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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"We beheld His glory,
the glory as of the only-
begotten of the Father,
full of grace and truth."

— John 1:14

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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.

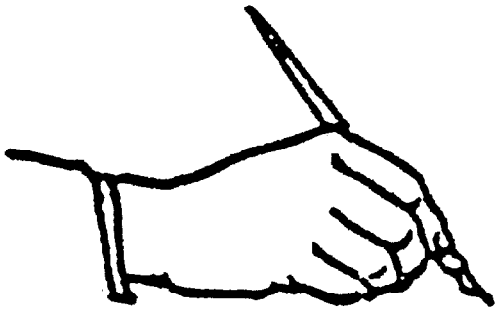
To show that we do not have among us a mixture of divergent teachings but that we are "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

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

DEAD ORTHODOXY

Dead orthodox, repristinationists, word worshipers, biblicists, hate mongers, separatists, etc., are all terms of reproach which have been used down through the centuries against those who support the Scriptural Principle of Sola Scriptura, namely, that the Bible is God's Word in all its words and parts; that it is the only Source and Norm of all Christian doctrine and practice; that it must be taught and upheld in its full truth and purity and all error denounced and all errorists and their followers avoided, and that it is this Word of God alone through which people, who are lost and condemned by nature, are brought to a saving knowledge of Jesus, their Savior. This, of course, we all know – as it is set forth in the *Sketch* of our Doctrinal Position.

Modern liberal theology looks at the lives of individuals and regards as Christians all those who claim to be "born again" and who want to live decent and upright lives in accordance with what is known as the Judeo-Christian Ethic. Modern liberals in external Christendom are unionistic and syncretistic – joining together in religious work and worship with any who regard themselves as Christians and even with professed heathen.

Modernistic liberals in the so-called Lutheran bodies of our day, for fear of becoming dead orthodox, also place stress on the outward Christian life (which they call Christian fellowship), on socializing, on antinomianism which waters down the Word of God, and on promoting good feelings in the heart and a peaceful relationship among their members. I've heard liberal Lutheran pastors declare, "I spend so much of my time with

various social programs and the building program that I have very little time to teach and instruct the members of my congregation in the Word of God – which, of course, most of them are not interested in anyway and, besides that, we have an educational director who takes care of that ministry for those who are interested." Over 50 years ago, when liberalism was just beginning to make inroads into the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, the majority of your fellow seminarians laughed at you if you told them, "Of course I'm going to teach my people the three genera in the doctrine of the personal union of the two natures in Christ and the communication of attributes." The Scriptural Principle in doctrine and practice began to be swallowed up by the desire to build the Church by means of man's wisdom and social appeal. The watchword became, "Don't rock the boat by insisting that the members of your congregation learn or memorize anything from the Word of God. That will just turn them off and you will ruin your congregation!" "If you try to apply the Word of God to the personal faith and life of your people and warn them against error and errorists, you will be accused of preaching hate from the pulpit." "Just be content to preach the positive truths of God's Word and let the people make their own judgments!" So the fear of dead orthodoxy turns into heterodoxy and into a definite tendency toward heathenism. Doctrine and practice in accordance with the pure teachings of God's Word is shunted into the background in the so-called Christian church-world of today and even among those who claim to be Lutherans.

There **is**, of course, such a thing as "**dead** orthodoxy," and the danger of falling into this insidious trap of Satan is present at all times even when and where it is least expected. A pastor may think that as long as he preaches orthodox sermons once a week, this is sufficient to keep his congregation alive and from falling prey to dead orthodoxy. Another may feel that belonging to an orthodox synod or conference is what is necessary for the spiritual life of his people – having orthodox Sunday School materials, orthodox tracts, orthodox hymnals, an orthodox book-store, orthodox essays at conventions, etc. These things, although very important, do not keep away the threat of dead orthodoxy. Dead orthodoxy is a dread disease which, through the machinations of Satan, inflicts itself upon congregations and church bodies who have, teach, and confess the Word of God in its full truth and purity.

A dead orthodox pastor may therefore be one who is ever so careful about preaching only what is substantiated by Scripture and scrupulously avoids preaching false doctrine, and yet makes little or no effort to influence the hearts and lives of his hearers. He may have an excellent command of the language and be able to set forth the doctrines of Holy Writ in wonderful words, so that the people remark about his great learning and how wonderful he is to listen to, and how nicely he sets forth the teachings of God's Word and rejects error and the wickedness in the world, BUT he applies very little to his own people in plain and simple language so that "Hansel and Gretchen behind the door" can apply it to what they should personally believe and how they should live. Such a dead orthodox pastor may belong to a small group of conservative Lutheran pastors. He may belong to a "Chicago Study Club" or to a "Lutherans Alert National" or to a "Lutheran Concerns" group, and his family may have suffered much because of his conservative stand on the Scriptures. He may have endured deprivation and slander as the result of his forthright testimony for the pure teachings of God's Word, **BUT** ARE THE MEMBERS OF HIS CONGREGATION taught to LEARN and to MEMORIZE THE WORD OF GOD, and are they taught HOW to apply it to themselves as to what they should personally believe; to apply it to each one's own particular position or station in life, and HOW to use it in their association with others and in the world about them – in school, in the workplace, at home, and in church – with their friends, relatives, and casual acquaintances? If this is **not** done through thorough instruction in Sunday School, Confirmation instruction classes, and in various Bible Classes, as well as through good sermons in response to which each member must say, "He means ME!", the door is wide open for Satan to destroy such a congregation through "**dead** orthodoxy!"

Now, by God's grace alone, our little Conference has been singularly blessed with men who earnestly desire to preach and teach only that which is in full harmony with God's Word, and to insist that the Word of God, and it only, must be the basis for every Christian's faith and life, and that, therefore, it must be learned and known by the members of their respective congregations for their souls' health. It must be applied to what they believe and how they live, not in order to be Christians, but because they ARE Christians who trust only in the Lord Jesus for their salvation and earnestly desire to show their faith in Him and their sincere

love for Him by the way they **use and apply** His Word in their lives – thus giving their lives meaning, direction, and purpose, and in this way, by God's grace and power alone, avoiding the dangers and pitfalls of **dead** orthodoxy.

— P.R.B.

For detailed information about our Conference, we invite you to visit our official Web Site!

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http://www.concordialutheranconf.com

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"So Teach Us to Number Our Days, That We May Apply Our Hearts Unto Wisdom"

—Psalm 90:12

Anxiety about the future. This is particularly the case as we approach the year 2000. Much is being said, written, and pondered about how society will make the shift to the 21st century. Will computer glitches shut down everything from airports to Wall Street? Will there be another great depression such as was experienced in our country in the late 20s and early 30s? These and many other questions have been occupying the news media and will probably intensify throughout this year of 1999. Just this last month we read about an office on the Boston University campus which will track worldwide occurrences at the turn of the century. This center not only maintains a site on the World Wide Web, but even publishes a quarterly newsletter, hosts a monthly discussion group, runs periodic educational programs, and sponsors an annual conference. It is hoped that such research will persuade businesses and individuals to take the Y2K problem (the term coined to describe computers' inability to deal with dates after Dec. 31, 1999) more seriously than many already do.

Anxiety about the future. This is the characteristic of those who still grope about in the kingdom of darkness. *"What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek"* (Matt. 6:31,32). The worldly-minded seek to eliminate the thought that there will be an end to their days. Hence their motto is: *"eat, drink, and be merry!"* They try to dismiss the thought that our life consists of a certain number of days which have been set and determined by God and when that number is reached, our end is here and we must die. And what then? *"It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment"* (Heb. 9:27). And here we observe the power of the prince of darkness over his subjects in the kingdom of darkness. One would think that every corpse they look upon in a coffin, every cemetery with its tombstones, every sickness which descends upon

them, would cause them such concern that they would then seek to number their days and apply them to wisdom. But, alas, such is usually not the case! The devil has such a grip upon their hearts and minds, and, being ruled by their sinful flesh, the devil's ally, they lay captive in Satan's domain. And, of themselves, they have no power to free themselves from the shackles of their captivity because *"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"* (I Cor. 2:14). The children of the world are not moved to apply their hearts unto wisdom; instead, they go on caring for this life but not for that which is to come.

Anxiety about the future. Can this possibly apply to us as Christians? Look at the text. Moses saw that evil lurking, not only in the people of his generation, but also in his own heart. Therefore, he does not pray: Lord, teach the unbelievers to number their days, but he includes himself and says, *"Lord, teach* ***us*** *to number our days."* And every sincere Christian joins Moses in this prayer. It cannot be otherwise! After all, we dare not forget that even though we have been translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the marvelous light of Christ's glorious Kingdom and have the new man which the Holy Spirit has brought into existence through the Gospel, we still have, as Luther so aptly describes, that old sack which we must carry with us until we die – our sinful flesh. Every single one of us must confess with the great Apostle Paul, *"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"* (Rom. 7:18). Thus our flesh constantly seeks to cause us to be so anxiously concerned about the things of this world that we forget to number our days and apply our hearts unto wisdom. That is why we observe the warning directed to us as Christians: *"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world"* (I John 2:15). And how many who once laid claim to that name have succumbed and made shipwreck of their faith! Not one of us is immune to these temptations, and the resulting spiritual fatalities are often sadly observed in our congregations!

Anxiety about the future. Here we observe the great difference between the true Christian and the sham Christian. For he who prays with Moses that the Lord would teach him, will also listen to the Lord when He teaches him wisdom concerning his end in His Word. He listens when

God tells him that death is the wages of sin, that sin arouses God's wrath to such an extent that *"the wages of sin is death"* (Rom. 6:23). The true Christian agrees with Moses when he writes in this psalm, *"We are consumed by Thine anger, and by Thy wrath are we troubled. Thou hast set our iniquities before Thee, our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance"* (90:7,8). The true Christian also listens and rejoices when he hears that *"the Lord, the Lord God, (is) merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin"* (Ex. 34:6,7); that this mercy revealed itself in sparing not His own Son but gave Him up for us all; that He laid upon Him the iniquity of us all, and won for us the forgiveness of our sins and the resurrection from the dead unto life everlasting. Now we do not have to fear the coming judgment since *"there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus"* (Rom. 8:1). For *"he that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life"* (John 3:36).

Anxiety about the future. We Christians need not be and should not be! He who has so richly provided for our spiritual welfare in Christ Jesus also promises us that the necessities of life will always be there. And God is not a man that He should lie (Num. 23:19). God manifest in the flesh promises those who seek His kingdom and His righteousness **first** that *"all these things shall be added unto you"* (Matt. 6:33). Whatever future events may take place in our lives and no matter how dark the cloud that may arise on the horizon, as long as we apply our hearts to the heavenly wisdom which our dear Lord gives us in His Word, we can meet the contingencies of the future without anxiety and fear. Trusting in the providence of Him who never makes a mistake and leaning upon the sustaining promises of His Word that He will never forsake us – our faith will never be put to shame!

— M.L.N.

The Purpose of Christ's Miracles

"This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory; and His disciples believed on Him." — John 2:11

We commonly define a *miracle* as a phenomenon which defies scientific explanation on the basis of natural law, a feat of which man is incapable without divine assistance or empowerment, or a work that only God Himself can do. [Because of his avowed enmity against God and his efforts to destroy God's works, we do not regard as *true* miracles supernatural works done by Satan and at his wicked behest, such as those performed by false prophets (Matthew 7:22-23) and those claimed particularly by the Papacy (II Thessalonians 2:9).] Indeed, for the *"fool"* who denies the existence of God (Psalm 14:1), for the skeptic who questions the validity of anything that cannot be empirically verified, and for the rationalist who subjects everything to the test of reason, there is no such thing as a *miracle*, only an occasional "unexplained" and "unsolved mystery." In this "scientific" and "enlightened" age characterized by the worship of "self," the arrogance of human intellect, the philosophy of "secular humanism," and the denial of a personal God, every *miracle* from the creation of the world to the resurrection of Jesus Christ is either rejected out of hand or is reduced to the status of mere myth or legend.

And for the sectarian, who, contrary to his profession of Christian faith, truly accepts and believes John Calvin's axiom that "the finite is not capable of the infinite" [*finitum non capax infiniti*], there is no *real* miracle either. The Reformed, therefore, categorically deny, for example, the *real presence* of Christ's true body and blood in the Lord's Supper, claiming that His body is locally enclosed in heaven and that His truly human, finite body is incapable of being really present *"at once in many places"* to be partaken of by countless communicants over twenty centuries. At the very same time, however, they show themselves to be grossly inconsistent by accepting as fact Jesus' feeding of five thousand people out of a child's lunch box containing a finite number of rolls and fishes and by acknowledging Jesus' *"beginning of miracles,"* namely, the changing of over a hundred gallons of common wash water into high

quality premium wine. "What difference does it make anyway whether Jesus *really* did such things?" some may ask. "Does the acknowledgment or denial of miracles constitute a 'fundamental' difference between Christians??"

The question itself reduces to the absurd the public ministry and prophetic office of Jesus Christ, as if His innumerable miracles (John 21:25) were meaningless, not only as to their effect upon those for whose immediate benefit they were performed, but also as to their salutary purpose *for US,* for whose benefit they were recorded (John 20:31). Was Jesus, in their view, the transparent side-show artist that King Herod Antipas regarded Him to be, who merely *entertained* people from time to time with *"some miracle"* (Luke 23:8)? Surely no one who holds such an opinion can be considered a Christian!

Moreover, those who either deny or minimize the importance of Jesus' miracles seem to forget that Isaiah, over seven hundred years in advance, prophesied by inspiration of the Holy Ghost that the long-promised Messiah would be able to be positively identified by His preaching and by the very specific *miracles* which He would perform. Concerning the latter, Isaiah wrote: *"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing"* (Isaiah 35:5-6). Jesus pointed the disciples of John the Baptist to THIS POSITIVE IDENTIFICATION of **Himself** as the very Messiah of God, the Savior of the world, when He told them: *"Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me"* (Matthew 11:4-6). On another occasion, shortly after His temptation by the devil, in a Sabbath-day sermon in a synagogue of Nazareth, Jesus read Isaiah 61:1-2, in which **the Messiah Himself** speaks of His God-anointed prophetic office and says: *"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord . . . ."* And, in His exposition of this text, Jesus stated for all to hear, to *"bear*

witness," and to *"wonder at,"* this identification of **Himself**: *"This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears"* (Luke 4:16ff.).

The Jews of Jesus' day could not refute this prophetic evidence of His Messianic office, for Nicodemus, *"a man of the Pharisees ... a ruler of the Jews"* admitted on behalf of his colleagues: *"Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him"* (John 3:1-2). Yet, in spite of this evidence, the Jews generally and especially their leaders rejected Him as the Messiah, rejecting also the word of the Gospel of which Peter reminded them in Acts 10:36ff, *"The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (He is Lord of all:) that word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him ... to Him give all the prophets witness, that through His Name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins."* In fact, when the Jews challenged Jesus (John 10:24), *"How long dost Thou make us to doubt? If Thou be the Christ, tell us plainly,"* Jesus Himself answered them: *"I told you, and ye believed not. The **works** that I do in My Father's Name, they **bear witness** of Me. ... If I do not the works of My Father, believe Me not. But if I do, though ye believe not **Me**, believe the **works**, that ye may know and believe that the Father is in Me and I in Him"* (vv. 25, 37-38).

This challenge of the Lord Jesus in His Epiphany to men, in His manifestation of Himself as the Son of God and the Redeemer of the world, is before us still today: *"Believe the works! They bear witness of Me!"* For in His miracles the Savior not only demonstrated His merciful kindness toward those for whose immediate benefit they were performed; He also *"manifested forth His glory,"* as He did at the wedding in Cana (John 2:11), for His disciples to behold, *"the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth"* (John 1:14b). And those miracles had the desired, God-ordained effect, for *"His disciples believed on Him."* The miracles are also recorded in the Scriptures for US, *"upon whom the ends of the world are come"* (I Corinthians 10:11). Jesus, of course, in His going about and doing good (Acts 10:38) during His public ministry, as a function of His prophetic office, did *"**many other***

[miraculous] ***things*** " than those written down in the Gospels, *"which,"* says John, *"if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written"* (John 21:25). That fact, in and of itself, is truly amazing! [Of bogus "saints," whom the Roman Antichrist "canonizes" as mediators between God and men in direct competition with and contradiction of Christ's High Priestly office, only **two** "documented" miracles – only **two** *"signs and lying wonders"* – are required by the "Holy Father" to take advantage of the *"strong delusion,"* created by God Himself in those who reject justification by grace alone, for Christ's sake alone, through faith alone, *"that they should believe a lie"!* (II Thessalonians 2:9-12)]

But **the purpose of CHRIST'S miracles** recorded in Holy Writ is clear and indisputable: *"These are written* ***that ye might*** *BELIEVE that* ***Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God,*** *and that believing* ***ye might*** *HAVE LIFE* ***through His Name"*** (John 20:31), the most salutary purpose of all. For His miracles have, for OUR sakes, validated Jesus of Nazareth not only as *"the Mighty God"* but as *"the Prince of Peace,"* (Isaiah 9:6), *"the Holy One of Israel, [our] Savior"* (Isaiah 43:3). The record of His miracles has thus been made a functional part of the **Gospel** message, *"the power of God unto salvation,"* through which the Holy Spirit operates in our hearts to *"make [us] wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus"* (II Timothy 3:15). May we therefore treasure the holy record of our Savior's miracles, value the manifestation of His glory to us, cling to the validation of His office as our anointed Redeemer, and ever confide in the forgiveness of all our sins by virtue of His perfect vicarious atonement!

Manifest at Jordan's stream,
Prophet, Priest, and King supreme,
and at Cana, Wedding-Guest,
in Thy Godhead manifest;
manifest in power divine,
changing water into wine.
Anthems be to Thee addressed,
God in man made manifest!

(L.H. 134, 2)

— D.T.M.

"And His Name Shall Be Called... Counsellor"

"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His Name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

— Isaiah 9:6

Counselor: That is one of the names that Isaiah, often referred to as the Evangelist of the Old Testament, gives to the Messiah, to our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed, the Name Jesus, which like these others is given Him by divine inspiration, is the combination of all the Old Testament titles used to designate the Christ according to His nature and His works. The names contained in chapter 7:14 (Immanuel) and here in chapter 9 have continued throughout the history of believers, from the time of Isaiah downwards in the mouths of all who have confessed His Name and trusted in Him alone for salvation. There is not one of these glorious Names attributed to our Savior under which believers of all ages have not worshiped, and adored, and praised Him. It's impossible to take one of these appellations and pick it out of the crowd as a favorite or as more important than the other. And so the Name "Counselor," like all the rest, has a special meaning for us as believers in the Christ which Isaiah foretold by divine inspiration and which we, by grace, have witnessed, we who by faith have beheld His glory, ***"the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth"*** (John 1:14).

"Counselor" and "counseling" are concepts with which we are bombarded today – on every side. We can hardly pick up a newspaper today without reading about the President's "counselors" explaining away his behavior. The president, like government leaders of every age, has dozens, maybe even hundreds of counselors to advise him on every conceivable aspect of policy, both foreign and domestic – policies which affect us. There are counselors to tell you how to lose weight. There are

counselors to tell you how to eat a diet which will prevent a myriad of illnesses and maladies, from things as common as pimples to diseases as serious as breast cancer and heart disease. There are counselors to tell you how to be successful, how to be happy, how to get along with people, how to be a good husband, how to be a good wife, how to raise your children. There are even "counselors" who, for a price, of course, will supposedly tell you how to make thousands of dollars a month without really working for it. Some of these counselors are harmless; some can even be helpful; but many of these so-called "counselors" are dangerous – even deadly, for they claim to speak for God!

By definition, a counselor is simply one who gives advice, one who counsels another how to live. The problem with the vast majority of so-called spiritual counselors today is that they know nothing of our Lord Jesus Christ, and so the advice they give is useless. According to these modern spiritual counselors, there are all kinds of new roads to God, stretching from a resurgence of the Eastern cults such as Hinduism and Islam to the vacuous New-Age rubbish of Ron Hubbard's Scientology and dianetics. People who counsel this kind of pabulum Christians normally can mark and avoid (Rom. 16:17). But there are also the so-called "Christian" counselors. Their counsel, their advice, is far more dangerous because it so often sounds so good, so loving, and therefore, these counselors ***"by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple"*** (Rom. 16:18). And they are doubly dangerous because oft times they don't even describe themselves as counselors. How much heartache does an author like Keith Miller in his A Taste of New Wine and A Second Touch cause people when he tells them how they should live **if** they are going to live *truly* Christ-filled lives? Though surely well intentioned, what he and others like him counsel is not Scriptural, no matter how good it may look or feel. It is a theology based upon emotions, not upon the sure Word of God. And there are hundreds of Keith Millers in the marketplace, all of them trying to "counsel" people, to help them find a richer relationship with Christ, but doing so apart from the Word of the Living God. So their counsel is not just worthless, it is dangerous; it can be faith-destroying and thus damning counsel.

The counsel of an orthodox Christian pastor is always solidly rooted in the Word of God. Indeed, the truly orthodox pastor counsels nothing apart from that Word. Of course, the counsel of the faithful Christian

pastor is *always* a derived counsel, a counsel that comes from the great and perfect Counselor, our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is of the greatest comfort to Christians that, included in the names given the Christ in this prophecy of Isaiah, is the appellation of Counselor. It describes our Savior in His Mediatorial, or Priestly Office. As our great High Priest (Heb. 4:14-16), Jesus *is* the **ultimate** Counselor, He from whom all other legitimate counsel flows. He needs no counselor Himself for He **is** Wisdom, He **is** all-knowing, He **is** Truth, He **is** the **mighty God** Himself. Unlike the advice of other counselors, the advice of this Counselor is always right, always perfect, always and absolutely for our good, and it is always true. We need not weigh the counsel of Jesus to determine its reliability, for it is always absolutely and totally reliable. And His counsel is personal. Even as one hears the Word of God preached or taught, or opens his Bible and reads it himself, it is the Christ Himself who speaks to him; His Word is a revelation of Himself, of His Father, and of the Holy Spirit; it is the epiphany of God's plan of salvation through the Counselor Himself. And Jesus' counsel is aimed at one thing, given for a single purpose: the salvation of your soul; indeed, its purpose is that ***"[you] might have life, and that [you] might have it more abundantly"*** (John 10:10).

Finally, it is interesting to note that the appellation, counselor, has taken on a meaning now which it did not have at the time that Isaiah wrote. A counselor today also can refer to a lawyer, an advocate for one before a court of law. Though Isaiah was probably not thinking in these terms when he described Jesus as the Counselor, it's not wrong for us to do so today. For Jesus is our Advocate, our Counselor or lawyer, so to speak, before the Father, representing us before the judgment seat of God, pleading His blood as the expiation for our sins. As Scripture testifies, ***"If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous: and He is the Propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world"*** (I John 2:1,2). Indeed, this is the ultimate work of Christ our Counselor: He counsels us with the good news of our salvation through His substitutionary work – He fulfilled the Law of God for us because we could not; He took upon Himself all our sins and suffered the wrath of God against them, forever removing the curse of damnation from those who by grace, through faith, trust in this truth for their eternal salvation. There is no greater counsel

any one can receive; there is no greater counsel that any one could give; and there is only one Counselor who was able not only to declare it unto us, but also to accomplish it in our stead and work faith in our hearts in its truth. May we thank God with all our hearts, all our souls, and all our minds that the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world for us to deliver us from sin, to give to us eternal life, and to give us life and give it more abundantly. *"And His Name shall be called ... Counsellor!"*

— M.W.D.

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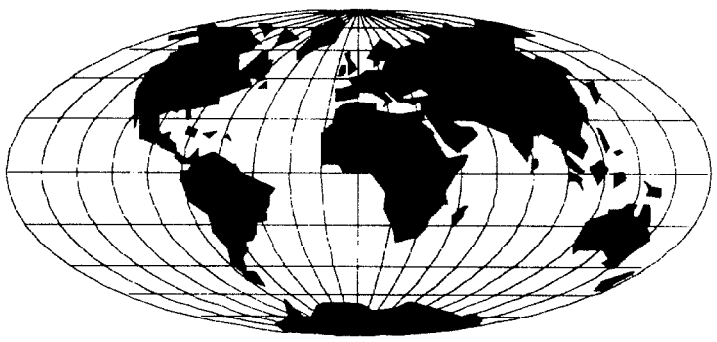
with editorial comment

by M. L. Natterer



For millions of Americans, and especially for baby boomers, the demands of the Information Age are colliding with a sense of waning vigor. "When boomers were in their 30s and 40s, they launched the fitness boom," says Cynthia Green, the psychologist who teaches Mount Sinai's memory class. "Now we have the mental-fitness boom. Memory is the boomers' new life-crisis issue." And, of course, a major marketing opportunity. The demand for books and seminars has never been greater, says Jack Lannom, a Baptist minister and longtime memory trainer whose weekly TV show, "Mind Unlimited," goes out to 33 million homes on the Christian Network. Anxious consumers are rushing to buy do-it-yourself programs like Kevin Trudeau's "Mega Memory," a series of audiotapes that sells for $49.97. And supplement makers are touting everything but sawdust as a brain booster ... (*Newsweek*, June 15, 1998)

Our mind is a precious gift from God. With Luther we Christians confess, "I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still preserves them" ... That means that we should make the proper use of our minds. We must fight against the evil thoughts which arise out of our minds because of our sinful flesh. The Lord Jesus reminds us that "out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man" (Matt. 15:19,20). We must be careful what we place into our minds and memories. Our minds should not be a dumping ground for needless

trash. First and foremost we should let the saving Word of Christ dwell in us richly (Col. 3:16). That means not only reading the Scriptures, but also committing to memory as many Bible passages as we can, so that we have an arsenal from which to draw the pertinent proof to silence the false prophet, the reservoir to dip into when we are afflicted and tempted, the balm with which to comfort our souls in the hour of death. Our memorizing should also include some of the fine Scriptural hymns found in our Lutheran Hymnal. Obviously not all of us have the same gift when it comes to memorizing. Some time ago we read about a man who memorized Homer's ILIAD (poem written in the 700's B.C. and divided into 24 books) in the original Greek. It took this man several years to accomplish his task. It was an extraordinary feat, no doubt about it. But with a memory like that, how much better it would have been if that amount of effort and time were spent in memorizing the "one thing needful" (Luke 10:42). In our instruction classes we ask our catechumens to memorize the Bible passages in Luther's Small Catechism. We want their minds to be veritable storehouses containing the perfect weapon to fight against the wiles of the devil, the desires of their sinful flesh, and the allurements of the world.

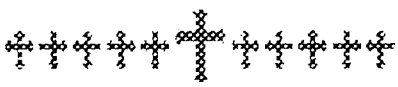
The number of unmarried couples in America has topped 4 million for the first time. As laid out in Census Bureau estimates over the years, the phenomenon closely reflects the sexual revolution of the last quarter-century. The Census Bureau estimated that fewer than a half-million couples lived together outside marriage in 1960. The total did not top 1 million until 1978 and then passed the 2 million mark in 1986, and 3 million in 1991 ... The bureau attributed the steady increase to a tendency among young people in recent years to delay marriage, or to try life as a couple before making a formal commitment. The new estimate, which is being released today, is included in an update of the Census Bureau's annual report "Marital Status and Living Arrangements." It also disclosed that of the unwed couples, 1.47 million, or about 36 percent, had children younger than 15 ... (The Associated Press, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, July 27, 1998)

There surely can be no doubt about it! We are living in the last evil days of the world! All about us we observe the fulfillment of those prophecies which describe the last days. And the Lord Jesus says, "when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28). The Lord Jesus foretells that these last days will be like Sodom and Gomorrah (Luke 17:28-30; cp. Gen. 19). Licentiousness and immorality abound and openly flaunt themselves in bold defiance of God's Law! Marriage is God's institution and therefore "whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favor of the Lord" (Prov. 18:22). Marriage involves a commitment, a pledge, between a man and a woman to remain together until they are parted by death (Rom. 7:2). Those who live together outside of marriage will only succeed in incurring the wrath of God. "Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge", and "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 13:4; 10:31). Part-time live-in arrangements between a man and a woman "to try life as a couple before making a formal commitment" is contrary to God's Law. How sad that our government and laws tolerate such conditions. How foolish that so many women enter into such an arrangement only to be left with a child (children) when the man finds someone else he would rather shack up with. And what a burden it then becomes upon the rest of the citizens whose taxes are raised to support those women who bear children resulting from such unscriptural unions. On the other hand, what a blessing when man and woman enter into marriage in the fear of God and earnestly seek to do His Will! "O blessed home where man and wife together lead a godly life, by deeds their faith confessing! There many a happy day is spent, there Jesus gladly will consent to tarry

The question of religious belief among U.S. scientists has been debated since early in the century. Our latest survey finds that, among the top natural scientists, disbelief is greater than ever -- almost total. Research on this topic began with the eminent American psychologist James Leuba and his landmark survey of 1914. He found that 58 percent of 1,000 randomly selected U.S. scientists expressed disbelief or doubt in the existence of God, and that this figure rose to near 70 percent among the 400 "greater" scientists within his sample. Mr. Leuba repeated his survey later, and found that these percentages had increased to 67 percent and 85 percent, respectively ... This year, we closely imitated the second phase of Mr. Leuba's 1914 survey to gauge belief among "greater" scientists, and found the rate of belief lower than ever -- a mere 7 percent of respondents. Mr. Leuba attributed the higher level of disbelief and doubt among "greater" scientists to their "superior knowledge, understanding, and experience" ... Our chosen group of "greater" scientists were members of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS). Our survey found near universal rejection of the transcendent by NAS natural scientists. Disbelief in God and immortality among NAS biological scientists was 65.2 percent and 69 percent respectively, and among NAS physical scientists, it was 79 percent and 76.3 percent ... (*Washington Times*, July 30, 1998)

The Lord warns us that "great men are not always wise" (Job 32:10). The list of degrees after the individual's name means nothing in the sight of God. Here is God's pronouncement upon those who deny the existence of God: "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good" (Ps. 14:1). No matter how learned the individual may be in the things of this world, he is but dust and ashes. The time inevitably comes when he must die. And then what? He must stand before the Judgment Seat of the almighty God, whose existence he has denied, and hear the sentence pronounced, "Depart from Me, ye accursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25:41). O what foolishness when people place their confidence in the learning of men and not in the wisdom of God! "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord" (Jer. 17:5). Those who arrogantly reject the Lord and His salvation because of their so-called "superior wisdom" and those who follow them "shall be punished with everlast-

ing destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power" (II Thess. 1:9). True wisdom is found among those who live in daily repentance and true faith in the Lord Jesus and "serve the living and true God; and wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come" (I Thess. 1:9,10).



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