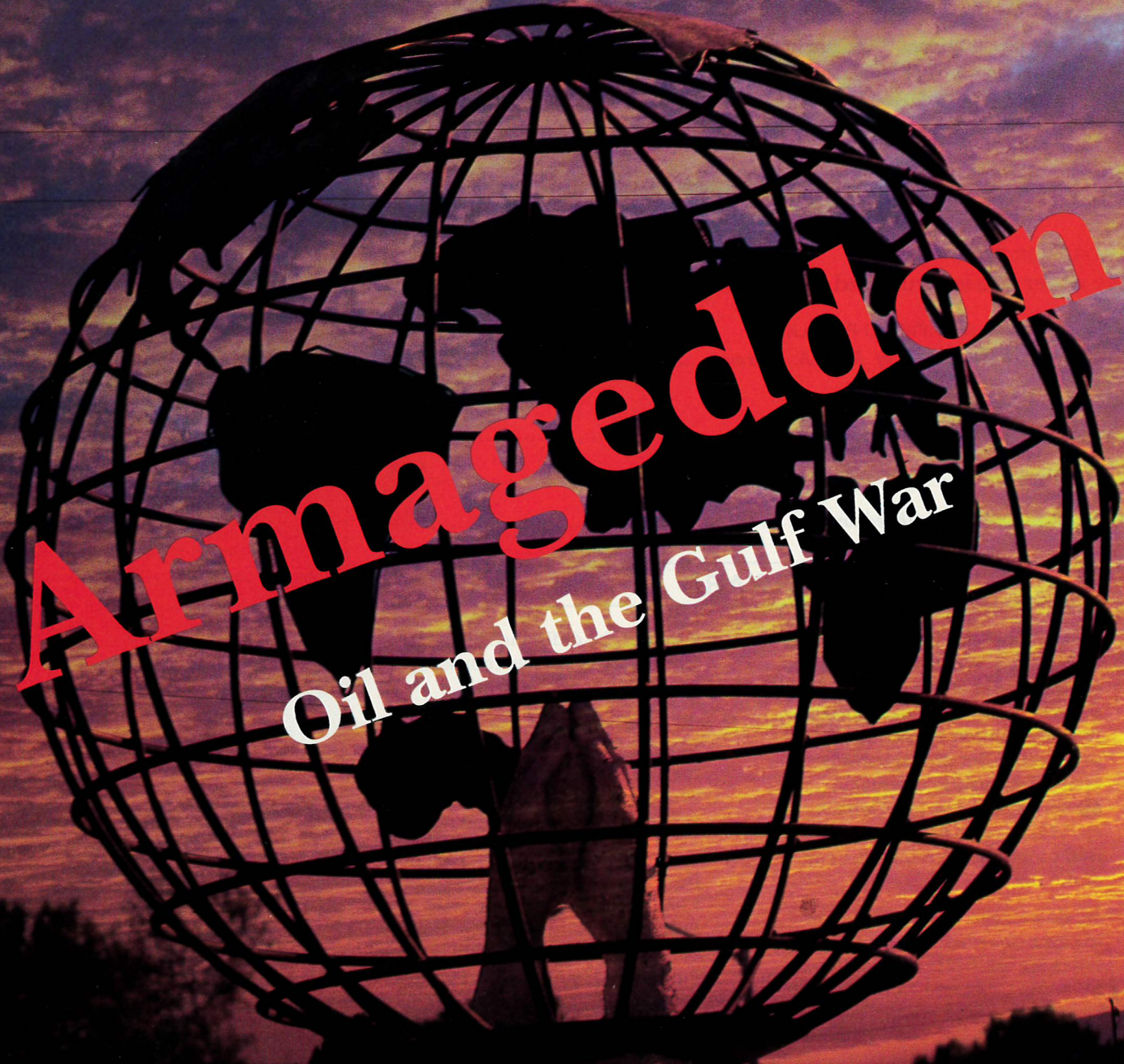


April 15, 1991

the
Northwestern
Lutheran



Armageddon
Oil and the Gulf War

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- A best-selling book by an author who believes the crisis in the Gulf to be one of a series of events leading to the end of the world has spurred a renewed interest in end-time prophecies. But the reestablishment of the nation of Israel in modern times, says Joel Gerlach (p. 144), is not a fulfillment of biblical prophecy foretelling the end of the world.
- Why do we need Christian counseling agencies when secular counselors are available? Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Service closes its series on counseling with

a look at the difference between Christian and secular counseling (p. 148).

- WELS Lutherans for Life offers the hope of God's love along with help for a crisis pregnancy. For a look at what goes on at a pregnancy counseling center, see page 150.
- The photograph on the back page is from a poster developed by Delzer Lithograph of Waukesha, Wis. Pohlman Studios of Milwaukee took the photo. Northwestern Publishing House also had posters printed with the psalm verse.

DJS

*May the Lord our God be with us
 as he was with our fathers;
 may he never leave
 or forsake us.* 1 Kings 8:57

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The other Christ crucified

by Robert H. Hochmuth

Christ crucified, a stumbling block . . . and foolishness. 1 Corinthians 1:23.

In contrast to the Christ you trust and love, in some people's minds there is another Christ crucified. As in a distorted mirror the person seen is a contortion of the real one, so, because of their twisted outlook, they picture a distorted Christ.

One rejected

An impractical idealist who died a wretched death in the prime of life. A failure. That's what our Christ was to those who were looking for an impressive crusader, one who would make the world sit up and take notice by launching a holy campaign to guarantee greater prosperity and earthly security. A Christ who would marshal heaven's resources to make life on earth more enjoyable was the one they were seeking. Such a one could count on their enthusiastic endorsement.

But a Christ whose uppermost concern is to restore sinners to God's family by trading places with the guilty is despised. A Christ whose aim is to change individual hearts through repentance, not just improve surface conditions in society, is detested. A Christ who humbly surrenders himself to be the satisfaction for offenses against a righteous Creator is rejected. In eyes sighting through profane criteria the real Christ is viewed as a let-down, a stumbling block.

Still other eyes, confident of finding answers for the meaning and destiny of human life through their own intellectual quest, disdain what a condemned Galilean carpenter can offer. The good news of pardon and purpose through a bloody, substitutionary death is met with contempt. "Demented nonsense" is one scholar's sneer. This is the crucified Christ seen by self-reliant, unconverted sophisticates.

The fact is, of course, that all human beings are born thinking that their own good living can merit God's favor. By nature none can appreciate the gory, cursed death of Jesus as a necessary payment in their stead.

The one revealed

While the unconverted intellect, downplaying the consuming righteousness of a holy God, may attempt to convince itself it can get along without an atoning Savior, the Holy Spirit convinced the apostle Paul that man's wisdom fails in delivering the guilty offender from the justice of the offended deity. It is God in his unsearchable grace who reveals he has a way to make the guilty fit for citizenship in his heaven; it is his Son hanging on a detestable cross as a substitute for the offenders. Man's wisdom could not alter God's holiness, but God's "folly" transformed sinners from guilty to forgiven.

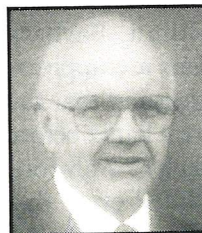
The Father designated the Crucified as our substitute, and the Holy Spirit works through the word to give us a valid image of him who hung there.

How grateful we ought to be that the Spirit has led us to realize that what appears to some as hopeless shame and helpless surrender is in fact God's unparalleled way of accomplishing for us sinners our deliverance, our victory, and our triumph. There is no need for any of us to die guilty or to live in anxiety.

The assurance of the Father's love is ours to cherish, but not to take for granted. You and I trust him, while others reject, not because we have superior intellect, but because the Holy Spirit has convinced us we can never earn God's favor. It is he who has led us to trust there is forgiveness and life gained for us as a gift by Jesus, the crucified, and he has shown us there is no other way.

The real one

The real Christ crucified is the one delivered for our offenses and raised again because our forgiveness is certified by the Father. He's the one Paul proclaimed. He's the one to trust. He's the one who claims our allegiance and still commissions our witness to people for whom he is the only Savior.



Robert Hochmuth is pastor of St. Andrew, Sacramento, California.

Armageddon:

“God no longer has a role for the nation of Israel to play either today or in the future in the unfolding of his master plan for the world.”

One interesting side effect of the Gulf War has been a 25 percent increase in the sale of Bibles in the United States, according to a report in the *New York Times*. At the same time sales of books dealing with end-time prophecies, such as Hal Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth* have nearly tripled.

There are both a good side and a bad side to this sudden surge of interest in the Bible. The good side is that people are turning to God's word for information and insight in a time of crisis. The bad side is that much of that new interest is directed, not toward the Bible's central message of sin and grace, but rather toward peripheral matters having to do with end-time prophecies. Armageddon and Doomsday are the hot topics of special interest.

One man millions of people are turning to for answers to their questions about the end of the world is Dr. John Walvoord. Walvoord is the chancellor of Dallas Theological Seminary. He is regarded by Bible-belt Christians as the leading authority on the Bible's prophecies dealing with the end of the world. His new book, *Armageddon, Oil and the Middle East Crisis*, became a best seller almost overnight. The *Los Angeles Times*' syndicated columnist, Cal Thomas, reviewed the book in his column just after the outbreak of the war in the Gulf. Two days later *USA Today* featured Dr. Walvoord and his book in its Inquiry column. Then in mid-February Dr. Walvoord was in Milwaukee to discuss his book as a guest of WISN radio's talk show host, Mark Belling.

Dr. Walvoord believes that the Gulf War is one of a series of events leading to Armageddon and the second coming of Christ. In *USA Today*'s column, Barbara Reynolds asked Walvoord, "Some Christians are applying biblical prophecy to the Middle East, suggesting that the war could mean Armageddon, the final great battle before Judgment Day. Do you believe that's likely?" Walvoord responded, "Bible prophecy is being fulfilled every day.

The Bible says that the Middle East will be the center of conflict, concern, and world power in the end-time. The Bible predicted that Israel ultimately would be restored to its land. This was contradicted for many years, but Israel returned in 1948. Now the whole world is focusing on the Middle East exactly as the Bible pictures."

According to Dr. Walvoord, the real issue in the Gulf crisis from a Christian point of view is not so much the price of oil in the West as it is the fate of Israel in the East. Israel's reestablishment as a nation is the key to the whole puzzle. And that, Dr. Walvoord insists, was clearly foretold in the Scriptures.

Let's let him speak for himself. In *Armageddon, Oil and the Middle East Crisis* he says, "Along with the Old Testament prophets, He [Jesus] also saw a time when Israel would be reestablished as a nation" (p.20). Again, "A careful study of both history and the Bible is necessary to put the Armageddon calendar together. The reestablishment of the nation of Israel in the Middle East was the necessary start" (p.25). And in chapter five, Palestine: Land of Promise and Travail, he writes, "The present return of Israel to the land sets the stage for an important series of end-time events. Prophecies have clearly predicted that Israel would be reestablished as a nation before the end of the Time of the Gentiles" (p.82).

Walvoord bases his view on his understanding of God's Old Testament covenant promises. God told Abraham, "The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give as an *everlasting possession* to you and your descendants after you" (Genesis 17:8). The prophet Amos concluded his book with a similar promise from God. "I will bring back my exiled people Israel . . . I will plant Israel in their own land, *never again to be uprooted* from the land I have given them" (Amos 9:14-15). Numerous promises like that can be found in the books of the Old Testament prophets.

People who insist that the reestablishment of the mod-

Oil and the Gulf War

by Joel C. Gerlach

ern nation of Israel had to occur because of such prophecies fail to take into consideration the fact that ancient Israel broke its special covenant relationship with God. Because of Israel's unfaithfulness to God, he put a new covenant into effect. Here is how Jeremiah put it: " 'The time is coming,' declares the Lord, 'when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,' declares the Lord" (Jeremiah 31:31-32).

Moses had issued a clear warning to Israel about what would happen if they proved to be unfaithful to God and broke their covenant relationship with him. "If you defile the land," he told his people, "it will vomit you out as it vomited out the nations that were before you" (Leviticus 18:28).

In the year 70 AD that is exactly what happened. The Roman general Titus captured the city of Jerusalem and destroyed it so completely that not one stone was left upon another. Hundreds of thousands of Jews were slain and another 95,000 were dispersed to the far corners of the empire. Jesus had warned that Israel would be dispossessed of its special role as the people of God. He concluded the parable of the tenants with this observation: "Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you (the Jews) and given to a people who will produce its fruit" (Matthew 21:43).

God's new covenant is the instrument God is using to fashion a new Israel to take the place of the old Israel. That new Israel is the holy Christian church, the communion of saints. God's New Testament saints are the "chosen people," the "royal priesthood," the "holy nation," the "people belonging to God" about whom Peter is speaking in 1 Peter 2:9. The "mystery" that God has made known to the world "through the gospel" is that "the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus." (Ephesians 3:6). That "body" of true believers in Jesus is the "Israel" Paul is speaking about when he says, "And so

all Israel will be saved" (Romans 11: 26).

Many students of the Bible fail to realize that when the Old Testament prophets viewed the New Testament church in prophecy, they frequently used literal terms such as Israel, Jerusalem, and Zion in a figurative sense. What those prophets understood clearly was that because the old Israel had failed in its unique mission, God would send to his true Israel Jesus, to create a new Israel to fulfil his mission to the world.

God no longer has a role for the Jews or for the nation of Israel to play either today or in the future in the unfolding of his master plan for the world. Those who contend that the reestablishment of the nation of Israel in modern times is a fulfillment of biblical prophecy misunderstand what the prophets said. And to say that modern Israel has started the end-time clock ticking is a distortion of what the Bible actually says.

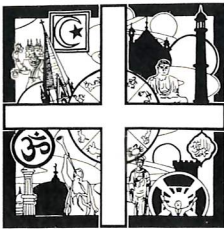
The problem with books like *Armageddon*, *Oil and the Middle East Crisis* is they divert attention away from the primary focus of attention in the Scriptures. The cross of Christ is the heart and center of the Bible's message to us. End-time prophecies are peripheral. That doesn't mean that end-time prophecies are unimportant. It means that we ought not to become preoccupied with them.

The emphasis in the Bible is not on modern Israel, but on spiritual Israel, Christ's holy church; not on Jerusalem as the capital of a future world empire, but on "the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God" (Revelation 21:2); not on the politics of the Middle East, but on the mission of Christ's church in the world; not on the economics of oil, but on the oil of gladness with which Jesus anoints the hearts of believers.

Armageddon is a legitimate subject of Bible study, but not when you try to couple it with oil and today's crisis in the Middle East.



Joel Gerlach is pastor of St. John, Wauwatosa, Wisconsin.



Satanism

by Roland Cap Ehlke

“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 6:12).

The prince of this world

This world is a spiritual battleground, in which God’s people must struggle against the devil and his forces. So great is the devil’s power that Jesus refers to him as “the prince of this world” (John 12:31).

From beginning to end, the Bible speaks of our enemy. Among his many names, he is referred to as *Satan*, a Hebrew word meaning enemy or adversary; *the devil*, that is, the slanderer or accuser; *Beelzebub*, Lord of the flies; *Belial*, worthlessness; *the tempter*; *the god of this world*; *the great dragon*. In whatever way God’s word refers to him, it is clear he is real, a fallen angel. Not only are he and his demon followers real, but Satan is also powerful. No human being can withstand him.

Satan’s own churches

The great lie of Satan is that we can save ourselves. As he tempted our first parents in the Garden of Eden, so he tempts us to think we can safely go against God and his word. Those who are not living in the grace of God in Jesus Christ are living under the devil’s dominion, whether they know it or not.

In our day, however, Satan has become so bold that he often dispenses with subtle temptations. He is openly worshiped. There are three recognized, legally protected satanist churches.

On April 30, 1966, the same year some theologians declared “God is dead,” Anton LaVey founded the First Church of Satan. Ironically, LaVey does not believe in a real Satan. Rather, he sees the devil as symbolic of people’s natural urge toward self-indulgence.

LaVey’s *Satanic Bible* is a blasphemous attack on God and Christian doctrine. For example, he speaks of the “watery blood of your impotent mad redeemer,” and refers to Christ crucified as “pallid incompetence hanging on a tree.” The *Satanic Bible* is said to outsell the Bible two to one on college campuses.

Michael Aquino was a follower of LaVey who broke

away and founded Temple Set, named after an ancient Egyptian god of evil. This group exalts mother nature and Nazi ideology.

The late 1970s saw Paul Valentine start what has been called the “most dangerous” of the satanic churches, the Church of Liberation. “Give me the young of today,” boasts Valentine, “and I’ll give you a satanic America tomorrow.”

Many people practice Satanism aside from any organized “church.” One researcher contends that the number of satanists in America rose from half a million in 1976 to a million and a half in 1985.

Devil worship

The so-called “black mass” goes back at least to seventeenth century Europe, where it was secretly practiced. It is a mockery of the Lord’s Supper. The “altar” is a naked woman; the wine in the chalice is mixed with animal or human blood; the wafer is often laced with drugs; the crucifix is set upside down; the Scriptures are read backwards.

According to *Humane News*, animals are increasingly being abused, mutilated and killed in satanic rituals. Small animals such as goats, cats, dogs, and chickens are prime targets. Some local humane societies won’t put black cats up for adoption around Halloween. Much more terrifying are the reports of human sacrifice.

Satanists have their own “liturgical calendar” with special dates. Walpurgis Night, April 30, is “one of the greatest witches’ Sabbats” and “perhaps the most important date in the whole calendar of Satanism.” Reportedly Adolf Hitler was heavily into the occult and took his own life on April 30, 1945, as a final, sacrificial tribute to the powers of darkness.

Certain symbols and words are standard among satanists. The inverted cross, lightning, the number 666 (or letter FFF), the occult pentagram, and the horned hand (index finger and little finger raised) are common satanic symbols. Satanists also use words spelled backwards: *nema* (amen), *Natas* (Satan), *red rum* (murder).

The tempter at work

In order to draw people, especially the young, more deeply into his grasp, Satan uses a number of “desensitizers.” The game *Dungeons and Dragons* is one entrance

This world is a spiritual battleground, in which God's people must struggle against the devil and his forces.

into deeper involvement. Astrology — particularly when mixed with other methods of divining the future such as Tarot cards — can be another. Involvement in drugs and promiscuous sex play into Satan's hands.

Seemingly innocent forms of entertainment like some TV cartoons can condition youngsters for the real thing. One of the most commonly cited doors to deeper involvement is the Ouija board. People utilize it in an attempt to receive messages from the spirit world. A woman I talked with said she first entered into Satanism when she and friends at college experimented with this "game."

Heavy metal rock music is a frequent link to more blatant Satanism. Consider the name of one heavy metal group: Black Sabbath. Or consider just a few lyrics from the AC-DC album "Highway to Hell":

Roaming through the endless wars
Hold high his home we must
Worried from the gates of hell
In Lord Satan we trust.

Christians concerned about their friends and children should be aware of signs of involvement. These signs may include objects: collection of unusual books (on magic, paganism, rituals, Satanism), ritual items (candles, inverted crosses, oddly shaped knives), symbolic jewelry, drug use paraphernalia. Attitudes may also be symptomatic: obsession with heavy metal music, a new set of friends, more aggressive behavior, drop in school grades, interest in death, alienation from religion.

The great dragon defeated

In the preface to his famous *Screwtape Letters*, C. S. Lewis remarks, "There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe,



Symbols of Satan: the inverted pentagram and Baphomet, the scapegoat

CONCORDIA PUBLISHING HOUSE

and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors, and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight!"

Many in our high-tech society, including many churchgoers, scoff at the very idea of Satan. At the same time the devil and his influence become more and more brazen all around us.

Rather than panic, we can do something. If someone we know needs help we can try to direct that person to a Christian counselor or pastor. We can also pray.

Above all, we can share the word of the living God. He promises, "The one who is in you [Jesus] is greater than the one who is in the world [Satan]" (1 John 4:4). The woman mentioned above was delivered out of Satanism. How? Through Christians bringing her the word. She says, "Application and use of the word — there is no other way out."

Nor is there any other way to stay away from the devil in the first place. Read the Bible *daily*. When the devil tempted Jesus to worship him, our Lord replied, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only'" (Matthew 4:10). We need to know and be able to apply the word as Jesus did.

Christ has defeated the devil. "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work" (1 John 3:8). Our Savior's perfect life, sacrificial death, and mighty resurrection belong to us by faith. His conquest of Satan and the powers of darkness is ours.

Stand firm. The victory is ours!

Further reading: *The Screwtape Letters* by C. S. Lewis; *How to Respond to . . . Satanism* by Bruce G. Frederickson (part of the Concordia "Response Series").

Next: Conclusion.

Roland Cap Ehke is an editor at Northwestern Publishing House.

Distinctively

People often seek out Christian counseling because it is distinctively different. What makes Christian counseling different? Why seek out a Christian counselor when secular counselors are available?

The same training—yet different

Christian and secular counselors have professional training. Both likely have master's degrees or perhaps doctorates. However, the Christian counselor recognizes that apart from God's word the full truth about people and their problems cannot be understood. Therefore Christian counselors have additional training in God's word. They continue in their study of the word and its application to counseling through personal study, attendance at workshops and seminars, and professional literature on Christian counseling. Those who work with other Christian counselors commonly meet together for group study and encouragement.

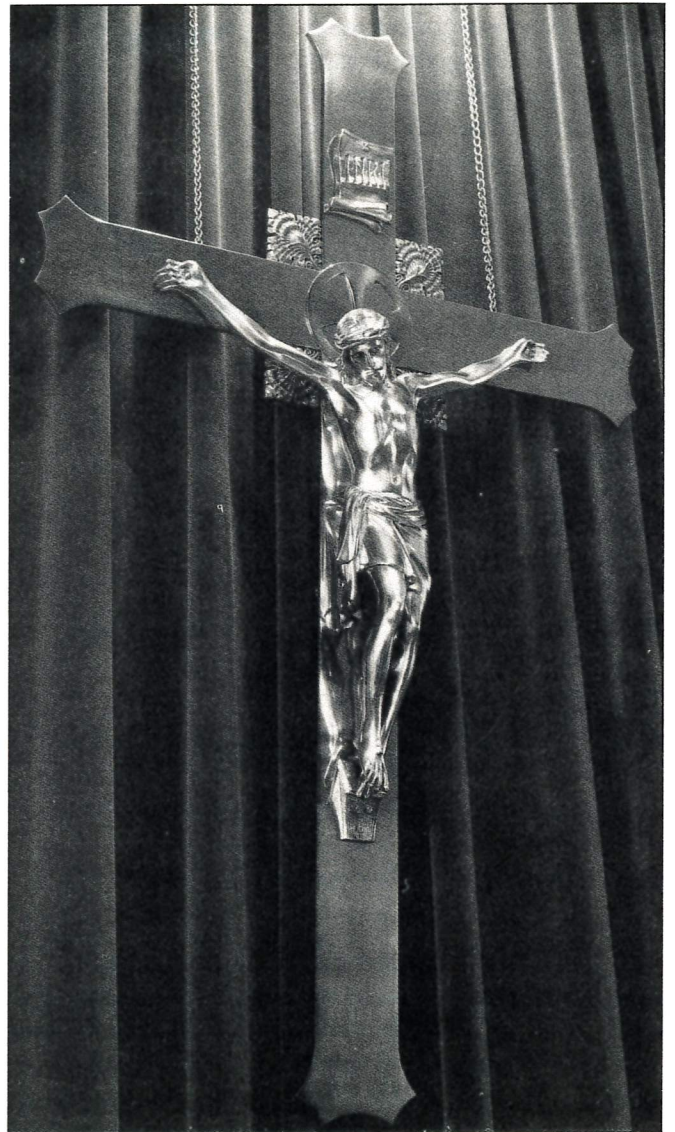
A different view of people

Christian counselors know that all people have a soul and would be hopelessly lost in sin without the Savior. Christian counselors recognize that sin propels every person to try to find meaning and worth apart from God's will for our lives. The Christian counselor also recognizes the worth and value of each person God created. Because God's word is "useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16), a Christian counselor uses it as an integral part of counseling.

A secular counselor's training taught him that people are basically good. The secular counselor's main goal therefore may be to help clients "live up to their full potential." The training of the secular counselor also taught there is no absolute right or wrong. God's word, God's will, and God-pleasing right are ignored.

A different view of problems

A Christian counselor has found the truth about people's problems from knowledge of God's word. The Christian counselor knows that each person is stuck in original sin, with a natural bent toward sinful attitudes and behaviors. Problems develop in people's lives and their relationships with God and others because of sin. And sin

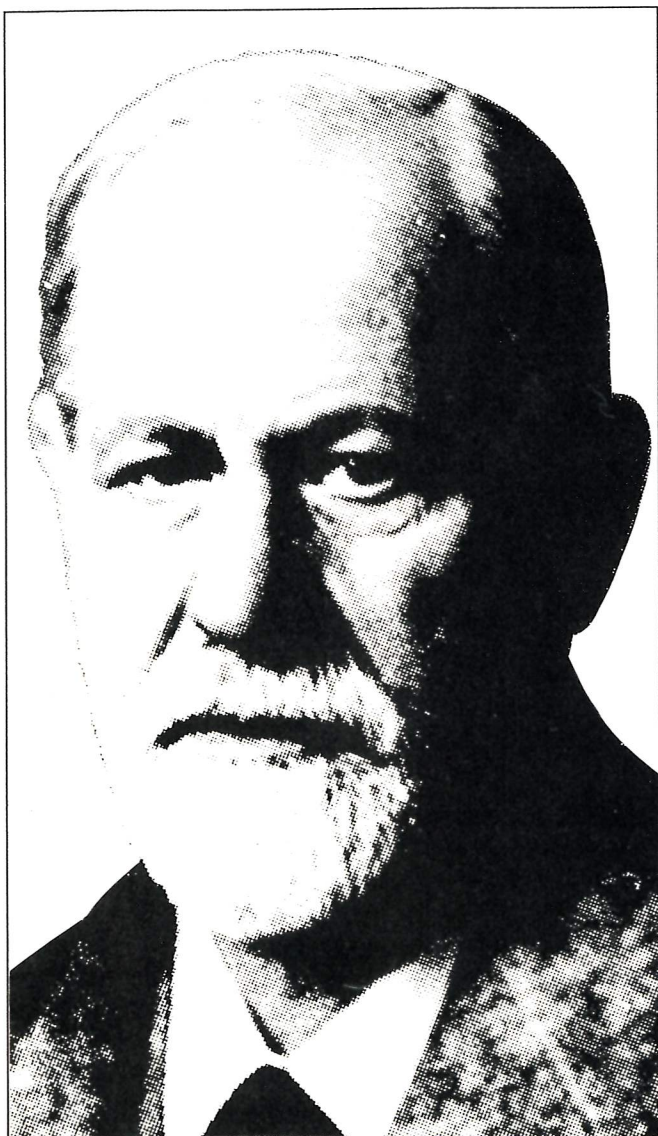


makes us try to solve our problems by depending on ourselves instead of on God.

A non-Christian counselor may view a person's problems simply as unproductive or inappropriate behavior that is not working in the client's situation at that time. The problem behavior could not be the result of sin, if sin does not exist. A problem may be blamed on an unhealthy situation, environmental influences, or some other extenuating circumstance, but never on sin.

different

by Dan Loe



Sigmund Freud

A different view of solutions

A Christian counselor knows that people need to be guided by the word to work toward God-pleasing solutions to their problems. The Christian counselor reminds the client of God's grace offered in Christ, along with the promises of hope and healing. The Christian counselor knows it is only God's grace that can "teach us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions" (Titus 2 :11-12) and

that his grace is "sufficient for us as [God's] power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9-10). The client is encouraged by reading "I can do everything through him who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:13) and by recognizing it is "God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose" (Phil. 2:13).

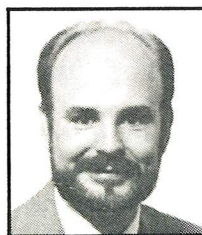
Non-Christian counselors who believe in the basic goodness in people emphasize the client's own internal resources. The goal in therapy is simply helping the client learn how to get through the current life struggle without too much personal hurt or pain. Some counselors believe that behavior modification or training will automatically yield appropriate behavior. Others promote their own brand of "me-ism," "self-ism," or "rugged individualism" and encourage self-expression regardless of cost to others. Parents may be encouraged to abdicate their role in the home so they don't interfere with the "creative energy" of the child.

Christian counselors place on their clients the responsibility for working through life issues and challenges, recognizing that the strength to make positive change comes from God. The Christian counselor helps clients work toward goals that are God-pleasing and that yield eternal rewards, rather than just a happier life here on earth.

Finding Christian counseling

Ideally, a Christian seeking counseling wants a counselor who shares the same beliefs and values. There are Christian counseling agencies affiliated with the WELS as well as independent WELS counselors. Independent Christian counselors not affiliated with the WELS may be available. Careful questioning of therapists will help you determine if they are Christian, how their beliefs compare to your own, and how they use the Bible in counseling.

If the counselor is not a Christian, make sure that he or she will respect your Christian beliefs and not work against them. If those working with a non-Christian therapist remain in close contact with their pastor, he can help them clarify any questions concerning faith and Christian living that arise from the counseling situation.



Dan Loe is a family therapist in the LaCrosse, Wisconsin, area office of Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Service.

Saving lives for now

by Dorothy J. Sonntag

You might recognize Ann Werner if you've seen the videotape describing the work of WELS Lutherans for Life. She's one of the counselors who talk about WELS LFL's pregnancy counseling centers. "We are saving lives for now and eternity—and I'd like to emphasize eternity," says Werner.

Ann works as a volunteer at the WELS LFL center in Livonia, Michigan. The center draws clients by offering free pregnancy tests and counseling service. "They think they're just coming for a pregnancy test," says Ann, "but they get more—we give them God's word."

When women come in, "Some are very apprehensive. I give them a hug, and tell them I know it's not an easy thing for them to be here for a test. I try to encourage them to trust me a little bit."

Each client is given a pregnancy test and taken to a counseling room while she waits for results. The counselor assures her that her visit is confidential and the test is free.

The counselors request some personal information. Along with questions about age, family, and religious background, says Ann, "We ask, 'What do you think you will do if the test is positive? What about the baby's father?'" The questions help the counselor know what approach to take.

"If they're Christians, we give them the law and, of course, the gospel. We tell them we are sinners too. I was really afraid of giving the law when I first started counseling," Werner admits. "You don't want to sound like you're judgmental. But you have to prick their consciences."

She tries to tailor her counseling to the client. "I might tell a teenager, 'What if you're going to a rock concert and there's a traffic jam? What are you going to do if someone gets in your way—are you going to kill him? This baby didn't ask to be born. Are you going to just take his life?'"

Many clients bring someone with them. "Sometimes it's a boyfriend, a husband, a mother—and lots of girlfriends." Ann is glad when they do. "We have a wonderful opportunity to talk about lifestyles, and not just to one person."

Most clients learn about the center by word of mouth or through the center's advertisement in the telephone company's Yellow Pages. Another way peo-



Ann Werner

"I give them a hug, and tell them it's not an easy thing for them to be here for a test."

ple hear about the centers, says WELS LFL national director Pastor Robert Fleischmann, is when pro-abortion groups picket. "At every center, whenever there are protests, the client load goes up. People find out where we are and they want to come."

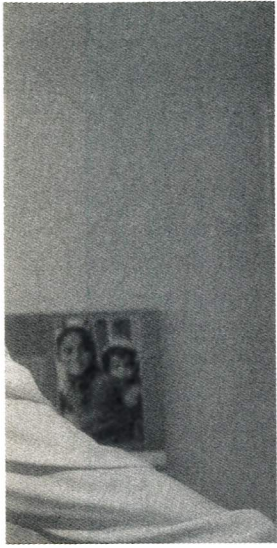
An abortion clinic is two doors from the Livonia center. "The funny part is," says Ann Werner, "they send us clients. We give free tests, and some girls who come to them can't afford the five or ten dollars they charge. That's okay, because it gives us the opportunity to show we're not like people talk about us in the newspapers."

Counselors try to follow up on clients. "We call or send a card. One of the hardest things in counseling is letting go of those who won't call or answer our letters."

Counseling does not always bring immediate results. "Sometimes it makes no difference," says Ann. "I wish everybody would say, 'Lord, Lord, here I am; I want to go to church,' but they don't do that. I've come home and cried over abortions that have taken place."

Some women who have abortions in spite of counseling return to the center during a subsequent pregnancy. Some people, Werner says, might resent repeat

and eternity



DOROTHY SONNTAG

clients. "But I look at it the other way, that the Lord's given us another chance to witness for him. And it gives the girl another chance to listen."

WELS Lutherans for Life makes a difference. Del Werner, Ann's husband, who serves on both the local and national WELS LFL boards, quoted statistics showing that, over a six month period, 40 percent of women whose pregnancy tests were positive indicated before counseling that they intended to have abortions. After counseling, about 18 percent still opted for abortion.

Other volunteers serve WELS LFL in a number of ways. Some are hotliners, responding to phone calls when counseling centers are not open. Others work as receptionists at the centers, do clerical work, prepare mailings, or take care of the gift

cabinet which holds baby clothes and other items. "We give a gift if there's a shower for a client, or a baby born," explains Ann, "or to someone who has a baby on the way."

The gifts are donations, as are all the funds with which Lutherans for Life operates. "Money is always a problem," Ann says, "but the Lord's never failed us. We've gotten down to where we can't pay rent, and then somebody sends a check. I always say, 'I think we should go forward until the Lord says no.'"

Ann has been a counselor for seven years. "When I first started out, I didn't want to be a counselor. I was going to take care of the baby clothes and work in the back room." Her children—there are five of them—and her husband urged her to be a counselor.

"I said, 'No way. What if I say the wrong thing and they go out and have an abortion?' Del, my wise husband, said, 'And what if you don't say anything?'" Training sessions helped her learn what to say.

Another consideration, when she first was asked to work with WELS LFL, was whether she could find the time. She was already involved in a number of activities

at her church, St. Paul in Livonia. "I said to the Lord, 'If you can show me I have time for this, I'll be a counselor.' I don't know where the time came from, but he gave it to me."

Her time spent with WELS LFL has not kept her from her church's activities. "She attends two Bible classes each week, is at every ladies aid meeting, and holds office in the Lutheran Women's Missionary Society local chapter," says Pastor James Hoff of St. Paul. "She comes to everything that goes on at church and is always involved."

Robert Fleischmann notes some reasons why Werner can give so much time. "Ann, and the group in Livonia, are all women whose children are at least high school age or older. They aren't working outside the home. They can spend the bulk of their time doing this."

Fleischmann also acknowledges that not everyone should be a counselor. "The Ann Werners are people who are uniquely matched to what they're doing. There are people, for example, who would not make good counselors, but they have an ability for organization. Every once in a while you find someone whose gifts really match what's needed. Ann Werner is that way."

Fleischmann believes "Ann has a real feel for the goals and purposes of a pregnancy counseling center. She's realistic about what's going on. She has no pipe dreams that every client is going to fall all over her for being so loving and caring."

Most important, he feels, is that "she sees the ministry as a means of putting people in touch with Christ. WELS Lutherans for Life is not just a means of ending abortion. Ann, and people like her, recognize that the abortion issue is the door God's given them to address eternal matters."

Ann Werner agrees. "People come in at the end of their ropes. Their lives are going downhill. You can tell them the Lord not only forgives, he forgets. The greatest joy in being a counselor is sharing the Lord and giving hope."



Dorothy Sonntag is assistant editor of the *Northwestern Lutheran*.

know
here."

Looking outward

by Curtis A. Peterson

In many churches there is a large room called the fellowship hall. Here potluck dinners are enjoyed, meetings are conducted, and parties are held. Sometimes members gather in this room before and after services for a cup of coffee and a doughnut. It is called the fellowship hall because, in the popular meaning of the word, this is where fellowship happens.

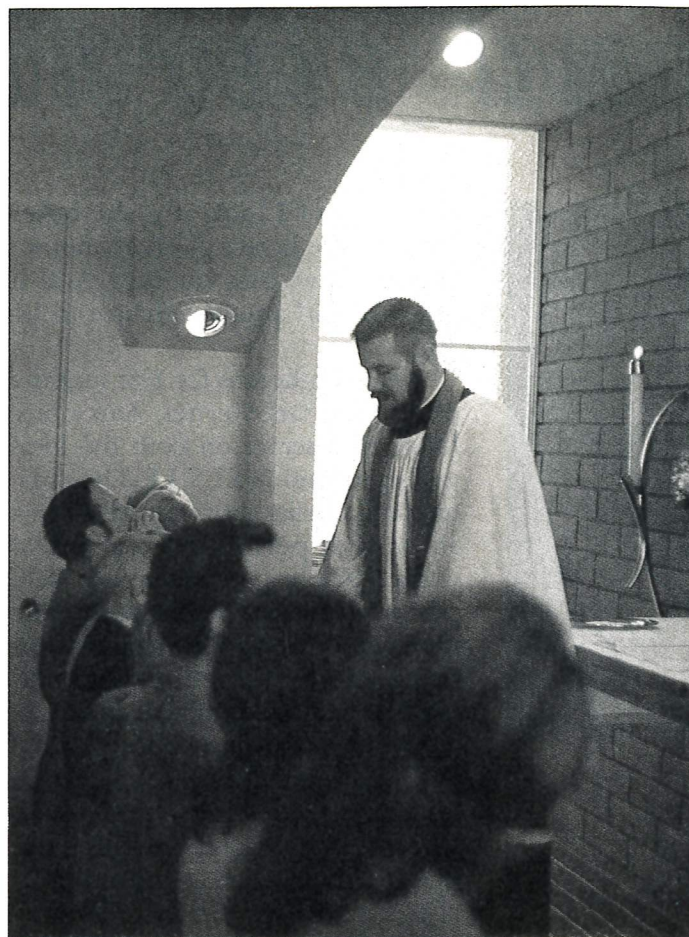
But, in a biblical sense, shouldn't the church sanctuary be called the fellowship hall? For it is there that we experience the deep expression of fellowship in the Sacrament of the Altar. The very name "communion" comes from the Greek word *koinonia*, which means a sharing, a partaking, a fellowship. (See 1 Corinthians 10:16: "Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a *koinonia* in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a *koinonia* in the body of Christ?")

We will be close to our Savior when we partake of his body and blood at the altar. Here the Lord Christ communes with his people, and his people commune with him.

As we look upward in our fellowship with Christ, we also look outward, for our deepest possible fellowship with one another. Our fellowship begins at the cross in our relationship with Christ, created by his blood shed for us, and continues in our fellowship with one another.

Paul wrote to the Ephesians: "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ." Here "his purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility" (Ephesians 2:13,15-16).

By the sacrifice of his body and blood for us, Christ made us one body, and now we express our oneness by action, including jointly partaking of his body and blood. As we kneel together at the altar, we are not only physically but also spiritually the same level. Holy Communion beautifully expresses our love for one another, as we commune with our fellow



MRS. KEVIN SCHEIBEL

believers and with Christ himself.

The sacrament is a time to set aside the sinful disputes that divide us, showing oneness both by love and a common doctrine. At the table of the Lord, God binds us into the one body he created on the cross. "Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf" (1 Corinthians 10:17).

On the night he instituted his supper, Jesus urged us to "love each other, as I have loved you" (John 15:12). Every breaking of this fellowship, whether by false doctrine or by personal bitterness, backbiting, cliques, or cutting one another down, is inconsistent with the oneness which characterizes God's people at the altar. Let the differences which divide us dissolve in the love of God which he so freely bestows on his beloved people.



Curtis Peterson is pastor of Resurrection, Milwaukee.

NPH names new president

Jerome A. Loeffel has been named president of Northwestern Publishing House. He has been acting president since July, replacing Thomas Spaulding who resigned in June. NPH, located in Milwaukee, is the publishing arm of the Wisconsin Synod.

Before taking over the duties of the president, Loeffel, 43, was vice president of sales and marketing. He has worked at NPH since 1979. He holds a degree in sales and marketing.

"Our mission at NPH is to serve the WELS—the churches, schools, the people," said Loeffel. "We're trying to put additional effort into customer service." To help improve service NPH has recently installed a new electronic publishing system, a new business computer system, and a new phone system with a toll-free number for placing orders.

Loeffel's wife, Linda, is director of financial aid at Wisconsin Lutheran College. They are members of Nain in West Allis and are



Jerry Loeffel

parents of a daughter, Wendy, a student at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, and a son, Michael, who attends Wisconsin Lutheran High School.

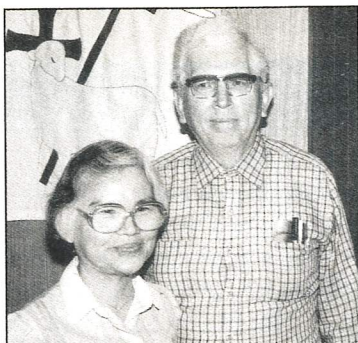
Veteran missionary retires

Missionary Richard A. Poetter, who has spent 41 years as a missionary in Japan, has announced his retirement at the end of June. Many of these years were spent as mission coordinator.

Poetter is a native of Fond du Lac, Wis., and a graduate of Winnebago Lutheran Academy. He is a graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College and spent four years in the teaching ministry before enrolling at Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Ill. He graduated from Concordia Seminary in 1953 after vicaring in Japan.

From 1953 to 1957 he served the Missouri Synod mission in Japan. In 1957, however, as the Wisconsin Synod's relationship with the Missouri Synod deteriorated over the fellowship issue, he entered the ministry of the Wisconsin Synod and continued his service as missionary to Japan.

Since 1958 Poetter has lived in Mito City, Ibaragi Prefecture, overseeing the development of the



Ikuko and Richard Poetter

national church, a theological training program, four national pastors, a literature program, radio programs, and ten congregations.

Over this extended period of time he has confirmed children of those he previously confirmed, and baptized

infants of the second and third generations of members he baptized.

In 1953 he married Ikuko, whom he had met in Japan. Their children are Hilda, Christ, and Timothy, who is pastor of St. John, Montrose, Col.

Pastor Duane Tomhave, administrator for world missions, said that Missionary Poetter "has gained a unique understanding of Japanese culture and people. As field superintendent, the Lord used him to guide our WELS mission there through most of its history. We deeply appreciate his faithful service." The Poetters will make their retirement home in the United States.

WELS Lutherans for Life leadership seminar

About 70 counselors and board representatives of WELS Lutherans for Life met in Milwaukee Feb. 1-3. They represented 20 chapters and eight branches of WELS LFL. Five workshops were presented which outlined scriptural principles and practical applications on life issues.

Pastor James Schaefer, editor of the Northwestern Lutheran, noted that it is still on the state level where laws governing all life issues will most likely be passed. Besides abortion, other issues are society's "moral meltdown," infanticide and euthanasia, breakdown of the family, and our growing secularity. Perhaps the greatest issue, said Schaefer, is the bias against life displayed by the news media.

Pastor Wayne Mueller, chairman of the WELS LFL national board, reminded the participants that Christian leadership means serving, and that through their service the WELS LFL volunteers provide a significant gospel ministry.

—Robert R. Fleischmann

Churches celebrate black history

When Betty Speed, a member of St. Marcus, Milwaukee, called the office of Dr. Howard Fuller, director of Milwaukee County's Health and Human Services, all she wanted was his picture to add to the display commemorating black history month at St. Marcus School. "I only asked for his picture," she said, "but his office said he'd be glad to come and talk to the children."

Fuller was one of several speakers at a program celebrating black history. Other speakers were graduates of St. Marcus school. The assembly was one of a number of special events commemorating black history month in February.

St. Marcus, founded in 1875,

became an integrated congregation when white flight from the area occurred in the 1960s. The congregation at first "ignored the change," said Pastor Mark Jeske. "Then they accepted it. Now we celebrate it."

Other Milwaukee churches also observed black history month. At Garden Homes a black member addressed the congregation during each service throughout the month and others led prayers, said Pastor Allen Sorum. The children also presented a program.

At St. Philip a festival service celebrating black history was followed by a "cultural feast," according to Pastor Terry Reich, with "corn bread, ribs, black-eyed peas, and

peach cobbler." The gospel choir presented special music at worship services during the entire month and performed at Wisconsin Lutheran High School and Wisconsin Lutheran College.

Worship services at Siloah featured gospel music and a dinner followed by a black history program, reported school principal Tim McNeill. The school observed black history month with several programs, art projects, and an essay contest. "Next year we're going to include black history in our school curriculum," said McNeill. "One month isn't enough."

—Dorothy J. Sonntag



Missionary Joseph Dietrich was commissioned February 3 at Holy Trinity, New Hope, Minn., as missionary to the Lutheran Church of Central Africa, serving 21 congregations and 950 baptized members scattered throughout the Northwest Province of Zambia. He and his wife, Carol, and three children will arrive in Africa sometime this spring.

Also in the news

Irene Riege, editor of the *Ephphatha Newsletter*, reminds us of the **WELS Convention for the Hearing Impaired** to be held in Milwaukee July 26-28. She writes, "It should help to accelerate our mission to the deaf and hopefully involve more deaf people in church activities." Details are available from committee chairman, Gene Seidel, 8955 Palmetto Ct., Milwaukee, WI 53225. . . . The Board for Worker Training is recommending that **Northwestern College** be authorized by the 1991 WELS convention to begin construction of its new library/administration building. The college has already received more than half the cost of the \$3 million project through special gifts. . . . A special task force for **rural church outreach** has been appointed. Pastor Norris Baumann of Clatonia, Neb., is chairman. About one-fourth of the synod's congregations are classified as rural. The task force will be funded by a special grant from Lutheran Brotherhood. . . . The Conference of Presidents recently approved calling the sixth planned giving counselor to serve the Arizona-California and Pacific Northwest Districts. . . . The **Lutheran Women's Missionary Society** recently received a grant of \$40,000 from Aid Association for Lutherans to provide for leadership training to increase participation in LWMS activities on the congregational level. . . . During the Easter break Arizona Lutheran Academy of Phoenix hosted the three-day **WELS Band Festival**. A special grant of \$2000 from AAL was given for the festival. Bands from Lutheran high schools participated. . . . The **Jesus Cares** program has opened at a sixth site, St. Paul, Brownsville, Wis. The program serves children and adults with developmental disabilities and encourages them to serve others. . . . **Missionary Raymond Cox** has accepted the call as principal of the Bible Institute at Lilongwe, Malawi.

Minnesota District news

Nearly 500 pastors, teachers, and lay leaders attended the annual **lay leaders workshop** Feb. 2 at Belle Plaine. Participants chose two of eight workshops, plus attending an open forum. . . . **Mrs. Christine Nelson Fuerstenau**, widow of Pastor Arthur W. Fuerstenau, died Nov. 8, 1990. For over 50 years she served as organist and Sunday school teacher in congregations in South Dakota, Minnesota, Michigan, and Nebraska. . . . **New Life of Shoreview** dedicated its building Feb. 3. New Life is served by Mark Cordes. . . . **Redeemer, Maple Grove**, observed its founding on Feb. 10. The former exploratory outreach served by Leon Piepenbrink has been granted mission status. . . . Commissioning services were held in the Twin Cities for two missionaries: **Larry Schlomer**, for Nigeria, and **Joseph Dietrich**, for work in Ndola, Zambia.

—Robert M. Edwards

Western Wisconsin District news

Elfrieda D. Horlamus, wife of Pastor Rudolph Horlamus, died at the age of 88 on Oct. 30. Funeral services were conducted at Eastside, Madison, on Nov. 2 with burial at West Bend. . . . Miniature Jerusalem crosses made by children of the congregation from remnants of wood used for the nave ceiling of **Our Redeemer, Madison**, were worn by worshipers at the dedication of the new worship and administration wing



Our Redeemer, Madison.

Nebraska District news

Zion School of Clatonia will observe its 40th anniversary April 21. President Lloyd Huebner of Dr. Martin Luther College will be the guest speaker. . . . **St. Paul, Norfolk**, Nebraska, is observing its 125th anniversary. Plans are underway for special services, archives display, confirmand get-togethers, and fellowship meals. The names of the 42 families who migrated to the area in 1866 are listed on a monument in Liberty Bell Park in Norfolk. The early history of the congregation is found in *Our Church: Its Life and Mission*. . . . Pastor Charles Flunker, missionary in Brazil, writes "I would like to say thank you to the people of the district for providing **Nebraska Lutheran High School**." The Flunkers' daughter Sara will graduate from NLHS in May. . . . Three graduates of NLHS have been part of operation Desert Storm. . . . **Messiah, Wichita**, Kansas, will celebrate its 25th anniversary June 16.

—Theodore L. Wendt

Nov. 4. The project included remodeling the former worship area and pastor's office into two new classrooms for its 80-student school. In the morning services on the same day the pastor, Ronald Ehlert, who had served the congregation since 1967, preached his farewell sermon. . . . On Nov. 11 a service of thanksgiving was held to commemorate 35 years in the preaching ministry for **Pastor Donald F. Bitter**. Twenty-five of those years have been at St. Paul, Fort Atkinson. . . . **Jehovah, Altura, Minn.**, installed a new digital computer organ Nov. 25. A former member, Julie Rupprecht, served as guest organist. . . . **Christus, Richmond**, is celebrating its 100th anniversary in 1991 with a series of four special services throughout the year. An A-frame redwood church was built in 1979 to replace the original building.

—Elton C. Stroh

THE BIBLE IN 365 READINGS

Continuing our program of reading through the complete Bible in one year, we list the fifth month of readings beginning May 1 and ending May 31.

May 1	Judges 8:29—10:16
2	Ju 10:17—12:15
3	Ju 13—16:22
4	Ju 16:23—19
5	Ju 20—21; Psalm 10; Ps 63
6	Ruth
7	1 Samuel 1—3
8	1 Sm 4—7; Ps 3
9	1 Sm 8—11
10	1 Sm 12; Habakkuk
11	1 Sm 13—15:9
12	1 Sm 15:10—17:49
13	1 Sm 17:50—18:30; Ps 7; 11; 12; 17
14	1 Sm 19—22:2
15	1 Sm 22:3—24:22; Ps 56
16	1 Sm 25—26; Ps 57
17	1 Sm 27—30; Ps 4
18	1 Sm 31; 2 Sam. 1—2; Ps 5
19	2 Sm 3—5; Ps 30
20	Ps 68; 2 Sam. 6—7
21	2 Sm 8—10; Ps 35
22	2 Sm 11—12:33; Ps 130; 32; 138
23	2 Sm 12:34—15:6
24	2 Sm 15:7—17:29
25	2 Sm 18—19:15; Ps 39; Ps 31
26	2 Sm 19:16—21:22
27	2 Sm 22—23
28	2 Sm 24; 1 Kings 1
29	1 Kgs 2—4:19
30	1 Kgs 4:20—7:12
31	1 Kgs 7:13—8:53

NOTICES

SYNOD CONVENTION

The fifty-first biennial convention of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod will be held Aug. 5-9 at Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. Details will be announced later.

Any memorials to be included in the Book of Reports and Memorials (BORAM) must be submitted to the office of the president by April 17.

David Worgull, WELS Secretary

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

Dr. Martin Luther College

The Board of Control requests the voting constituency of the WELS to nominate candidates for the field of English at Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. Nominees should be qualified particularly in the areas of speech and language. Names with as much pertinent data as possible should be in the hands of the board's secretary no later than May 1. Please send nominations to Pastor Robert A. Bitter, 173 E. Waupun St., Box 277, Oakfield, WI 53065.

JAMES J. TISSOT (1836-1902)



The roar of the lion

by James A. Aderman

“**T**he Lord roars from Zion.” Although Scripture describes Satan as a roaring lion, God doesn’t shrink from describing himself with the same picture when he sounds the warning growl of his revulsion toward sin. It’s no secret God hates sin and has committed himself to punish it. But he warns of the consequences of

living outside his will, so that we sinners, despairing of righting ourselves with him, may be led to find forgiveness and adoption through his Son. Such is the message in the first of the three sections of Amos’ prophecy. This section is set off by a beginning and ending reference to God as the roaring lion (Amos 1:2 and 3:8).

At the time of Amos there was plenty of selfishness, hate, immorality, and idolatry in Israel to cause God to roar. Amos’ audience, however, would not have been willing to hear those charges had he not handled them carefully. That’s why his message is a masterfully crafted argument, beginning with God’s threatened punishment of the ungodliness of the surrounding nations and coiling its way, like a slowly tightening noose, around Israel.

Read Amos 1:3-2:3. The repetition of “For three sins . . . even for four . . .” not only introduces a series of nations ripe for destruction, but placards for us how God had watched and waited for repentance in these countries. Notice also that the Lord rules over all lands, unlike those gods of other nations who were believed to have only local power.

The Lord finds these heathen lands guilty of not living up to their own moral standards. Although they have failed in their relationship with God, the Lord judges them on their failures in their relationship with other humans.

Damascus and Gaza are condemned because of their barbarity and pitiless slave trade. They had violated the most basic premises of relationships between humans. Tyre and Edom had violated commitments

made between brothers by breaking treaties and allowing hatred against blood relatives to fester and explode into violence. Ammon and Moab were guilty of inhumanity toward the helpless. Pregnant women and young children suffered sickening atrocities and even the dead were desecrated.

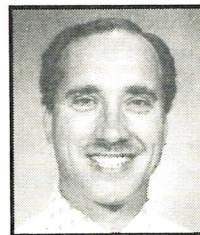
One imagines Amos’ hearers cheering because surrounding nations were to be punished for their crimes. Even the condemnation pronounced against their rival Judah would have produced applause. Judah’s sin was that it had closed its ears to God’s word and opened its heart to false gods. Judah’s punishment is the same as the first six nations: loss of defenses against invaders and loss of the wealth it had trusted in. Do you think that in our day job loss or economic slowdown may still contain God’s gracious call for a closer walk with him?

The noose of God’s prophecy now tightens uncomfortably around the neck of Israel. As it had cheered the demise of neighboring nations because of their lawlessness, Israel had also condemned itself. The rope of God’s law jerked taut with his pronouncement, “I will not turn back my wrath.” Israel had shown rejection of God’s grace by the selfish way it chose to live. God declares his punishment will be swift and thorough.

Read the first eight verses of chapter three. The lion continues to roar. If he is roaring, there is still time for escape. Consequently, the Lord pleads with his people. He warns his threats are not idle, his judgment is not uninvited, he will not be mocked.

Did you notice that verse three doesn’t quite fit the cause-and-effect argument of verses 4-6? For good reason. If verse three had been fleshed out, it probably would have said, “Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so? Don’t two who are enemies separate?” The Lord is not ready to bring his relationship with errant Israel to that conclusion just yet.

Are there sins you are not dealing with appropriately? What are the areas of your life you haven’t turned over to the Lord? The lion continues to roar. “Who will not fear” and repent?



James Aderman is pastor of Fairview, Milwaukee.

Reading on

One of the problems that non-Christian women have with Ephesians 5 is they don't believe that verse 21, "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ," can be reconciled with verse 22, "Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord." Some Christian women who are influenced by feminist theology have the same difficulty. They may even read on in Ephesians 5, looking for the verse that says, "Husbands, also submit yourselves to your wives," or at least a verse that states, "Husbands and wives, submit yourselves to each other." The verses aren't there.

Then some wives are puzzled, some frown. Some flare up. "Paul is contradicting himself," they protest. On the one hand Paul asks every Christian to submit to other Christians; on the other hand he requires only the wife to submit in marriage. Some decide that the real truth is in verse 21, "Submit to one another." They dismiss verse 22, "Wives, submit to your husbands," as Paul's sexism, his cultural prejudice, his denial of human rights. If wives must submit to husbands, they say, husbands must also submit to wives.

We must reread verses 22-33 and also read on to verse nine of chapter six. What is going on in chapters 5:22-33 and 6:1-9, where Paul writes not only about wives submitting themselves to their husbands, but also about children obeying their parents, and about slaves (servants) obeying their masters?

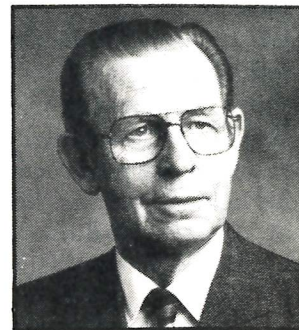
In these verses Paul is still aware of his exhortation, "Submit to one another." The reason for the seeming contradiction is that Paul must also reckon with another fact of life: headship. There is headship in the husband-wife relationship, in the parent-child relationship, in the master-slave (servant) relationship. Headship is a fact of life in the workplace, in the family, in marriage. God himself has established it there. He has even made headship in marriage so important that he has made Christ's headship in the church the pattern for headship in marriage.

Now, how does "Submit to one another" apply in the home, the family, the workplace? How does a head submit to those who are placed under him? We read 5:22-33 and 6:1-9 again. To the husband, God says, "Love your wife as your own body; care for her as Christ cares for the church." To fathers, God says, "In love, be considerate to your children. Bring them up to be my children." To masters, God says, "Treat your servants as I treat you."

As heads, husbands and fathers and masters are submitting when they carry out such services. They are submitting when they love and care for those who are stationed under them. Christ himself showed them how to submit to others, even though he was their head.

A Christian wife will accept her husband's headship because she has "reverence for Christ" (verse 21) as her Redeemer and head; she knows it is her Lord who is asking her to submit to her husband "as to the Lord."

Carleton Toppe



Carleton Toppe, retired president of Northwestern College, lives in Watertown, Wisconsin.

Home schooling

I would like to compliment on your coverage of home schooling (Sept. 15). The WELS has a strong background in providing Christian education for our children. It is for that reason that our family homeschools.

We urge the Board for Parish Education to offer more resources to those of us who are homeschooling. We would like to be informed about teaching materials, textbooks, workshops, and conferences. We would also like Northwestern Publishing House to carry instructional materials for homeschool use. Being informed of courses available through Dr. Martin Luther College would be of use also.

Homeschooling can be an option for families unable to send their children to one of our fine Lutheran schools and who are willing to commit their time and energy to educating their children.

*Sharon K. Braun
Livingston, Montana*

Our favorite hymns

In a recent issue (Jan. 1) a notice stated that a tape of "Our Favorite Hymns" was available. My wife and I were wonderfully surprised at these tapes and found we were able to sing along with most of the verses.

It made me think back to the time we were in grade school. Part of the regular curriculum was hymnology. Some forty years later we are able to draw from our memory these wonderful hymns.

We encourage all congregations to have a hymnology program in day school, Sunday school, and instruction classes. It will be a source of inspiration and peace to be able to recall these hymns in later life.

We thank our teachers for making us learn these hymns, and Martin Albrecht for supplying the music for "Our Favorite Hymns."

*Ron and Diane Affeldt
Newburg, Wisconsin*

A real sabbatical

"Out of the ivory tower" (Jan. 1) rang my bells. Great idea. Reading on, though, I realized the project didn't mean "sabbatical" as I'd hoped for through my years of WELS membership and observing its worker system.

The project has some obvious blessings. But I believe a real sabbatical has some, too. Every seven years, cast our church workers into the mainstream. They would experience the trials of establishing a new home in a strange city filled with strangers, maintaining it out-of-pocket, and nurturing new friends by melting coolness, even in some Christians, by trustworthy behavior.

Many workers have led cocooned lives, moving from family to WELS schools to congregations. Yes, congregations peering over workers' shoulders can be difficult, but receiving open-handed benefits balances that. A real sabbatical could subdue a sense of taking those benefits for granted and sharpen a sense of gratitude for God's worldly gifts. It could bring even more blessings to all of us.

*Phyllis I. Ehlke
Grafton, Wisconsin*

No need for WELS LFL?

In response to the letter "No need for WELS LFL" (March 1), first, while it is the pastor's responsibility to speak God's word, that commission was also given to me as an individual Christian. As a counselor I have many opportunities to share Jesus with women who, as a rule, do not come to church to hear the pastor's message. . . . Second, no synod funds are used to support the work of WELS LFL. All expenses are met through donations given above and beyond regular, faithful support of congregations and synod programs.

*Paula Buermele
Canton, Michigan*

. . . To clarify two misconceptions: first, the first priority of all WELS LFL counselors is to spread the message of God's saving grace. . . . Second, WELS LFL is not funded with synod dollars, but relies on the generosity of friends. . . .

I feel sure that once the precepts and practices of WELS LFL are understood, those who feel the organization is not necessary or in some way a waste of "gospel dollars" will reconsider and include us in their prayers.

*Diane L. Koser
Hartland, Wisconsin*

Through LFL I can express love for my Lord by helping to lead lost souls to Christ and by saving some children from being murdered. . . . I cannot think of one person involved in LFL who is not also a faithful worker in his or her congregation.

*Mark S. Bergemann
West Allis, Wisconsin*

While it is true that in our churches we hear the fifth commandment loud and clear, most of the rest of the world isn't listening. Our counseling offices spread God's word to all who come through our doors. . . . I cannot imagine being without this very worthwhile organization.

*Carol A. Pratt
Ann Arbor, Michigan*

The work [of WELS LFL] goes far beyond just lecturing against abortion. Christ's gospel is shared with everyone who walks into a counseling center. . . . Pregnancy counseling centers are funded completely by private donations. . . . God bless this wonderful lay ministry and all of its volunteers, as well as those who support it.

*M. Ramona Nimmer
Waukesha, Wisconsin*

Letters between 100 and 200 words are preferred. In the interest of conciseness, letters are subject to editing. Full name, address and daytime phone number should accompany each letter. Names will be withheld only under unusual circumstances. Letters cannot be acknowledged, nor can all letters be used. Address your letters to LETTERS, The Northwestern Lutheran, 2929 N. Mayfair Road, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53222-4398.



I am writing these lines on the fourth day of Iraq's "mother of all battles," in which the allied coalition forces crushed the fourth largest army in the world in precisely 100 hours. For anyone mindful of the horrors of a battlefield, there will be no gloating—just a prayer of thanksgiving to the Lord of the nations.

Except for President Mischke's words (March 1) on the morning after hostilities had commenced, these pages have been silent about the war. Our Mayfair address fired no directives at Washington telling the government how to run the war, or terminate the war, or how wicked of us to wage it.

As hostilities cease, there are two pronouncements that are appropriate at this point. The first is by the German philosopher Hegel: "What experience and history teach is this—that people and governments never have learned anything from history." The second, by American philosopher Santayana, is like unto the first: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to fulfill it." Both are aimed at the same target: the uncontrollable urge of people to believe in the perfectibility of the human race. Words like "never again," "a new world order," "freedom from fear," "safe for democracy," come to mind. It never happens. That is not so much a reproach for such fruitless efforts, as it is a dismal commentary on human nature.

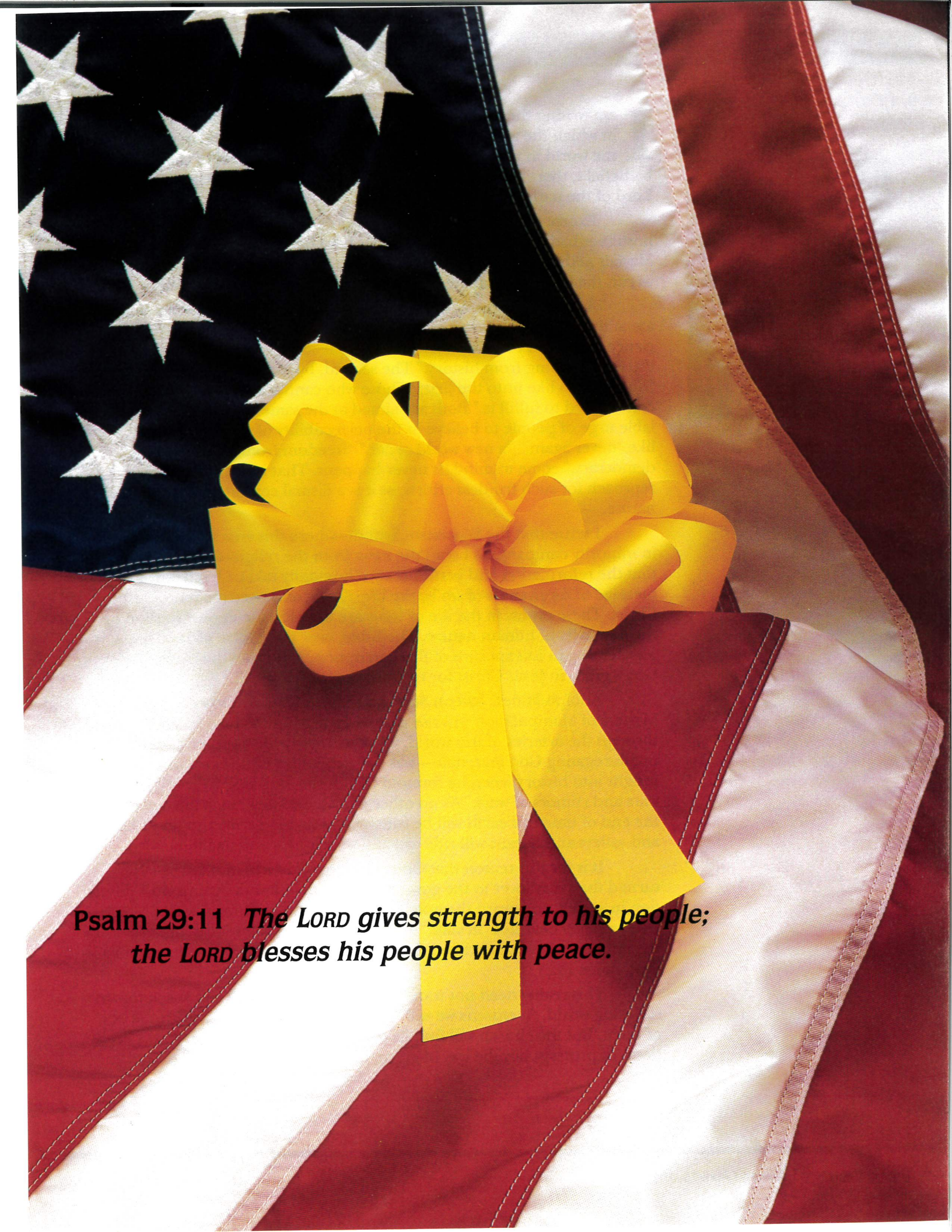
I sense that the Wisconsin Synod—where this view is widely held—is in minority company. As I scan the news from the religious world, it appears that the reformation and betterment of humanity takes a front seat to the message of forgiveness of sin by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. These events in the life of Jesus are the ultimate demonstration of the depravity of human nature. The Bible, over the course of 1500 years, is unrelenting in its exposure of this corruption, alongside the blessed story of God's grace in Jesus Christ for the salvation of the world.

Adolph Hitler? Joseph Stalin? Saddam Hussein? Other Great Grand Masters of Manipulation will rise to take their place. As long as sin courses through the arteries of this world, there will always be another. Jesus—without derogating God incarnate—was not exhibiting some extraordinary insight into history when he foretold that in the end-time "you will hear of wars and rumors of wars." As no other person he knew the nature of sin. To the end of time this earth will be rotten to its flaming core and on its hills and valleys and oceans will ride evil and wickedness and death.

It is for this reason that God—in good old Lutheran terms—has turned the sword over to the government as the bulwark against sin's desolation in society, to reward the good and punish the evildoer. A sword which governments bear not "in vain." The events of the last months and especially the last hours have underlined the words of Jesus in Matthew 24 and of Paul in Romans 13.

This reality need not transform us into bystanders and spectators in a suffering world. As citizens we will "seek the peace of the city" with the best of them. But the church will find its own way: not the way of power, of coalitions, of protests, but the way of grace, the way of faith, hope, and love.

James P. Schufer



***Psalm 29:11 The LORD gives strength to his people;
the LORD blesses his people with peace.***