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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"Oh, Come,

Oh, Come,

Emmanuel"

TLH #62

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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.

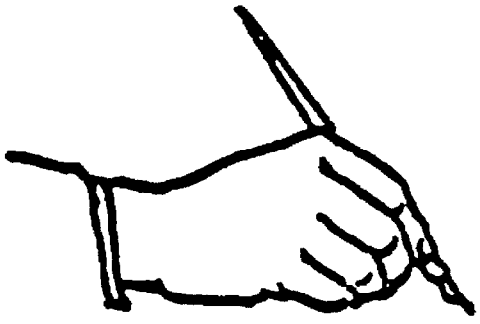
To show that we do not have among us a mixture of divergent teachings but that we are "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

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 to freely 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

All of us have seen the beggar on the street anxiously looking for some generous passerby to place a few coins in his cup. We are reminded of Lazarus, the beggar, who desired to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table (Luke 16), and of the lame beggar who was placed at the gate of the temple to beg alms of those who entered (Acts 3).

In the spiritual sense, we Christians are also beggars before the throne of our heavenly Father pleading for His mercy and help. Were He to deal with us on the basis of our worthiness and works we should all be cast into everlasting destruction, for "*the wages of sin is death*" (Rom. 6:23). Although we are Christians who strive to please Him who loved us unto the death on the cross, nonetheless, we must acknowledge with the Apostle Paul, "*I know that in me, (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing.....the good that I would I do not; and the evil which I would not, that I do*" (Rom. 7:18,19). Martin Luther's words are in full accord with Scripture when he therefore states in his explanation of the Fifth Petition of the Lord's Prayer, "we are worthy of none of the things for which we pray, neither have we deserved them; but that He would grant them all to us by grace; for we daily sin much and indeed deserve nothing but punishment."

We come before the heavenly Father's Throne of Grace dressed in the merit of His Son "*who loved us and gave Himself for us*" (Gal. 2:20). Being "*the children of God through faith in Christ Jesus*" (Gal. 3:26) we now have access to the heavenly Father through Christ "*who also maketh intercession for us*" (Rom. 8:34). We should never hesitate or be afraid to lay all our needs and wants, our difficulties and problems, before His Throne. For He Himself has commanded us to pray: "*Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me*" (Ps. 50:15). And Christ, "*God manifest in the flesh*" (1 Tim. 3:16), commands us, "*Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find;*

knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" (Matt. 7:7,8). When our sinful flesh would tempt us into thinking that it is rank arrogance on our part to approach God's Throne and that He would listen to us sinners, then let us declare with the Psalmist, "*When Thou saidst, Seek ye My face; my heart said unto Thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek!*" (Ps. 27:8).

The Lord has also promised to hear and answer as we beg for His help. With an oath the Lord Jesus declares, "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My Name, He will give it you*" (John 16:23). What a comfort and relief for us Christians! All the sorrows and troubles that burden our hearts are to be taken before His Throne in earnest prayer as we beg for His help in Jesus' Name. Nothing is too difficult for Him. He is the almighty God with whom "*all things are possible*" (Matt. 19:26). Did He not tell Abraham, "*Is anything too hard for the Lord?*" (Gen. 18:14). What He commands and promises, that He also fulfills, "*for all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen*" (2 Cor. 1:20). Should this not encourage us Christians to be frequent and fervent in our prayers? We should "*pray without ceasing*" (1 Thess. 5:17), and "*everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting*" (1 Tim. 2:8) without "*wavering, for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord*" (James 1:6,7). To approach His Throne and beg for His help and then say: "I don't think that the Lord will hear and answer my petitions," is to accuse God of lying!

Being Christians we should always submit our will to the good and gracious Will of our dear heavenly Father as Jesus did in the Garden of Gethsemane: "*Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me; nevertheless not My Will, but Thine, be done*" (Luke 22:42). "*This is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His Will, He heareth us*" (1 John 5:14). If He does not immediately answer that for which we beg, then we must remember that a delay is not a refusal. Often He wants to test our faith whether we will be persistent in our supplications like the Canaanitish woman who would not allow herself to be pushed to the sidelines until the Lord had answered her plea (Matt. 15:21-28). He may decide to give us something far better than that for which we have been begging. After all, He is the omniscient

God who knows full well what is best for our welfare. But whatever reason He has in His inscrutable wisdom, we know that He answers all prayers offered in the Name of Jesus, but in His own time and at His own pleasure for our temporal and eternal welfare!

Just think! This gracious privilege which the Lord has given to us Christians to approach the Throne of Grace with such firm confidence is all due to our dear Savior and His work of redemption! Were it not for the fact that He had manifested Himself in the flesh in the little village of Bethlehem, having assumed a true human nature within the womb of the Virgin Mary and humbling Himself, being obedient to His heavenly Father even unto the death on the cross, then we would still be in our sins and our prayers would not be acceptable to God. But now "*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*" (Philip. 3:9) we beggars can close our prayers with "**Amen**, that is, Yea, yea, it shall be so."

Your servant in Christ,
Pastor M. L. Natterer, President

The "Lost Art" of Giving Thanks

"And Jesus answering said, 'Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.' And He said, 'Arise, go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole.'"
--Luke 17:17-19

Considering the bountiful blessings which the Lord our God has showered down upon this country of ours over the span of almost 375 years since the time of the Pilgrims in Plymouth, Massachusetts, Americans by-and-large are an **ungrateful** lot! Most are quite content to "snatch and scram" like looters in a riot, to *"grab for all the gusto they can"* in life, and to be nothing more than "takers" of all the benefits that come their way! Like rich, spoiled children, they have become accustomed to **having** *whatever they want, whenever they want it, no matter what they have to do to get it*! They fully **expect** to have what they want, whether they *work* for it, *barter* for it, *scheme* to get it, or simply *collect* it from some government agency as a "fringe-benefit" of American citizenship. And the evidence of their **patent ingratitude** lies, first of all, in the fact that the word **"thanks"** has just about disappeared from people's everyday vocabulary. Parents and teachers in school used to **insist** that children say "Thank you" when something was given to them, when they were complimented, or even when they collected a reward which they had *earned*. But even that formal exercise of etiquette has for the most part fallen into disuse because it takes so much effort anymore to teach it and follow up on it. And, *"as the twig is bent, so grows the tree."* The kids of today will be the adults of tomorrow, who will no longer have as their "knee-jerk" reaction the tendency at least to *say* "Thanks!" Sadly, this trend is only spotlighted at **Thanksgiving**-time in the mere fact that a day of national gratitude had to be *mandated* by *presidential proclamation* in this country when Abraham Lincoln first made **Thanksgiving Day** an official national holiday in 1864. But even that mandate makes little difference, since many Americans deliberately leave the *thanksgiving* part out of the day altogether, preferring to call it **"Turkey Day"**!

Now we Christians shouldn't wonder for a minute how this can be, *"for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth,"* the Bible says in Genesis 8:21. That's how man is **by nature**; and the old, evil flesh of Christians is no different! With the Apostle Paul, every one of us must frankly confess, *"I know that in me, (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing."* (Romans 7:18) The sin of ingratitude has its roots deep in the heart of man, from which it grows and manifests itself in all kinds of ungrateful behavior, behavior of which we ALL are guilty before God and even before our fellowmen who witness our shabby ingratitude.

Being appreciative for what we have received from the Lord is not merely a matter of *courtesy*, neither is the expression of appreciation in the form of thanksgiving --both to God and to our neighbor. God Himself **demands** it of us in His holy Law. St. Paul, speaking of the *natural knowledge of God* which even the "Gentiles" (that is, the heathen) have in their conscience --which leaves them *"without excuse"*-- says that they are not *"thankful"* to Him (Romans 1:19-21). How much greater responsibility do those bear who have the *revealed knowledge of God* in His written Law (including all those exhortations in the Psalms, for example, which tell us to *"give thanks unto the Lord"*)? Why, the dumb, amoral animals are more grateful for God's providential blessings than are many professing Christians, as Isaiah wrote of God's anger against His people in the Old Testament for their ingratitude, saying, *"The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider!" (Is. 1:3)* And surely, in these *"perilous times"* of the *"last days"*, the Apostle Paul tells Timothy that *"men shall be...unthankful"* as evidence of their wickedness and manifest unbelief (II Timothy 3:1-2).

To be sure, God's Law **demands** thankfulness; but it does not and cannot **work** thankfulness *in the heart* of man, neither does it **produce** *overt expressions* of gratitude either in words of the mouth or in deeds of grateful service. Rather, truly God pleasing gratitude is the **fruit of saving faith in Christ Jesus**, wrought by the Holy Spirit through the means of the Gospel; *"for it is **God** which worketh in you both to **will** and to **do** of His good pleasure,"* Paul writes to the Philippians and to us as well (2:13). We see the evidence of this fact in the *standard Gospel Lesson* for ***Thanksgiving Day***, the incident of *The Ten Lepers* (Luke 17:11-19), from which our title text is taken. **All ten** lepers had been the

recipients of a gracious and merciful, completely undeserved blessing from the hand of their Savior. They had been *"cleansed"* from an incurable disease, and they all recognized the miracle that had been done in them. We know that it wasn't only the Samaritan who *"saw that he was healed,"* because Jesus fully expected an expression of gratitude from ALL of them (v. 17). And yet, *"the nine"* who were Jews, professing members of the true visible Church at that time, who had been raised from childhood to know the Holy Scriptures and, through them, the grace of God to poor sinners through the atoning sacrifice of the Messiah, --they went their way, taking what they had mercifully received --what they had **prayed for** when they *"lifted up their voices"* to Jesus-- without so much as turning back to thank Him! Only the tenth leper, *"and he was a Samaritan,"* only *"this stranger,"* this poor *"alien from the commonwealth of Israel and stranger from the covenants of promise"* (Ephesians 2:12), *"turned back and with a loud voice glorified God."* Why?? Because *"out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh"* (Matthew 12:34b). His thanksgiving welled up out of a heart of confidence in God's mercy to sinners for Jesus' sake! *"And He said unto him, 'Arise, go thy way, **thy faith** hath made thee whole.'"*

This precious Thanksgiving Gospel text was not written merely to record the facts concerning Jesus' public ministry here on earth. Nor was it given by inspiration of God's Holy Spirit for its "human interest" content and possible application to social conditions here in this world. This Word of God, as also the rest of Holy Scripture, was written *"for our **learning**,"* Paul tells us in Romans 15:4, and *"for our **admonition**, upon whom the ends of the world are come"* (I Corinthians 10:11). It testifies to the greatness of the miracles done by the Lord Jesus to the intent we might believe that He *"is the Christ, the Son of God,"* and that *"believing (we) might have life through His Name"* (John 20:31). It testifies to the great mercy and grace of God to us poor sinners in Christ Jesus, whereby He saved us from the leprosy of sin and regenerated us to a new life of faith and hope and sanctification by His Spirit. *"And all this purely out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in (us); for all which it is (our) **duty to thank and praise**, to serve and obey Him. This is most certainly true."* (Luther)

In rethinking the title of our article, we might well regard the lack of gratitude shown by people in our day and age, especially by professing Christians who *"know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (II

Corinthians 8:9), as not so much a **"lost art"** but rather a case of **"lost heart"**. Like the Children of Israel in the wilderness, we all too often succumb to our flesh and become guilty of loathing the *"light bread"* of God's grace and mercy dispensed to us regularly and consistently in our congregations through the proclamation of His precious Word and the administration of the Sacraments; and that makes us downright ungrateful for our **finest** and **most valuable** blessings! When that is the case, is it any wonder that we exhibit little if any appreciation for the lesser, for the purely temporal blessings?

As we this year celebrate our country's day of national thanksgiving, let us pause to take grateful inventory of all the gracious benefits which God for Jesus' sake richly and daily bestows upon us! Chief among these are our **spiritual blessings**: --His precious Word in its truth and purity by which He brought us to faith in Christ Jesus our Savior; --saving faith itself, created in us by His Holy Spirit; --confidence of the heart in His mercy to us for Jesus' sake, whereby we lay hold on all the blessings of Redemption; --the renewal of our lives as His dear children, so that according to our New Man of faith we desire to do His will and bring forth fruit to the glory of His grace; --the nourishment and preservation of our faith through the Means of Grace regularly and consistently dispensed to us in our local congregations by faithful stewards of God's mysteries; --the fellowship of true brethren who are one with us in the unity of the Spirit; --the blessed assurance that the exalted Christ rules over all things in the interest of His believing children and promises to turn all things into good for us; and --the sure and certain anticipation of everlasting life as the inheritance of grace prepared for us even now in the heavens. Indeed we could mention many more!!

But let us also then take time to appreciate even the "mundane" **temporal blessings** which comprise the "daily bread" by which *"He richly and daily provides (us) with all that (we) need to support this body and life,"* (Luther), that the Lord would lead us ever to recognize Him as the giver of all our good things and create in us grateful hearts to receive all His gracious blessings with thanksgiving. For the giving of thanks, as the giving of our offerings, is not to be motivated by the Law, *"not by commandment, but* ***to prove the sincerity of your love****; for ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ!"* May that sweet Gospel of our Savior move us, yea, *"constrain us,"* to shake off complacency,

indifference, and ingratitude regarding His manifold benefits toward us and fill our hearts, our hands, and our voices with true thanksgiving to Him who continues to do *"exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think!"*

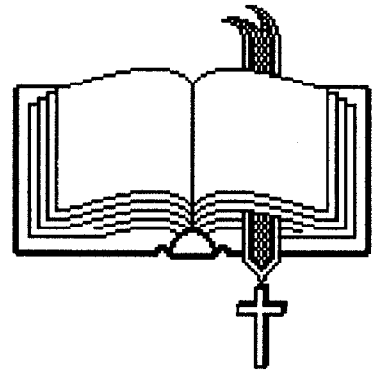
Praise, O mankind, now the Name so holy
of Him who doth such wondrous things!
All that hath being, to praise Him solely,
with happy heart its "Amen" sings!
Children of God, with angel host,
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

T.L.H. 26, v.6.

(The following is the third and last 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)



Principle #13: "The Church can in no wise act as judge with regard to the sense of Scripture. Compare Canones et Decreta Concilii Tridentini, Sess. 4, Decr. 2. (Romanism) (Luther, IX, 1361-1363; XVIII, 1294.)" (Fuerbringer #39, page 21)

While this principle was covered briefly under this essayist's principle #3, it is deserving of singular focus. Since the rise of the papacy, the Roman church has been the chief exponent of making the Church the

judge of doctrine. Indeed, Rome has not only made itself the judge of doctrine, it has outright made or created doctrine and claimed it to be of God!

Yet even in our day when synods meet, they often sit as creators of and the authoritative judges of doctrine and practice. In 1969 the Missouri Synod in convention assembled declared that any congregations wishing to permit their women to become members of the Voters Assembly were free to do so. By doing this, the LC-MS acted like Rome. It gave a permission which God's Holy Word does not grant. The same passages of Scripture which forbid a woman to be a pastor also apply to the matter of whether women can be voting members. Paul says, "***I suffer not a woman to teach nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.***" (I Tim. 2:12) The Church has no right or authority to change this divine command which forbids women to exercise authority over the man in the church.

And let it be said here that even we of the Concordia Lutheran Conference must ever keep in mind that neither our pastors meeting as a pastoral conference nor our congregations in convention assembled are to establish or create doctrine, or act as authoritative judges of doctrine. When we render a judgment, we not only should but must simply render Scripture's own judgment. God's Holy Word alone establishes, judges, and interprets doctrine. We are simply to parrot the Scriptures.

This however raises two questions: 1) What is the significance of our Lutheran Confessions? 2) What is the significance of the testimony of the historic Christian Church? Concerning the function and role of our Lutheran Confessions, Fuerbringer writes the following note:

> "Note: Lutheran theologians are indeed required to see that no exposition of any Biblical passage contradicts any doctrine contained in the Lutheran Symbols, as the *norma normata* of all doctrine; but this request does not conflict with the above-mentioned rule. In observing this requirement, the symbols are neither set above nor even on a par with Scripture, but the cause and justifying ground for this requirement is contained in the principle that no interpretation is to be admitted that stands in opposition to the so-called *analogia fidei.* (#37.) Just as certain as the doctrine of the Lutheran Confessions rests in all its parts

on the Holy Scriptures as the *norma normans*, being taken directly from Scripture, just so sure will any deviation from this doctrine in the exposition stand in opposition to the aforementioned principle. (Formula of Concord, pp. 852, 853, para. 9,10.)" (Fuerbringer, p. 21)

In brief, the authority of the Confessions is a derived authority, *norma normata*. We subscribe to and adhere to the Lutheran Confessions simply *BECAUSE* they agree with the Holy Scriptures. They set forth the *analogia fidei*. Hence, anything which disagrees with the Confessions is thereby in disagreement with the *analogia fidei* of the Scriptures.

What is more, the Lutheran Church has ever been a Confessional church over against the "creedless" churches, those churches which boast of having no written statements or creeds except the Bible only. By such a pious sounding position, the creedless churches actually hide their many doctrinal aberrations. Churches which refuse to adopt creeds are churches which do not wish to commit themselves to and be bound to the specific doctrines of the Holy Scriptures.

With respect to the second question concerning the function of the testimony of the historic Christian Church, a quote from John T. Mueller is pertinent. Mueller says, "With respect to the witness of the Christian Church two extremes must be avoided; on the one hand, it must not be underestimated or rejected as worthless; on the other hand, it must not be overestimated, as if the testimony of the Church were in itself a *principium cognoscendi*." (Christian Dogmatics, J.T. Mueller, p. 95)

Principle #14: The Bible interpreter must carefully observe the distinction between mere verbal or word parallels, and thought or real parallels.

While this particular principle might well have come earlier in this essay, the essayist was undecided where he wanted to place it. Yet, that it is the next to the last principle we are considering may well be salutary. Indeed, it is one of the more practical rules of Bible interpretation which every Bible reader ought to be aware of as he reads his Bible.

As we study our Bibles, we find that the doctrines of the Bible and also

various subjects and words have parallel passages. Under the rules of Bible interpretation or hermeneutics, we usually classify parallel passages as being verbal or word parallels, or real parallels which are true parallels of the same doctrine, thought or subject. Sometimes word parallels may simply be two different verses using the same word, or two different verses using the same word with the same meaning or connotation. An example of a word parallel would be the New Testament use of the word, conversation. In the King James Bible this word usually has the connotation of conduct or manner of living. However, in Ephesians 4:22 Paul says, "***That ye put off concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts.***" Here the word is used as a synonym for the old man or the Old Adam. However, in Galatians 1:13 Paul says, "***For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it.***" Here Paul is referring to his past conduct or manner of living. Although the word is the same in both texts, even being from the same Greek word, there is a difference in connotation because of the context of the verses. Thus, even the use of the same word may not be a true word parallel in the sense that the word has the same meaning in both places. However, in I Peter 3:1-2 we read, "***Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.***" Here the use of the word, conversation in I Peter is a true word parallel with the one in Galatians 1:13.

A parallel passage which we call a *parallelismus realis* (real parallel) is one where the complete context or the complete thought expressed is the same. For example, Jesus' Parable of the Sower is found in both Matthew and in St. Luke. Both texts are true parallel passages because they express the very same parable. Likewise, the passage of Matthew 24:15 which relates of the Abomination of Desolation has a parallel passage in St. Luke 21:20 where Jesus says, "***And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.***" Thus, a true parallel passage may not consist of identical wording or even any similarity of wording, but because both texts are talking about the same event or series of events, they are true parallels.

A true parallel is also one in which the same doctrine is being taught. For example, the doctrine of original sin is clearly taught by the following parallel passages. King David says in Psalm 51:5, "***Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.***" Paul says in Romans 5:12, "***For as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.***" Again there is absolutely no similarity of wording, but both texts clearly set forth the doctrine of original sin. Likewise, Isaiah the prophet is teaching original sin when he says, "***But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.***" (Isaiah 64:6)

With respect to real parallels, Fuerbringer states a significant point. He says, "For the same reason also this rule holds true, that one can show proof, or argue, from a real parallelism." (Fuerbringer, #29, Note 2, p. 15) The point is, where one has true parallels, he can be sure that he can prove his point on a controverted matter. For example, with respect to the fact that God instituted marriage, that He instituted it to be monogamous is proven by the fact that the sedibus on marriage and their parallels all refer to one man and one woman unto one flesh.

There is a word of caution to be given concerning parallels. Except for the least expensive Bibles, most all Bibles supply cross-references either in a center column or in marginal notes. First of all, these listings are obviously not a part of the Bible text, but have been inserted by the publishers in conjunction with those who produce the particular Bible version. They are placed there as a convenience for those who are not familiar with the parallel passages or word parallels or who simply cannot remember where the parallels are found. Unfortunately, sometimes the cross-references have been supplied in such a way as to convey a particular theological bias. A Scofield Reference Bible inserts cross-references in such a way as to favor Millenialism. In other cases, there may not be any intent to give a theological slant, but there is simply an incorrect listing due to an incorrect understanding of the passages involved.

Principle #15: The rules of hermeneutics are not to be used manipulatively so as to build a theological construct or to justify sophistry or a personal interpretation.

There is to be integrity and objectivity in the use of the rules of Bible interpretation. If the exegete or Bible interpreter is truly a Christian, he will have a conscience toward God and operate in the true fear, love and trust in God. He will operate under this injunction of the Lord, "***But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.***" (Isaiah 66:2) He will honor the words of St. Paul in II Corinthians 4:2, "***But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience.***"

In this regard, the use of hermeneutics is to be couched in the spirit of the Gospel of our salvation which is the heart and core of the Scriptures. As Paul reminded Timothy, it is the Holy Scriptures which make us wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. It is through the Holy Scriptures that we learn that we have a Saviour who loved us and gave Himself for us to redeem us from our sins and from eternal damnation. It is through the teachings of the Holy Scriptures that the Holy Ghost convicts us of our sins and leads us to Jesus' blood. The Holy Scriptures teach Christians the true rule or guide for Christian living. The Holy Scriptures is the Book of books, the very Bread of Life, the words of eternal life, that Lamp unto our feet, and that Light unto our path. Indeed, although referring to the Old Testament in its context, Romans 15:4 is applicable to all of Scripture, namely, "***For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.***"

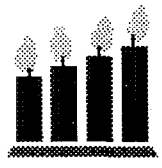
Conclusion

In concluding this essay, we all should arrive at one simple but urgent conclusion: all the rules of Hermeneutics are worthless and in vain if the Scriptures are not in fact read, studied and heard. The neglected and unstudied Bible needs no rules of interpretation. All the blessings of proper hermeneutics are lost where the Word is not used. This is why our Saviour lovingly but urgently implores us, "***Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me.***" (John 5:39) Again our Saviour says, "***If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.***" (John 8:31-2)

Can there be any more fitting conclusion to our study than the prayer which we so often pray toward the end of our church services? "*Blessed Lord, who hast caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning, grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of Thy Holy Word we may embrace, and ever hold fast, the blessed hope of everlasting life, which Thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end.*" Amen.

--ERS

The Various *ADVENTS* of Christ



Beginning with the fourth Sunday before Christmas and proceeding through the 24th of December is referred to, on the Church Calendar, as **The Advent Season**. The Fourth Sunday before Christmas is known as Advent Sunday which is then followed by the Second, Third and Fourth Sundays in Advent. The word **advent**, of course, means **arrival** or **coming**--as we use this word in common English sentences, such as: "The sudden appearance of the robin and crocuses proclaimed the **advent** of spring." "The President's **advent** in Detroit was thoroughly unexpected." It is, therefore, not strange for the word **Advent** to be used as the name for the first season of a new church year, which season points us, with joyful anticipation, to the **coming** of the Christ Child in the manger at Bethlehem. This season of the church year leads us, however, to meditate upon the coming of our Saviour in **three or four** different ways. You will notice this from the Gospel and Epistle Lessons which have been selected for the four Advent Sundays as well as from the hymns and from the texts which your pastor has chosen for his sermons during this season.

The Coming Of Christ In The Flesh

"O Bride of Christ (the Church) **rejoice;**
Exultant raise thy voice
To hail the day of glory
Foretold in sacred story."
T.L.H. #57, v.1

In Advent we are reminded of the great **prophesies** of Christ's coming found in the Old Testament Scriptures: How He would be **born of a virgin** (Is. 7:14) in the little town of **Bethlehem** (Micah 5:2) and the virgin's Son would be **called Immanuel** (God with us), and how His coming would be **made known to the Gentiles** (Gen. 49:10; Isaiah 60:2,3; Matt. 12:17-21; Rom. 15:8-12); how the **believers** in Old Testament times **waited and longed** for the fulfillment of God's promises regarding the **coming** Savior, the "Rod of Jesse," the "Day-spring from on high," the "Key of David," "the Bridegroom," (Psalm 14:7; 53:6; Is. 49:18); that His coming would be **heralded** by His messenger and forerunner, John the Baptist (Isaiah 40:3,4; Mal. 3:1; 4:5,6; Matt. 3:3; 11:10,14; 17:10-13; Mark 1:2,3; Luke 1:17; 3:4-6; 7:27; John 1:23); and that He would be **a King** amidst shouts of Hosanna (Zech. 9:9; Matt. 21:4,5; John 12:15).

These are the great topics of the Advent Season which refer to **our Savior's coming in the flesh** and, in these texts, we see how **important** it was for the eternal and almighty Son of God to become a true Man that He might be able to take **our** place under the Law (Gal. 4:4,5), keep the Holy Law of God perfectly **in our stead** (Rom. 5:19), and suffer, **as our Substitute**, the punishment which we deserve by our sins in the eternal torments of hell--that all who believe in Him "**should not perish, but have everlasting life**" (John 3:16).

The Coming Of Christ In Word and Sacrament

During the Advent Season we also have opportunity to ponder the **coming** of the Lord Christ **to this day** through the proclamation of His Word and the proper administration of the Sacrament of the Altar. The Lord says, "**In all places where I record My name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee**" (Ex. 20:24). The **record** of His name is in His Word and Sacrament through the use of which He promises to come

to us and bestow upon us His blessing. **Again,** He promises that He will be in the midst of even only two or three who are "**gathered together in His name**" (Matt. 18:20), and He says of those who proclaim the pure teachings of His Word, "**He that heareth you heareth ME**" (Luke 10:16), and of the bread and wine which is eaten and drunk in His Holy Supper, "**This is My blood of the new testament**" (Matt. 26:28). Thus, He COMES "bringing news of sins forgiv'n," "leading souls redeemed to heav'n" "to young and old, to man and wife; thro' Sacrament and living Word."

We therefore sing: **"Oh, may He soon to every nation**
Find entrance where He is unknown,
With life and light and full salvation,
That heathendom may be o'erthrown."
T.L.H. #65, v.6

The Coming of Christ Into The Hearts of Believers

And Christ also **comes** into our hearts by faith, to which our Savior refers when He says, "**I will come in to him, and will sup with him and he with Me**" (Rev. 3:20), "**My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him**" (John 14:23), "**I am in the Father, and ye in Me, and I in you**" (John 14:20). This mystical union (*unio mystica*) is **not to be confused** with God's omnipresence according to which He declares in Jer. 23:34, "**Do not I fill heaven and earth**" and as the Apostle Paul states in Acts 17:29, "**In Him we live and move and have our being.**" **Nor** is this union **to be confused** with the personal union (*unio personalis*) which is the undivided and indivisible union of God and man in the person of Christ Jesus our Savior. **Nor** is this mystical union of Christ with the believers **to be confused** with the New Man which God has created in every Christian at the time of his regeneration and by which a Christian is enabled to overcome sin and to do works pleasing to God in his life of sanctification. When a person becomes a true believer in Christ by the work of the Holy Ghost through the power of the Gospel, the body of that person becomes a Temple of the Living God in which the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, dwells (I Cor. 6:10, I Cor. 3:16). Because of this indwelling the true believers throughout the world are called collectively "**the Temple of the Living God**" (II Cor 6:16) and

the "**Body of Christ**" (Eph. 1:23). This mystical union (*unio mystica*), between God and those who are His dear children through faith in Christ Jesus, is **so intimate** that, in II Peter 1:4, the believers are called, "**Partakers of the Divine Nature!**"

The Lord Jesus says of every true believer, "He . . . abideth in Me, and I in him." Because the Lord God has brought us to a saving knowledge of Christ through the power of His Gospel, Christ dwells in us and we in Him as a **branch** in the Vine (John 15:5) and as a **member** in the Body (I Cor. 12:27). The Apostle Paul, therefore, writes in I Cor. 1:30, "**Of Him are ye IN Christ Jesus.**" Christ is our "**Head,**" He is our "**Life,**" He is our "**All in all!**" It is by virtue of this **mystical union** that the Lord Jesus identifies Himself with His suffering believers, crying out to Saul, who was on his way to Damascus to persecute the Christians in that city, "**Saul, Saul, Why persecutest thou ME?**" This very special manner in which the Savior comes to us and abides in us , He refers to in His highpriestly prayer where He says, "**Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their work; That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us!**" (John 17:20,21). We, therefore, pray in one of our Advent hymns, "**And make our secret soul to be A temple pure and worthy Thee.**" (T.L.H. #70, v.3) And we also sing:

> **"Prepare my heart, Lord Jesus, Turn not from me aside,**
> **And grant that I receive Thee, This blessed Advent-tide.**
> **From stall and manger low, Come Thou to dwell within me;**
> **Loud praise will I sing Thee, And forth Thy glory show."**
>
> T.L.H. #75, v.4

The Coming of Christ On the Last Day

Another Advent of Christ of which we are reminded during the Advent Season is His "**coming in the clouds of heaven**" (Matt. 24:30) on the Last Day. This is often referred to as Christ's Second Coming. When our Savior ascended up into heaven, two angels spoke to the wondering disciples on the Mount of Olives, saying, "**Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.**" (Acts 1:11) On that great day when He shall come again, it will not be in poverty and weakness--as the manger Child

of Bethlehem--but it will be with "**power and great glory**" (Matt. 24:30) and "**every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him**" (Rev. 1:7). He will be accompanied by the heavenly host--the armies of holy angels (Matt. 25:31).

The **purpose** of His Second Coming will be to **judge** all mankind **in righteousness** according to His Word. Jesus Himself says, "**The Word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the Last Day**" (John 12:48). No one will be able to blame God for having sentenced him to everlasting torment in hell--for God had provided a way of salvation for all mankind, and His Gospel went forth to "**all the ends of the earth**" (Ps. 98:3; Is. 52:10; also Matt. 24:14). On that day **the believers** will rise to a life of eternal bliss and joy in the presence of God (Ps. 16:11) **but the unbelievers** will rise to a life of "**shame and everlasting contempt**" in a place where "**their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh**" (Is. 66:24).

The Second Advent of Christ is called "**the Day of the Lord**" (II Peter 3:10) and it will **surely come** because it is a day which God has set in His eternal counsels, for we are told in Acts 17:31 that God "**hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained,**" namely, Christ, who is "**ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead**" (Acts 10:42). According to Scripture, the time of Christ's Second Coming is unknown to men and angels (Mark 13:32--even Christ withheld this knowledge from Himself according to His human nature in His state of humiliation), and His **coming** will be as **unexpected "as a thief in the night"** (II Peter 3:10), **sudden** "**as the lightning**" (Matt. 24:27), and near, for "**the end of all things is at hand**" (I Peter 34:7). The Lord Jesus therefore admonishes us, "**Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh**" (Matt. 25:13); "**Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not**" (Luke 12:40); "**Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is**" (Mark 13:33).

Our Advent hymns also remind us of this coming of Christ, for in them we sing:

Jesus comes on clouds triumphant
When the heavens shall pass away;

Jesus comes again in glory.
Let us, then, our homage pay,
Alleluia! ever singing
Till the dawn of endless day.

T.L.H. #56, v.5

He comes to judge the nations,
A terror to His foes,
A Light of consolations
And blessed Hope to those
Who love the Lord's appearing.
O glorious Sun, now come,
Send forth Thy beams most cheering,
And guide us safely home.

T.L.H. #58, v.9

Lo, the Lamb, so long expected,
Comes with pardon down from heaven.
Let us haste, with tears of sorrow,
One and all, to be forgiven,
That, when next He comes with glory
And the world is wrapped in fear
He may shield us with His mercy
And with words of love draw near.

T.L.H. #60, v.v.3-4

Teach us in watchfulness and prayer
To wait for the appointed hour
And fit us by Thy grace to share
The triumphs of Thy conquering power.

T.L.H. #64, v.5

Our Hope and expectation, O Jesus now appear;
Arise, Desire of nations, O'er this benighted sphere.
With hearts and hands uplifted, We plead, O Lord, to see
The day of earth's redemption, That brings us unto Thee! Amen.

T.L.H. #72, v.4

--PRB

Around the World

with editorial comment

by M. L. Natterer

Rev. Ron Shonk directs Open Door Ministries, which has its office at Gethsemane Lutheran Church, near downtown Seattle. John Paul Olafson, president of Open Door's board, most of whom are straight, is well-acquainted with the abuse sometimes directed at homosexuals. "I'm very open about being gay," said Olafson, 38, who lives with his partner of 13 years. "But the only times I remember people hating me for no reason was in church settings." Today he is vice president of Gethsemane's church council. "I stuck with the church because the good news of Jesus Christ is good news for everyone, including gays and lesbians," he said. "Many gays and lesbians get the message that they can't be gay or lesbian and be a Christian. That's disgraceful."..... In Virginia, the president of Messiah Lutheran Church, Virginia Beach, resigned after the church received a homosexual couple as members. Virginia Synod Bishop Richard Bansemer supported the decision to admit the couple. "The issue of homosexuality is secondary to their faith in Christ," he said. "If they are baptized Christians, and they are, they should have a family that will welcome them."...The genetic evidence about gays is not clear, and the Bible is not necessarily that clear either...This church desperately needs - on this subject and on others - greater listening to each other.

The above has been culled from several issues of the official organ of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, The Lutheran, May, July, 1993. The above is merely a sample of the erroneous position held within the ELCA and which, incidentally, is shared by its president, Bishop Herbert Chilstrom, who has declared, "The ELCA does not ban gay and lesbian people from becoming pastors in our church." Bearing the name "Lutheran" (a misnomer) and accepting that which is an abomination in the sight of God is enough to bring Martin Luther springing out of his grave protesting the vilification of

his name. More important is the utter rejection of the plain Word of God. Let there be no mistake! A person can not be a true Christian and live, at the same time, in the sin of homosexuality! And who says so? The almighty God Himself! In Romans, chapter 1, the Apostle speaks of the lesbians and homosexuals who dishonor their own bodies between themselves (vv.24-28). In 1 Corinthians the same Apostle states that those who are abusers of themselves with mankind shall not inherit the kingdom of God (6:9,10). And in his 1st Epistle to Timothy he again refers to them that defile themselves with mankind (1:10). Even the Sunday School children know why the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by the Lord (Genesis 19). Ever since those in the higher echelon of our government have spoken in favor of the homosexuals we have observed that the majority of church denominations have compromised to such an extent that they are virtually indistinguishable from the world! The Gospel of Christ indeed offers forgiveness to repentant homosexuals NOT to continue in this sin but being constrained by his/her love to Christ will with the help of the Holy Spirit also forsake it! (1 Cor. 6:11).

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