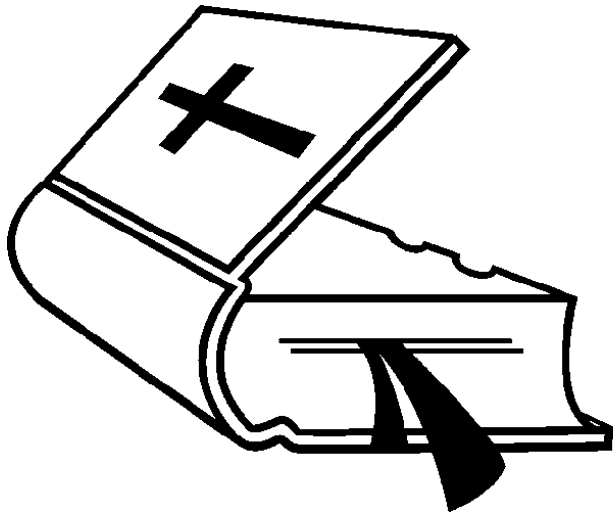


“Test the Spirits”
1 John 4:1



**A Reference Chart
of Doctrinal Differences**

**A Reference Chart
of Doctrinal Differences**

I. By Doctrine

II. By Group

III. An Outline of Church History

**By Pastor Dan Fleischer
and Pastor David Scheirenbeck**



***“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits,
whether they are of God; because many false prophets
have gone out into the world.” – 1 John 4:1***

Test the Spirits... without wavering

“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.” Hebrews 10:23

Two great concerns led to the establishment of the Church of the Lutheran Confession in 1960. They were and remain:

- The concern for upholding the full truth of God’s Word, and the precious Gospel which is the seed of life, and the power unto salvation.
- Concern at the inroads of error manifest through false teaching. False teaching sows confusion among God’s people, and endangers their faith. False teaching causes loss of confidence in God’s Word, and may well lead, if unchecked, to the loss of eternal life.

This presentation, limited as it is, is meant to serve two purposes. Firstly, it presents the Scripture teachings on certain doctrines of Scripture in condensed form, as well as a condensation of some of the errors that are taught today. Secondly, it presents a reference chart identifying some churches and religious groups, with the errors they hold. The Bible statements are referenced with some of the pertinent Bible passages. The contrary teachings here listed are commonly taught, as one who observes the church scene will recognize. Your pastor can help you identify those who teach the errors to which reference is made.

We hope this presentation will be of benefit as Christians **“test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” 1 John 4:1**

We recognize that not all pastors and teachers in a specific church body may teach or hold the errors here exposed. At the same time, many church bodies do not hold their clergy to any particular standard of doctrine (teaching). Others, while not officially promoting or defending an error, tolerate in their midst those who do.

It has been a long held and time tested principle within the orthodox (true teaching) Lutheran Church that the official doctrinal position of a church is determined by what is taught in its schools, preached from its pulpits, and written in its official publications. We subscribe to this principle.

This comparative study is offered with the prayer that the Holy Spirit will give us a love for the Truth, lead us into the Truth, and keep us in it. May we who love the Truth from God speak it in love.

Abbreviations:

BAP	Baptist
CHAR	Charismatics
CoC	Church of Christ
CS	Christian Science
ELCA	Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
ELS	Evangelical Lutheran Synod
EPIS	Episcopalian
HB	Holiness Bodies (Pentecostals, Church of God, Assembly of God)
JEW	Jews
JW	Jehovah’s Witness
LC-MS	Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod
MOR	Mormon (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints)
RC	Roman Catholic
REF	Reformed (Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, there are many others)
SDA	Seventh Day Adventists
UNI	Unitarians
WELS	Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

- Any group that denies the humanity and/or divinity of Christ and rejects the Trinity is not a Christian Church (CS, JEW, JW, MOR, UNI).

**Hold Fast
The Scriptural, And True
Lutheran Teaching:**

Holy Scripture

1. Holy Scripture is inspired by God, and contains no errors or contradictions (2 Peter 1:21, 2 Timothy 3:16, John 17:17, John 10:35).
2. Miracles recorded in Scripture actually happened [e.g. Jonah, Virgin Birth, Water to Wine, etc. (Jonah 1,2; Luke 1:34-35; John 2:1-11)].
3. Christ made the statements attributed to Him in the New Testament.
4. The Scriptures are complete. Only the 66 accepted books of the Bible are to be regarded as inspired and inerrant.

**“Test the Spirits”
And Avoid:**

Holy Scripture

1. Historical and geographical references, and matters of custom recorded in Scripture may not be the Word of God. Holy Scripture “contains” the Word of God and so also Holy Scripture may contain errors and contradictions. One should not speak of an inerrant Word of God (ELCA, has been tolerated in LC-MS, BAP and others).
2. Miracles may not have happened as they are recorded (ELCA and others).
3. Statements of Christ may have been added by the early church.
4. Traditions of the church and later witness of the church [visions, and revelations] are equal to Scripture (RC, MOR, CS, SDA).

Trinity

God is Triune. There is one God, Who is three separate distinct persons - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The three persons are equal in honor, power, and glory (Deuteronomy 6:4, Numbers 6:24-26, Matthew 28:19).

Creation

1. God created the world in 6 days by the power of His Word. Creation is a historic fact (Genesis 1).
2. Adam and Eve were real historic persons, created on the 6th day by God (Genesis 1).
3. The creation days were days of the same cycle as our days (Genesis 1).

Sin

Man lost the perfect righteousness and the knowledge of God’s will (image of God) with which he was created. This happened when man was tempted by Satan and sinned (Genesis 3). Since the fall into sin, all people have been born in sin [original sin] (Psalm 51:5, Genesis 5:3). Sin is the transgression of God’s law by thought word and deed [actual sin] (1 John 3:4).

Trinity

God is not Triune (UNI, JW, JEW, CS, MOR. Jesus is merely a man, and the Holy Spirit an impersonal force.

Creation

1. Evolution is a possible and permissible explanation for the origin of the world (ELCA and many others).
2. Adam and Eve were not necessarily historical persons, but were later additions to the account (ELCA and others).
3. The creation days were possibly long periods of time (ELCA and others).

Sin

There is no original sin. Evil is the result of environment. Children are not held accountable for sin until they reach an age of discretion (BAP, CoC).

Justification

1. God justified all sinners in Christ. “To justify” means “to declare not guilty” [Objective Justification] (2 Corinthians 5:21, Romans 3:23-24, 4:25).
2. The sinner is justified by grace through faith in Christ Jesus [Subjective Justification] (Romans 5:18-19, 1 Corinthians 5:18-21).

Salvation

1. Jesus died for all sinners, and God declared them forgiven for Jesus’ sake (Romans 5:6, 2 Corinthians 5:19, 1 John 2:12).
2. The sinner is saved by grace through faith in Christ, without works (Romans 3:24, Ephesians 2:8).
3. Jesus desires the salvation of all. (2 Peter 3:9).

Virgin Birth

Jesus was miraculously conceived, and was born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:23, Luke 2:35).

Justification

1. God justifies the sinner in view of faith, or because of the better attitude on the part of those who are saved (ELCA).
2. The sinner is justified by grace [infused] plus works (RC).

Salvation

1. Jesus died only for those who are eventually saved (some REF).
2. The sinner is saved by grace [infused] plus works. (RC and finally all who deny justification).
3. Jesus did not desire the salvation of all, but chose some to damnation (REF).

Virgin Birth

Jesus was not necessarily born of a virgin, but of a “young woman” (ELCA, tolerated in LC-MS, BAP, others).

Conversion

1. The sinner is converted from unbelief to faith in Christ by the power of the Spirit Who works through the Gospel (1 Corinthians 6:11, 4:15, 12:3, 1 Peter 1:23, Titus 3:5).
2. All are equally dead in sin, and equally resistant to the Word (Romans 8:7, 1 Corinthians 2:14).
3. The sinner in no way contributes to, or cooperates with God in his conversion. (Jeremiah 31:8, Ephesians 2:4-5, 2:8-9, 1 Corinthians 12:3).

Resurrection

1. Christ physically (bodily) rose from the dead on the third day (Matthew 28, Luke 24, 1 Corinthians 15, many others).
2. All the dead will rise on the last day. The believers in Christ will enter eternal life; the unbelievers will enter eternal death (Job 19:26-27, John 5:28-29, 1 Corinthians 15:51-52).

Conversion

1. Man is converted without means (CHAR, HB).
2. The sinner, though spiritually dead, cooperates in conversion [e.g. “A personal decision for Christ”] (BAP, other REF, CHAR).
3. They are converted because of a better attitude, or because they resisted less than others (REF, ELCA).

Resurrection

1. Christ did not rise from the dead bodily (JEW, ELCA and tolerated by others).
2. Some will be taken to heaven bodily before judgment day (CHAR, SDA, JW, tolerated in ELCA, and who teach or tolerate millennialism).

The Church

1. Only those who believe in Christ Jesus as their Savior are the children of God (John 1:12, Galatians 3:26, Romans 8:9).
2. Believers make up the spiritual body of Christ, the CHURCH. In the Holy Christian Church there are no unbelievers or hypocrites. The Lord knows them that are His (Romans 8:9, 2 Timothy 2:19, Ephesians 5:25-27, 1 Peter 2:5).
3. There is no salvation outside of the Holy Christian Church (2 Timothy 2:19).

Lord's Supper

1. The body and blood of Christ are truly present in the Sacrament, in, with, and under the bread and the wine (Matthew 26:26-28, Mark 14: 22-24, Luke 22:18-20, 1 Corinthians 11:24-27).
2. Through the grace of God, forgiveness is given and sealed to us in the Sacrament (cf. passages above).
3. The Lord's Supper was instituted for the comfort of penitent sinners. It is an expression of the unity of faith [Close Communion] (Romans 16:17-18, 1 Corinthians 1:10, 10:17).

The Church

1. All people are children of God (ELCA, REF).
2. Everybody who calls himself "Christian" is a member of the body of Christ (ELCA, REF).
3. There is no salvation outside of membership in the outward organization (RC, JW, CoC).

Lord's Supper

1. The body and blood of Christ are only symbolized in the bread and the wine (REF). The bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ (RC).
2. Forgiveness is only symbolized (REF). Blessing is received through the ACT of coming to the Sacrament (RC).
3. Open communion (practiced by many HB, REF, many Lutherans).

Baptism

1. Baptism is a rebirth by the Spirit through water and the Word. The sinner is thereby brought into the family of God (Galatians 3:24, Titus 3:4-7).
2. Baptism forgives sins and saves (Acts 2:38, 22:16, 1 Peter 3:21).
3. The Lord's command to baptize includes little children (Matthew 18:6, 28:19, Acts 2:38).
4. Baptism is administered in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (Matthew 28:19).

Church and State

The church is to be free of interference or control of the state; the state is to be free of interference or control by the church (Matthew 22:21, John 18:36).

Fellowship

True expression of church fellowship is manifest by the union of those who are united in the teachings of the Bible (Acts 2:42, 1 Corinthians 1:10).

Baptism

1. Baptism is only a dedication of the child to God (REF).
2. Baptism only symbolizes forgiveness of sins and salvation (REF).
3. Little children (infants) are not to be baptized (REF, though the Methodist church does baptize infants).
4. Baptism is not administered in the name of the Trinity (UNI, JW, JEW, CS, M and any other deniers of the Trinity).

Church and State

The church bears both swords. The state is subject to the church (RC). The state is required to share "in the care of divine things" (REF).

Fellowship

Worship and church work are practiced without regard to differences in doctrine. Latitudes of opinion are tolerated in matters of doctrine [cf. Unionism] (many church bodies).

Unionism

1. False teaching is any teaching that is contrary to the Word of God (Jeremiah 23:31-32).
2. All teaching in the church is to be taken from, and is to be faithful to Scripture. It is to be tested in the light of Scripture (Jeremiah 23, 1 John 4:1).
3. For protection of faith and out of love for the Word, false teachers and their false teaching are to be avoided when it is noted that their error is not merely a mis-speaking, but is being defended and/or promoted (Romans 16:17-18).

The Mission of the Church

1. The mission of the church is primarily to preach and to teach the Gospel, and thus to fulfill the commission given it by the Lord (Matthew 28:19-20, Luke 24:47, John 20:23).
2. The church is to teach all that the Lord has commanded in Scripture (Matthew 28:20).

Unionism

1. Every church has some of the truth (many churches).
2. There are allowable latitudes of opinion in doctrine (ELCA, REF, tolerated in LC-MS).
3. Fellowship may continue “until one has reached the conviction that admonition is of no further avail” within the framework of fellowship, or as long as there is a perceived hope of gaining the erring person (LC-MS, ELS, WELS).

The Mission of the Church

1. The mission of the church in practice is social (many churches including the ELCA, REF, etc.)
2. The church is to teach the Bible and the tradition of the church (RC, MOR, CS).

Role of Women

1. The public ministry (pastorate) is restricted to men (1 Timothy 2:11-12, 3:2, 1 Corinthians 14:34-35).
2. Exercise of headship or authority in the church and in the home is, according to Scripture, properly exercised by men (Genesis 3:16, Ephesians 5).

Eschatology

1. The Lord shall return in glory on Judgment Day (Acts 1:11, 17:31). Jesus’ return will not be in secret (Matthew 24:31, 1 Thessalonians 4:16).
2. The Lord will come to judge the world (John 5:28-29, Acts 10:42, 17:31, Romans 2:5-6).
3. The fact that Christ will return is certain (1 Peter 4:7). Only the time of His coming (2 Peter 3:10), as well as the time of the end (1 Peter 4:7) is uncertain.

Role of Women

1. It is permissible and acceptable to ordain women as pastors, (EPIS, ELCA, REF).
2. Women’s suffrage is not contrary to Scripture (EPIS, ELCA, REF, practiced in LC-MS and many others).

Eschatology

1. The Lord will return secretly to take believers off the earth [Rapture]. He will return another time to rule physically on the earth for 1,000 years after which will come the judgment [Millennialism] (CHAR, REF, HB, JW, many others).
2. The time of the return of Jesus can be determined (JW, HB). He will come to reign visibly in Jerusalem for 1,000 years after which the end will come [Millennialism] (all of the above).

‘Born Again’ Christian

1. At baptism one is born again through water and the Word, by the power of the Spirit of God (John 3:3-5, Acts 2:38).
2. The “Spirit filled life” is manifested by a confession of faith in Christ and a life of sanctification (fruit-bearing) (1 Corinthians 6:11, 1 Corinthians 12:3, Galatians 6:22-26).
3. Certainty of one’s Christianity and salvation is this: That one is a penitent sinner who trusts in the atonement of Christ, as the Word of God teaches. Christ is the foundation of faith (John 3:16, 1 Corinthians 3:11, 1 John 5:12-13).

Abortion

1. Life begins at conception, and each child, regardless of physical or mental condition, is a gift of God and a precious soul (Genesis 1:28, Job 10:8-12, Jeremiah 1:5).

‘Born Again’ Christian

1. Water baptism and Spirit baptism are not the same (REF, CHAR).
2. The “Spirit filled life” is manifested through the use of speaking in tongues, healing, visions, etc. (Same as above).
3. Certainty of one’s Christianity and salvation is found in one’s possession of the Spirit, with the attendant gifts. One’s subjective feeling is the foundation of one’s hope (ELCA, REF, CHAR).

Abortion

1. It cannot be determined when life begins (Pro-choice - condoned by many church bodies).
2. Abortion is a viable and sometimes necessary procedure, e.g., wanting a career, not wanting a child, especially one who is crippled or retarded or who is conceived as a result of rape (Pro-choice, also within many church bodies).

Part II

Doctrinal Differences (Arranged by Group)

Heathenism

Over three quarters of the world's people: Islam (Moslem), Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism and others.

Idolatry	Matthew 4:10
Deny Triune God	Matthew 28:19
Deny Deity of Christ	John 5:23
Salvation by Works	Ephesians 2:8-9
Deny Bible Authority	2 Timothy 3:15-16
Other Unchristian Beliefs	

Jehovah's Witnesses

Deny Triune God	Matthew 28:19
Deny Deity of Christ	Colossians 2:9
Holy Spirit Not a Person of the Godhead	Acts 5:3-4
Deny the Sufficiency of Christ's Atonement	Romans 5:1
144,000 - - Millennialism (1,000 Year Earthly Kingdom)	John 18:36
Human Government's are Satanic	Romans 13:1
Quote Scripture out of Context	2 Peter 1:21

Mormons (Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints)

Beliefs Based on Own Books and Ongoing Revelation	Luke 16:31; John 17:20
Salvation by Faith and Obedience Laws and Ordinances (e.g. Faith, Repentance, Immersion Baptism, Laying on of Hands)	Ephesians 2:8-9
Man becomes a "god" Like Christ Did	Hebrews 9:27
Eternal Marriage	Matthew 22:30; Romans 7:2
Polygamy	Genesis 2:24; 1 Corinthians 7:2
Baptism for the Dead	Hebrews 9:27

Christian Science

All Sin, Disease and Death are Unreal (Overcome by Faith, Prayer)	
Deny Triune God and Deity of Christ	Matthew 28:19; Colossians 2:9
Deny Atonement of Christ (He was Only a "Way-shower")	Ephesians 1:7
The Book "Science and Scripture" Supercedes Bible	2 Timothy 3:16-17

Other Cults

Other groups such as the "Moonies" (Unification Church), the Unitarians (Universalists), and Spiritualists also hide behind the guise of Christianity, but are unchristian in their beliefs.

Roman Catholic

Papal Authority and Infallibility	John 17:17; Matthew 15:9
Beliefs Based on Scripture, the Pope, and Tradition	2 Peter 1:21
Faith and Good Works Save (Infused Grace)	Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 11:6
No Salvation Outside the Catholic Church	John 3:16
Worship and Prayer to Mary and The Saints	Matthew 4:10
Indulgences (Remission of Temporary Punishment for Sin)	1 John 1:8-9
Grace Conveyed through their Seven Sacraments	Matthew 15:9
Lord's Supper: Only Bread, Sin-Sacrifice, Host Elevated	Hebrews 10:18
Priests Not Permitted to Marry (Celibacy)	1 Timothy 3:1

The Eastern (Greek) Orthodox Church

Separating from the Roman Catholic Church in 1054 A.D. (Great Schism) because of a power struggle, its beliefs somewhat parallel that of Rome except in its rejection of the authority and infallibility of the Pope.

The Reformed (Most Non-Lutheran Protestants)

This group includes the Reformed, Presbyterian, Baptists, Mennonite, Episcopal, Methodist, Assembly of God, Pentecostal and others, including most TV evangelists. While there are distinctive teachings to each, below are the general areas of difference between them and Lutheranism.

Deny Original or Inherited Sin	Psalms 51:5; Romans 5:19
No Baptism of Infants	Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38-39
Deny Power of Baptism	Galatians 3:27; 1 Peter 3:21
Body and Blood of Christ not Present in the Sacrament	Luke 22:19-20
Man capable of Believing ("Decision for Christ")	1 Corinthians 12:3
Limited Atonement	1 Timothy 2:4; John 1:29
Millennialism (1000 Year Earthly Kingdom)	John 18:36
Baptism of the Spirit (Speaking in Tongues)	Acts 2:4-11; Romans 6:1-11
Agreement in Gospel Sufficient for Fellowship	1 Corinthians 1:10; Romans 16:17

Seventh-Day Adventists

Similar “Reformed” teaching above as well as...

Following the Old Testament Sabbath (Saturday Worship) Colossians 2:16-17
Emphasis and Prediction of Christ’s Return Mark 13:32
Millennialism John 18:36
Tithing Required by the Lord 2 Corinthians 9:7
No Chemical Substances (Alcohol, Drugs, Tobacco) 1 Timothy 4:3-5

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of America

Scripture may Contain Errors and Contradictions John 10:35; John 17:17
The Gospel, Not Scripture is the Standard of Belief John 5:39; John 14:23
Evolution Permissible Genesis 1:1; Hebrews 11:3
Agreement in Gospel Permissible for Fellowship . Romans 16:1; 1 Corinthians 1:10
The Ordination of Women 1 Timothy 2:13; 1 Corinthians 14:34
Abortion: An Individual Decision Psalm 51:5; Psalm 139
Homosexuality Tolerated Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10

The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod

Membership in Lodges, Scouting and Fraternal Religious Organizations Permitted . .
. Romans 16:17-18
Loose Fellowship Practice (e.g. Open Communion) Romans 16:17-18
Women Suffrage Permissible 1 Timothy 2:13-14
Joint Religious Work with Other Churches Romans 16:17-18
Lack of Internal Discipline Matthew 18:15-18

Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

Fellowship Broken with Identified False Teaching Church Only After Conviction
Reached that “Admonition is of No Further Avail” Romans 16:17-18
Manifest Also by Toleration of Fraternal Benefit Societies Which Promote
Teachings Contrary to Scripture Romans 16:17-18

Semi-Religious Organizations

While not churches or religious organizations per se, some organizations hold religious principles contrary to Scripture. All who participate are required to hold membership and thus automatically share in those beliefs.

Lodges And Scouting

Deny Triune God and Deity of Christ Matthew 28:19; Colossians 2:9
Lump all Religions into One; All are Good John 14:6
Teach Salvation by Works Ephesians 2:8-9
Membership Implies Approval and Agreement Matthew 10:32-33

Fraternal Benefit Societies

Unites All Policyholders Regardless of Beliefs in Various Forms of Religious
Fellowship and Church Work Romans 16:17-18
Requires Membership of All Policyholders Romans 16:17-18

The History of Christianity - Part 1 (From Creation to Christ)

Old Testament History

Throughout the four time line sheets which follow, the preservation of God's Truth is represented by the center line crossing the middle of the page. Here in the Old Testament times, it follows the ancestry of the Savior and the nation of Israel and Judah. On the following page, all others lines departing from that center line represent unbelieving nations.

The History of Christianity - Part 2 (From Christ to 1500 A.D.)

Early New Testament History The Formation of the Roman Catholic Church

Despite the extension and growth of the early Christian Church in the days of the Apostles, Satan eventually weakened the visible church through formalism and indifference. The dotted line on the following page indicates a time when Catholicism developed and dominated, when there was no true-teaching visible church. Yet God preserved His Word and His faithful and eventually raised up Martin Luther.

The History of Christianity - Part 3 (From 1500 to 1900 A.D.)

Recent New Testament History

The Formation of Lutheran and Protestant Churches

The fathers of the two groups mentioned above were Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli. The differences between Zwingli and Luther explain the origins of most other Protestant churches and the differences in belief between the Lutheran and Reformed churches.

General differences:

- Do not believe in Original Sin
- Do not believe in infant Baptism
- Do not believe in the Real Presence of Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper.
- Believe in Election to Salvation and Damnation
- Believe in Millennialism (1000 year earthly kingdom of peace and prosperity ruled by Christ and His Church - misinterpretation of Revelation 20 and other passages).

Note that the four churches on the bottom right of the following page (Seventh Day Adventists, Mormons, Pentecostals, and Jehovah's Witnesses) are without any historical Christian origins as is reflected in many of their beliefs.

The History of American Lutheranism (From 1800 to present)

The History of Lutheran Synods in America

The story of American Lutheranism is a sad one as through compromise and merger American Lutherans have sought the lowest possible confessional denominator in the interest of tolerance and numerical strength. Some have so forsaken their Lutheran heritage and denied the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture that even the name Lutheran is a misnomer. May God keep us faithful in these last days!

Church of the Lutheran Confession

The Church of the Lutheran Confession aims to be what its name implies – a church that continues to uphold the Scriptural teachings and Christian values which God restored through the Lutheran Reformation some 400 years ago.

The historic Lutheran creeds, especially the Augsburg Confession, make it clear that salvation is a gift of God's grace, that Jesus Christ paid the full price - His life - for that gift, and that the Holy Spirit works repentance and kindles the faith through which one receives the blessing of salvation.

The Foundation

The foundation for such saving faith is the Bible, which is the Scripture that cannot be broken. Since "*all Scripture is given by inspiration of God,*" it is completely reliable. It is the only safe basis for faith and true guide for living.

Limits

Our teachings and practices are as narrow and as broad as the Scriptures themselves. The Bible does not require a certain form of church service, nor a particular type of music, nor any specific kind of church building. The Bible does specify what we are to "*teach all nations.*" To His great commission our Savior added, significantly: "*Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you.*" There is no liberty to tamper with His teachings.

Fellowship

There is common approval of alliances being fashioned today in pursuit of unity; even when such are made at the expense of the Christian witness. Toleration is asked even for outright denial of such basic Biblical teaching as the deity of Christ, the virgin birth, the natural sinfulness of man, and redemption through Christ alone.

In opposition to this trend we maintain that unity of doctrine is necessary for a God-pleasing organizational unity and fellowship, since the Apostolic Word requires an avoidance of errorists. Yet we are anxious always to extend the hand of fellowship to individuals and groups under conditions of harmony in the doctrine of Scripture.