

Open Letter to Bishop Hanson from Bishop Emeritus George Paul Mocko

July 20, 2007

The Rev. Mark S. Hanson, Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Chicago, Illinois

Dear Mark,

All my life I have been proud to call myself a Lutheran. Given my Hussite roots, I have quipped that I was a Lutheran a hundred years before Luther. That pride is not what it was, as I feel it breaking down before feelings of betrayal and alienation. This is happening as I watch my church, like a juggernaut follow the path of the ECUSA (The Episcopal Church USA) in the matters of the ordination of those openly living in homosexual relationships and the blessing and marrying of those in such relationships.

We ignore what this is doing to the ECUSA: it faces schism; it has become a pariah in Africa; the welcome mats from Rome and Constantinople have been pulled back; membership and income losses were recently described in "The Christian Century" as "precipitous." But undeterred, we push forward, apparently ready to accept the same sort of results.

Why? Is it because some new exegetical revelation has burst upon us? No. All attempts to claim that come up against the wall that every reference to homosexual practice in our scripture gives a clear negative judgment. Yet we would pronounce it blessed.

So next we launch into a study on the authority of Scripture, which, excuse me, early signs are that it will tell us that we can continue to claim that Scripture is the "source and norm of our faith and life," as we clearly brush aside Scripture and turn to other sources and norms. We are preparing to sell our birthright as the foremost biblical theologians of the West for the pottage of this culture's approval, as we accommodate to its desires and demands in its extraordinary and overwhelming obsession with, and, worship of sex. What hubris possesses this generation to think it is qualified to rewrite the teaching of what has been the faith for 2,000 years, and a thousand before that.

If we succeed in doing this, we will sacrifice the credibility of all our teaching. The very thing that has made our teaching notable has been its solid rootage in Scripture. Make that optional, take it away, and, who cares what we say about anything?

I read with deep appreciation the paper on the authority of Scripture produced by bishop Paull Spring, and Lutheran CORE. I hope there may still be hope for us.

In Christ,

George Paul Mocko
Bishop Emeritus, Delaware-Maryland Synod, ELCA