fables. In fact, if they would just tell their people that fables are being taught, at least the people would not be deceived. However, by disguising fables as the Word of God, the people are being deceived unto their very damnation. Either way, God's condemnation rests upon them. Jeremiah 23:32 says, ***"Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the Lord, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the Lord."***

However, even orthodox Christians must never rest on their laurels. Even we who believe and confess the Bible to be God's fully inspired, inerrant Word must always carefully and painstakingly be sure that we apply the proper principles or rules of Bible interpretation. While this is absolutely essential for pastors and teachers of the Word, it is also important for our lay people. Not only when our pastors prepare sermons and Bible Classes, but also when our lay people read their Bibles privately or conduct family devotions or witness their faith to

others, their knowing and applying of at least the basic rules of Bible interpretation are highly important. For this reason our essay has an ever significant and ever current practical value for all of us.

Because the basic rules of interpreting the Bible are not the product of development by man, but are inherent in the Scriptures themselves, there is nothing in this essay which is intended to be original or innovative. Instead, this essay will treat the already proven and demonstrated principles of Bible interpretation which have been drawn from the Scriptures. However, these principles have also been collated and concisely set forth in textbooks and classroom teaching outlines. One such textbook which has been used in our Conference seminary hermeneutics classes is THEOLOGICAL HERMENEUTICS by Dr. Ludwig Fuerbringer. This is the standard outline for the seminary classroom. Without apology this essay will often refer to the outline of this text which sets forth 44 principles. Due to the limitation of space in a convention essay, this present essay will not cover specifically and in detail every hermeneutical principle set forth in Fuerbringer's text. Yet because the principles of hermeneutics are interrelated and in some cases overlapping, those principles considered in this essay will virtually cover in some respect all the principles. In fact, some of the principles and rules in Fuerbringer's outline are sub-principles and correlatives to major principles. Of the principles selected, we will do two things: 1) state and explain the principle or rule of interpretation, and 2) cite one or more practical examples of how to apply the principle. One further comment: usually our convention essays are divided into three parts, one part for each day of the convention. Due to the nature of this essay, there are no specific parts. However, under God's blessing, hopefully we will be able to cover the first 1/3 of the material on day one, the second 1/3 on day two, etc.

Before we consider specific rules of hermeneutics, we should have a common understanding of what is meant by the word, hermeneutics. Fuerbringer defines the term as follows: "Biblical or theological Hermeneutics...is the name applied to that branch of theology in which the principles and rules are set forth by means of which we may discover the true sense of Scripture and give a correct exposition of the meaning which the Holy Spirit has laid down in the words of Scripture. The name 'hermeneutics' is derived from hermeneuein, to explain, expound, interpret, translate." (Fuerbringer, Page 1)

We now consider the chief principles or rules of hermeneutics or Bible interpretation. The numbering and sequence, and in some cases even the wording, are those of the essayist.

Principle #1: **To be a faithful theologian or Bible interpreter, a person "must be truly enlightened by the Spirit of God and be a true Christian at heart." (Fuerbringer, Page 3).** (Note: We can judge another only by his confession or teaching.)

For a person to be a faithful interpreter of the Bible, he himself must be a spiritual person who can discern spiritual things. Scripture itself sets forth this principle. I Corinthians 2:14 says, ***"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."*** The Psalmist says, ***"Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."*** (Psalm 119:18) Again, Paul says, ***"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."*** (II Cor. 4:6) From this we can determine that one reason some teachers teach false doctrine is that they simply do not believe. They are not in fact Christians. Their hearts have not been converted and enlightened by the Holy Ghost. The Law of God has not crushed their self-righteous unbelief and pride so as to enable them to see their sins and the need to repent and to trust in the merits of Christ for the forgiveness of sins.

A few years ago a pastor in the former Lutheran Church in America (L.C.A.), Rev. J. Kincaid Smith, an avowed and unabashed liberal who championed the liberalism of the old L.C.A., met with a conservative pastor, and during their series of meetings, he, by his own admission and confession, realized on the basis of Scripture that he had not been a true Christian. By God's grace he repented and by the power of the Gospel became a true Christian. He now belongs to a conservative Lutheran body albeit, and unfortunately, not fully orthodox. Nevertheless, his own testimony bears out that one cannot accept the Bible as the very Word of God nor even begin to interpret Scripture properly unless and until he first possesses saving faith.

With respect to this principle that a true exegete must be a converted Christian, there is certainly a practical application of this principle in our own dealings with unbelievers. We cannot expect them in their unbelief to respect and accept the Bible as the Word of God. Not until and unless they are converted by the Word to faith in Christ will they respect the Scriptures as God's Word. Instead of demanding from an unbeliever that he give unqualified acceptance of the Bible as the Word of God, we must first **USE** the Word, the sword of the Spirit, that is, speak Law and Gospel, to bring the person to repentance and faith in Christ. When by the grace of God and the power of the Gospel in the Word such a person believes, he will at that time recognize and accept the Bible as God's Word. Faith in Christ and acceptance of the Bible as God's Word go hand in hand.

Principle #2: The interpreter operates with the true conviction and belief that the Bible is truly the inspired, infallible Word of God.

Under Fuerbringer's point #2, he explains in an explanatory note, "the exegete must accept the Biblical doctrine of inspiration, of the inerrancy of Scripture, and of the divine origin of its contents." (Page 1) The true interpreter recognizes and believes the Bible to be the Word of God set forth in human language. ***"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God."*** (II Tim. 3:16) ***"Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."*** (II Peter 1:21) ***"Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual."*** (I Cor. 2:13) From this we are to understand that every thought, every statement, even every word of Scripture, is God's very own. How significant that the Greek word, theopneustos, which our English Bible translates, ***"by inspiration of God,"*** literally means God-breathed. The words and statements of the Bible are the very breath of God!

In this respect, a person interpreting the Bible realizes that whatever is written in the Scriptures is divine truth. Christ says, ***"Thy Word is truth."*** (John 17:17) Therefore, even when the Bible sets forth something contrary to natural reason, against logic, or contrary to our human experience and observation, we accept it as true simply because we know that God Himself has declared these things. As Christ says,

"The Scripture cannot be broken." (John 10:35) Therefore, when God's Word addresses matters which involve history, science, geography, biology, astronomy, etc., what it says is true even though the aforementioned systems or disciplines of man do not arrive at the same conclusions as those of the Scriptures. Man's reason, experience, or testing do not establish whether or not what Scripture says is true. What Scripture says is true because our holy, infallible, righteous God has spoken it.

Therefore, because contemporary science endorses the anti-Scriptural theory of evolution does not mean evolution must be accepted. Science is not in itself an absolute authority, and in matters spiritual and divine it is no authority at all. Science in its purest sense is a human, finite discipline of observation and examination of humanly collected data. It is limited to that which is temporal and finite. It can only prove or disprove what man is capable of proving or disproving. In fact, some things which belong even to the natural realm are still beyond scientific explanation and observation. Man has not yet nor ever will be able to explain many of the mysteries of the oceans and the mysteries of the heavenly bodies. Therefore, when science delves into the realm of the supernatural, when it delves into the untestable workings of the Triune God, it must acknowledge that it is not equipped nor qualified to make assessments. Science, because it is a human discipline, has no authority in matters spiritual and supernatural. On the other hand, because Scripture is the Word of God, it is of divine authority, and by that very fact possesses authority over all the disciplines of man. Science must bow to Scripture, not Scripture to science. God says in Isaiah 55:8-9, ***"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."***

It should be quite evident how important this principle is for our children. If our children attend public schools which teach ungodly theories and these theories are presented as if they are facts, our children need to be reminded over and over again that the Bible is the fully inspired, infallible Word of God. It does not err. No matter what the textbooks say, and no matter what the teachers teach which is contrary to the Bible, it is not the Bible that is in error. ***"The Scripture cannot be broken."*** (John 10:35)

Principle #3: Based on the fact that the Bible is the verbally inspired, inerrant Word of God, the most fundamental rule of Bible interpretation is that Scripture interprets Scripture (Scriptura Scripturam interpretatur).

Scripture possesses its own "built-in" interpretation. Put another way, Scripture interprets itself. It is self-interpreting. In this regard, neither private interpretation, human reason, nor other sources outside of Scripture are a norm of interpretation. II Peter 1:21 says, ***"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation."*** Yet a traditional hermeneutic of conservative Baptists is the supposed absolute right of every Christian to exercise private interpretation. For this reason we hear Baptist ministers and laymen say such things as, "What this passage means to me is this...," or "God has led me to believe that this verse is saying..." (a direct revelation sometimes implied). Yet neither a Church, a church council, a pastoral conference, a pastor, nor any individual serves as judge or interpreter of Scripture. Taken to its extreme, private interpretation of Scripture can result in cultism on the order of the Branch Davidians who were burned up in fire in Waco, Texas. Their self-proclaimed messianic leader, David Koresh, made himself the authoritative interpreter of Scripture. Allegedly he was working on his inspired explanation of the seven seals in Revelation when he and his blind followers died.

Yet there is a lesson here for each of us. Because we have an Old Adam, a sinful nature, which is naturally impressed with itself, we are tempted to want to insist on some personal, private interpretation of this or that passage in the Bible. The power of such a natural fascination for our own views and opinions must never be underestimated. By nature we all like to think we have some special insight into God's Word. Luther labeled all who operated by personal feelings and private interpretation as "enthusiasts." Yet whatever our supposed insight might conclude, if it does not conform with the Bible's own interpretation, it must be condemned as coming from the devil. Paul the Apostle says, ***"Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."*** (II Cor. 10:5)

Principle #4: The doctrines of the Bible are based on clear texts or sedibus doctrinae. ("All doctrines of faith and all rules of life are revealed in clear terms." Fuerbringer, Pages 15-16)

Every doctrine or teaching set forth in the Scriptures rests upon clear and certain texts which we call sedibus doctrinae. This means that a doctrine rests upon a passage or passages of Scripture which are so unmistakably clear that even a child of normal intelligence can understand it. ***"Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."*** (Psalm 119:105) ***"The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple."*** (Psalm 119:130) Luther once warned, "I beg and warn most faithfully every pious Christian not to be offended at the simple speech and narrative which he will frequently meet with; let him not doubt, no matter how simple it appear, that these are nothing but words, works, judgments, and narratives of the divine majesty, omnipotence, and wisdom. For this is the Scripture, which makes fools of all the wise and prudent and is open alone to the lowly and simple, as Christ Himself says in Matt. 11,25. Therefore give up your pride and haughty spirit and regard Scripture as the greatest and most precious sanctuary and the richest mine, which can ever be exhausted, in order that you may find the divine wisdom, which God here presents so plainly and simply that He may quench our pride." (Mueller, J.T., Christian Dogmatics, pp. 98-99, from St.L., XIV, 3 f.)

As an example of a doctrine resting upon a sedes, consider the doctrine of the Virgin Birth of Christ. It rests on clear and unmistakable passages in both the Old and New Testaments. Isaiah 7:14 says, ***"Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call his name, Immanuel."*** Then in the New Testament we read in Matthew 1:23, ***"Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us."*** Further supporting this clear teaching are additional and equally clear texts. After Mary had declared to the angel Gabriel, ***"How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?"***, Gabriel replied, ***"The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."*** (Luke 1:35) Then in Matt. 1:20 the angel of the Lord said to Joseph, ***"for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost."***

Let it be made clear that any text, verse, or passage of Scripture which is a sedes doctrinae, cannot and must not be variously interpreted. A sedes, because it is a sedes, has no exegetical or hermeneutical problems. Should a particular passage be posited as a sedes, but contain exegetical or interpretative difficulties, such interpretative difficulties would immediately disqualify such a passage from being a sedes. Again, sedibus are clear, indisputable texts of the Bible. In short, there can be no disagreement or difference of opinion on what a sedes says and teaches. Where there is disagreement on a sedes, there is no unity of faith, but a breach in fellowship.

Principle #5: Mere Biblical examples without a supporting sedes do not establish nor disestablish doctrine. (Exception: The perfect example of Christ)

Under this principle, we must recognize, for example, that the actions and deeds of the Old Testament patriarchs or even the New Testament saints are not, simply because they were godly persons or simply because their actions are recorded in the Bible, norms or standards of godly conduct. The incest, the adultery, the fornication, or other aberrations from either the Law of God or an institution of God practiced or committed by some of the patriarchs do not constitute a Biblical sanction or a norm. Clear passages, foundation passages, those passages which set forth a Law of God, a doctrine, or an institution of God, must stand despite a host of examples to the contrary.

For example, in our dealings with the pastors of the Lutheran Churches of the Reformation (L.C.R.), we learned that they defend the practice of pastors holding down secular employment, that is, holding a job in addition to their work as called pastors. The men of the L.C.R. cited the example of the Apostle Paul working as a tent-maker. Yet Paul himself declares in I Corinthians 9:14, ***"Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel."*** This sedes sets forth the principle. That Paul worked as a tent-maker did not undermine nor even set aside the principle. Paul was a special case. Paul explains in I Corinthians 9:12, ***"Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ."*** In Paul's case, he refrained from taking a salary or some form of formal support to silence and defuse the charges of those who sought

to discredit his ministry. Indeed, that Paul was a traveling Apostle and not a resident pastor of a flock, would also have made it virtually necessary that he also work as a tent-maker. It was dictated by the special and unique duties and circumstances of his apostleship.

However, there is an exception to the rule that examples do not establish doctrines. The exception to this rule are the examples or actions of Christ. Christ, ***"who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth,"*** is ever the perfect example of righteousness in all things. We are even called upon ***"to follow His steps."*** (I Peter 2:21) Therefore, when Christ submitted to an oath under the high priest, Caiaphas, His submission to a governmental oath can be cited as a proof text that we may and should, under the Fourth Commandment, and without violating the Second Commandment, submit to such oaths. Therefore, the example of Christ may be set forth as sedibus doctrinae without supporting passages, but the example of men may not.

Principle #6: The less clear and the obscure texts of the Bible must be interpreted in the light of the clear texts, the analogia fidei (the analogy of faith).

With every doctrine resting upon clear and unmistakable texts, no verse or passage may be interpreted in such a way that it contradicts an individual sedes, nor its parallel passages. For example, it is the clear teaching of Scripture that salvation is by grace alone without our works. ***"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast."*** (Eph. 2:8-9) ***"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us."*** (Titus 3:5) Therefore, when Philippians 2:12 says, ***"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling"***, it cannot mean you must work for or earn your own salvation with fear and trembling. The doctrine of grace as set forth by its sedibus forbids such an interpretation. What, then, does Philippians 2:12 mean? It means that the saved person, the person who is already justified by grace through faith, is to live out or exercise out his faith with fear and trembling. He is not to trifle with God's grace by falling into a false and carnal security.

Mention was made earlier of the Book of Revelation. This prophetic book of the New Testament contains many difficult symbolisms and truly dark passages. Some of its symbolisms will not be clearly understood until we get to heaven. Yet, no doctrine is taught in Revelation which is not also clearly taught in the rest of Scripture. Hence, as one of our older Lutheran theologians once wrote, the Book of Revelation must be interpreted with the rest of Scripture, and not the rest of Scripture interpreted by the Book of Revelation. This is just another way of stating that the Book of Revelation, largely a book of many difficult and dark passages, must be understood in the light of the clear texts of the Bible, the analogy of faith.

With respect to the less clear texts being interpreted by the clear texts, Fuerbringer adds a significant note. He says, "In accordance with this general rule we must expound the Old Testament in the light of the New Testament, the New Testament being the clearer portion of Holy Writ." (Fuerbringer, Page 16) In exercising this principle, we derive from the New Testament that the Old Testament Ceremonial Laws no longer exist since what they prefigured was fulfilled in Christ. As Paul says in Colossians 2:16-17, ***"Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ."*** Therefore, in exercising this principle, we avoid the error of the Seventh Day Adventists who still observe the seventh day, Saturday, as a Sabbath. From the New Testament we learn that since Christ fulfilled what the Sabbath stood for, a Sabbath no longer exists. Neither Saturday nor Sunday is a Sabbath. Likewise, the Old Testament restriction on eating certain meats has been abolished. Furthermore, the Old Testament civil laws under which God placed the Old Testament nation of Israel no longer exist.

Principle #7: For a proper interpretation of Holy Scripture, context must be observed.

This principle is a universal principle of all literature which must be employed in the reading or interpreting of any written materials, whether it be Scripture or the writings of men. Yet because the spiritual and eternal welfare of souls are at stake in the interpreting of Scripture, the adhering to and honoring of context is all the more imperative.

Fuerbringer's Principle #26 says, "Every exposition of a word or of an entire passage must agree with the context. (Luther, VIII, 380f.)" (Fuerbringer, Page 14)

Usually we speak of the close or immediate context and the distant or wider context. The immediate context is what is written immediately preceding and/or following the text under consideration. The wider context may be the entire chapter or a section of chapters which form the entire subject or discussion of which the specific text is a part. The wider context also may be the entire Epistle or book from which the text is taken. In fact, the wider context may be the entire Old Testament or the entire New Testament. In other words, in which Testament the passage is found may also be a determining factor in gaining the correct Scriptural interpretation.

A classic example of honoring context is the ages old allegation of a contradiction between Paul and James. When Romanists refer to James 2:14, ***"What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?"*** they cite this as proof that justification is not by faith alone, but by faith plus works. Yet we know that James cannot be used against Paul's teaching in Romans 3:28, ***"Therefore a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law."*** Here the context of the Book of James as a whole is one which treats of sanctification, and not justification. In James the subject of the entire epistle is the sanctified life which is to flow from justifying faith. James warns against a mere head-faith which is nothing but a dead faith. Yet, it should be mentioned that even in James 2 where James appears to say that justification is by faith and works, there is a clear reference to justification by faith alone. After James says, ***"Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?"***, the succeeding verses clarify the matter. Verses 22-23 say, ***"Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham BELIEVED God, and IT*** *(his faith)* ***was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God."*** Thus, even James informs us that Abraham's faith was imputed for righteousness or justification. In no way does James actually teach that a sinner is justified by works in the sight of God. The context helps to clarify this fact.

Principle #8: Since the Holy Scriptures were recorded in human language, the basic rules of language and grammar must be followed, and this principle must be honored regardless of the language in which a particular version or translation may be written.

First of all, since the Bible is God's Word in human language, the Bible is a written document which was written in the dominant language or languages at the time of their being written. The original manuscripts of the Bible were written chiefly in Hebrew and Greek. The Old Testament was written primarily in Hebrew, but with some Aramaic which is a derivative of Hebrew. The New Testament was written primarily in Greek with some portions also being written in Aramaic. We no longer possess any of the original manuscripts of either Testament. Nevertheless, faithful copies of manuscripts, copies of faithful copies, and faithful translations from faithful copies have been preserved by the providence of God so that even to this day we still have God's Word. The lack of the original manuscripts does not equal the loss of the Word of God. Likewise, the process of translation in and of itself does not destroy God's Word, although bad translations, wittingly or unwittingly, may deny or weaken specific doctrines. For example, the Revised Standard Version (RSV) translates Isaiah 7:14, ***"Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call his name Immanuel,"*** as "Behold, a young woman shall conceive and bear a son..." This is a nullifying of the Virgin Birth of Christ. Hence poor or even bad translation takes away God's Word to the extent that it alters or denies a doctrine. However, for our assurance and comfort, and in accord with Christ's promise, ***"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away"*** (Matt. 24:35), we today, in spite of poor translation, despite erroneous copying and other human failings, still have the Word of God. In keeping with this promise of our Saviour, no doctrines have actually been lost. Even in bad translations where a doctrine is denied in one place, the same doctrine is upheld in another place where the translation did not affect the doctrine. Even in a Catholic Bible the way of salvation is still preserved. Of course, this does not mean that we are to be careless in our acceptance of various translations. It remains our duty to have and to retain the best version. It is surprising, although perhaps not too surprising, that the Wisconsin Synod (WELS) has accepted and endorsed the New International

Version (NIV) which has incorporated many Reformed doctrine biases and which frankly contains poor and even erroneous renderings of important passages.

However, whether we are dealing with extant copies of manuscripts in the original languages or with translations and copies of translations, it still remains that the Bible interpreter must follow the rules of language and grammar. The classic example from the days of the Reformation is found in Luther's dealings with Zwingli on the Lord's Supper. In his efforts to deny the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the Sacrament, Zwingli made Christ's words, ***"This is my body,"*** to say, "This represents my body." This was Zwingli's famous alleosis or substitution of the word, represents, for the word, ***"is."*** However, Luther, in following the proper rules of language and grammar insisted that the copula, ***"is,"*** can ever and only in any language mean **IS**. In any language, ***"is"*** can only mean ***"is,"*** and can never mean "represents." As Luther stated, to make ***"is"*** mean anything other than ***"is"*** would do violence to all language.

Under this principle that the Bible must be interpreted according to sound rules of grammar, this is an appropriate place to distinguish between two historically different schools or philosophies of Bible interpretation. One is the Historico-Grammatical Method of Bible interpretation, and the other is the Historical-Critical Method. Theological liberals, that is, false teachers of a liberal persuasion employ what is called "The Historical-Critical Method." This school of interpretation makes use of the historical, scientific, linguistic, and cultural background of Bible times, not as handmaids or instrumental aids in Bible interpretation, but as norms whereby the meaning and sense of the Bible text are made to conform with outside sources. Such a method of Bible interpretation is sometimes called, The Higher Critical Method. It is a method of interpretation which is in fact critical of the Bible. Essentially it edits the Bible on the basis of strictly human and rationalistic principles. It treats the Bible as if it were no different than any other literary document. It is not accepted as the divinely inspired, inerrant Word of the Almighty God. It strips way all that is supernatural or miraculous. By means of the Historical-Critical Method, the parting of the Red Sea, Jonah being swallowed by a large fish, and the miracles of Christ did not happen. Also, according to Higher Critics, Paul's instruction, ***"But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority***

over the man, but to be in silence" (I Tim. 2:12) is a mere culturally conditioned prohibition which simply reflects the mores of ancient society. As such, Paul's instruction is not to be taken as doctrine and a permanently binding injunction to be followed in the Church for all times. Yet Paul's injunction that a woman neither teach nor usurp authority over the man is a doctrine which Paul anchors into the created orders of Genesis 1 and 2 and the order of the Fall. Paul says, ***"For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression."*** (I Tim. 2:13-14)

Here we should also be somewhat familiar with another element of the Historical-Critical Method. Higher critics speak of the JEDP theory. These letters stand for supposed authors or literary sources of the Old Testament, especially the supposed authors of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. We know from Scripture that Moses wrote the Pentateuch. Yet according to the JEDP theory, certain differing writing styles exist in the Pentateuch which allegedly imply that Moses could not have been the sole author. These critics claim that the writing styles of the Jehovist(J) writer, of the Elohist(E) writer, of the Deuteronomist(D) writer, and of the Priestly(P) writer are found throughout the Old Testament, and that many of these literary and stylistic differences are found in the Pentateuch. Therefore, according to the JEDP theory the Mosaic authorship of the first five books of the Bible cannot stand. In most cases the unknown authors (JEDP) are supposed to have lived later than Moses and this factor would also rule out the Mosaic authorship of Genesis through Deuteronomy. Such late dating of the Biblical books is a common methodology of Higher Critics. For example, Higher Critics have ever held that the Book of Isaiah was not written in the Eighth Century B.C. They also allege that the Book of Isaiah has two authors. Even those critics who allow that Isaiah wrote chapters 1-39, do not believe he wrote chapters 40-66. Rather, a supposed second Isaiah (Deutero-Isaiah) wrote chapters 40-66.

In contrast, conservative Bible interpreters employ the "Historico-Grammatical Method." Under this method historical, linguistic, geographical, and cultural information are not ignored, but they are not used to criticize, edit, and deny what the Holy Ghost has in fact said through the holy writers. Under the "Historico-Grammatical Method," the rules of grammar and language are carefully observed, and valid historical, geographical, and cultural data are taken into consideration.

Yet the intent and purpose of the Historico-Grammatical method is to discover what Scripture itself actually says, and not what harmonizes with philosophy and other secular beliefs. Furthermore, under the Historico-Grammatical method, the prophetic and apostolic authorship of the books of the Bible are upheld, and they are upheld as having been written when they were actually written.

--ERS

To be be continued...

CORRECTION

In the January--February, 1993 issue (Vol. XXXVIII Nos. 1 & 2), the first sentence of the second paragraph on page 7 which reads *"Orthodox theologians of all major religious groups interpret the Biblical account literally."* should read *"All theologians who accept the Bible to be the verbally inspired Word of God interpret the Biblical account literally."*

Organizers of a march of homosexual men and women and their supporters claim they had 1.1 million at their march on Sunday, April 25 in Washington, D.C. The U.S. Park Police estimate that some 300,000 people took part in the march. The St. Louis Post Dispatch reported that "Many religious faiths were represented in the march - including Lutherans, Presbyterians, American Baptists, United Methodists, Unitarians, Mormons and Jews." The Washington Blade reported that Evangelical Lutheran Church in America clergywomen Barbara Lundblad of New York City, a member of ELCA's Church Council, who had been supported by many in ELCA for the position of head Bishop of ELCA, was to preach at a service of Holy Communion for homosexuals and lesbians on April 24 at Reformation Lutheran Chruch in Washington, D.C. In 1988 Lundblad preached at a joint ELCA-LCMS Reformation Worship Service in Washington. Reformation Lutheran is a member of ELCA. First Trinity in Washington, D.C. is a member of both ELCA and The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Trinity has also supported the homosexual cause and allows homosexuals to commune. (Christian News, May 3, 1993)

The Word of God tells us that *"righteousness exalteth a nation"* (Prov.14:34), not the abominable unnatural perverseness of homosexuality! The brazen shameless conduct of these perverts was openly displayed by many indecent and obscene acts in this parade. This event was endorsed by "Rev." Jesse Jackson, Sharon Kelly, the mayor of Washington, D.C., and Phil Donahue, the TV talk-show-host, who brazenly declared that people in America should get over the idea that sodomy is a sin. Let anyone examine history and he will inevitably find that when a nation has openly tolerated every kind of sexual deviation imaginable and not upheld marriage and the family, that nation simply will not endure. For Christians the answer is crystal-clear. **The Word of our God declares that *"abusers of themselves with mankind ...shall not inherit the kingdom of God"* (I Cor. 6:9; see also Romans 1:26-29). Unrepentant homosexuals will be cast into hell in spite of the false comfort given them by so-called Christian leaders. And those "Lutheran pastors and teachers" who endorse the abominable sinful life-style of the homosexuals disgrace the name and work of Martin Luther who wrote concerning this sin, "The vice of the Sodomites is an unparalleled enormity. It departs from the natural passion and desire, planted into nature by God, according to which the male has a passionate desire for the female. Sodomy craves**

what is entirely contrary to nature. Whence comes this perversion? Without a doubt it comes from the devil. After a man has once turned aside from the fear of God, the devil puts such great pressure upon his nature that he extinguishes the fire of natural desire and stirs up another, which is contrary to nature" (What Luther Says, Vol. 1, page 134). Let those who encourage such defiance of God's Word bear in mind that they shall have to stand before the Judgment Seat of God and *"it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God"* (Heb. 10:31).

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