

JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

VOLUME 43 JUNE 2003 NUMBER 2

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The JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY is published at Immanuel Lutheran College, 501 Grover Rd, Eau Claire, Wisconsin 54701-7199, by authorization of the Church of the Lutheran Confession. Subscriptions: \$10.50 per year, \$18.00 for two years, \$26.50 for three years (Foreign: \$14.50, \$26.00 and \$37.50), payable in advance. Issues are dated: March, June, September, and December.

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Graduation Address – Immanuel Lutheran College

May 24, 2003

John K. Pfeiffer

Grace be unto you and peace, from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Our text is taken from the 13th chapter of the book of Numbers, from which I shall read portions.

In the name of Jesus Christ, through whose strength we can do all things,

Young people tend to be optimistic. They have their youth; death seems far away. They have their strength and vitality; weakness and frailty are only words spoken by the aged. So it is that the young charge into difficult situations with the confidence in themselves and their ability to

overcome.

However, as the experiences of life follow one after another, this exuberant optimism begins to wane. They become more cautious . . . more unsure about themselves. They want to think things over and then proceed slowly and carefully.

There is a time for exuberant optimism and a time for thoughtful caution. However, there are also times when optimism can be careless and care can be pessimistic. There are times when both are wrong . . . in fact, sinful.

You, dear graduates, stand on the border of a future which is hidden from your sight. As you are about to take the first step, are you carelessly optimistic or carefully pessimistic?

I pray that the Word of the Lord will lead you to be carefully optimistic, so that you will be able to say

WE CAN DO IT!

The children of Israel had been delivered from bondage in Egypt; they had been forged into a nation at Mt. Sinai; now they stood on the borders of Canaan, ready to see the fulfillment of the next phase of their destiny. . . Or were they ready?

The Lord wanted them to proceed with caution: so He told them to send spies throughout the land. They were to spy out the fruitfulness of the land and the strength of the people. When they came back, they reported that the land was very fruitful and that the people were very strong.

You, too, are standing on the borders of the Promised Land, ready at any given moment to enter and take possession. Are you ready to say, "We can do it! We can fight the battles; we can overcome the enemies; we can take possession!"? Your Lord instructs you to proceed with care. Christ tells us that we should count the cost of discipleship.

Seminary graduates: you have accepted calls to the public ministry . . . calls to lead the people of God into the Promised Land. Have you carefully considered what is involved? Have you "spied out the land?"

I trust that you have considered the work with caution. In fact, you have spent three years considering, both in the classroom and as vicars in the field. So, you do have some idea of what awaits you. Actually, we could use words similar to those of the spies. The land is fruitful, or, as Jesus said, "Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!" (John 4:35)

"Nevertheless the people who dwell in the land are strong; the cities are fortified and very large." The Israelite spies were talking about the enemies that they would have to face. Even so, there are enemies for you to face: the roaring lion, the wolves in sheep's clothing, and an innumerable brood of vipers. But you know this, for you have carefully "spied out the land." So are you ready to say, "We can do it!"?

What about the future teachers, who have trained to shepherd the lambs of the flock of the Lord? I trust that there is a shepherd's staff awaiting each of you. One has already been called by the Lord; the other waits on the Lord.

Like our pastoral candidates, you have "spied out the land" in the classroom and during your teaching internships. You have found that the field is filled with fruit, ready to be harvested. But you have also found that there are enemies who would like to prevent you from harvesting that fruit. So, are you ready to say, "We can do it!"?

Those of you, who are graduating from the Associate of Arts program: your callings in life shall be different . . . different from our future pastors and teachers and different from one another. Nevertheless, the Lord will set before you, also, opportunities in His kingdom work. In fact all that you do should be done in service to Him. As for opposition: the enemies that pastors and teachers face shall be on the prowl for your souls, too. Are you then ready to go into your future confidently saying, "We can do it!"?

As for the 32 high school graduates: you, too, are standing on the borders of the Promised Land. What awaits you in the days and years to come? Some have a desire for the preaching and teaching ministries. Some of you are ready to train for other callings, whether in school or on the job.

You are venturing into a future, which you may not have personally “spied out.” Nevertheless, we and your parents have spied out the land for you. During your years at Immanuel, we have been telling you what the land is like and what the people are like.

The land is fruitful: there are many ways to use your gifts in the service of the Lord and many souls to be drawn to Him. Yet, the enemies are strong: there are many who will oppose you . . . who will try to stop you from serving God. They will cast stumbling blocks in your way. They will persecute you. They will try to confuse you and lead you away from Christ. Are you ready to say, “We can do it!”?

Graduates of our seminary, college, and high school, in order to answer this question, you need to ask another: “How can we do it?”

When the spies came back from the land of Canaan, two of them said, “We can do it!” The other ten said, “We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we.” As for the people of Israel, they cried out in misery and anger and they started making plans to go back to Egypt.

What made the difference between the two and the ten? Why did Israel believe the two and not the ten? Did Caleb and Joshua trust in the power of Israel? If they had, they would have joined the ten. Israel was not powerful; they were like grasshoppers before the mighty Canaanites.

Four hundred years before this, the almighty and gracious God made a covenant with Abraham, telling him that from his descendants the Savior of the whole world would come. This would take place in a land of God’s own choosing. That land was Canaan. The destiny of the sons of Abraham lay in that land and nowhere else.

It was this covenant, which strengthened the resolve of Caleb and Joshua. They had carefully spied out the land, but they did so with the promise of the Lord in their hearts. The other ten did not believe the promise. If they had, they would have shouted, “We can do it!” But when the children of Israel wanted to return to Egypt, they were rejecting the promised Savior, the destiny of Israel.

Can you do it, graduates of Immanuel Lutheran Seminary, College, and High School? Yes, you can, but not with the wisdom of your own mind nor with the strength of your own arm.

However, do not be fearful, for God has made a covenant with you, even as He did with Abraham. It is called the “New Covenant.” It is God’s binding agreement with you. In it He declares, “I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more” (Jer. 31:34). “No more . . .” Not now; not ever. Thus His agreement with you is that you will spend eternity with Him in heaven.

God is faithful and in His steadfast love He put this covenant into everlasting force by the shedding of the blood of His own Son. Jesus’ blood is indeed “the blood of the New Covenant.”

I trust that you, the graduating classes of 2003, have placed your confidence in the New Covenant. You believe that for Jesus’ sake your sins are forgiven and He is preparing a place for you in heaven.

Like Israel, you are standing on the borders of the Promised Land. Just as they had to go through a struggle before gaining possession of their land, so do you. There is an unknown number of years and struggles that lies ahead of you, before you enter the heavenly land that God promised to you.

Just as Joshua and Caleb found their confidence in the covenant made with Abraham, so you will find your confidence in the covenant that God has made with you. This covenant guarantees that you can do it, because the covenant guarantees that Christ’s victory is your victory. Thus you

can confidently say, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13).

Whether you are about to enter the pastoral ministry or the teaching ministry or another educational institution or an occupation, you need to proceed carefully, gaining full awareness of the enemies that lie ahead: the devil, the world, and your own sinful flesh. Yet, you need not fear, for Christ has defeated your enemies and has made a covenant with you. Therefore, in Him you will more than conquer.

In others words, dear graduates, **YOU CAN DO IT.** “Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15:57).

Preachings from Daniel

Paul F. Nolting

Chapter 12:1-4

In Christ Jesus, who rules and controls all history to the glory of His holy Name, Fellow Redeemed:

We shall continue with our study of

DANIEL’S FOURTH AND FINAL VISION.

I. Michael standing up: “At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people.” The time frame of the prophecy is “the time of the end,” the time term that appeared for the first time in this vision at the close of the Maccabean era which marked the beginning of the Herodian era in the national history of the Jews. It was during that time that the final conflict between the king of the South and the king of the North took place, which resulted in the defeat of Cleopatra and Anthony by Octavian which resulted in Herod the Great being confirmed as “the king” in Israel.

It was at this time, the time of the end of the second phase of Israel’s national history that Michael would stand up as the guard over the sons of Daniel’s people. This is the third time that Michael appears in this vision. You will recall that Daniel had been mourning for three weeks by the banks of the Tigris River. He saw a vision of a heavenly Person, whom we believe to have been the Angel of the Lord, the pre-incarnate Christ. Daniel had fainted but was revived by a heavenly messenger who had been commissioned to answer Daniel’s prayer with a new prophetic vision. That angel had been hindered in his coming by “the prince of the kingdom of Persia” (10:13), the evil angel whose job was to obstruct the Kingdom of God in its Old Testament Jewish form. Michael had come to the assistance of the angel who was bringing Daniel the new prophetic vision. Michael would continue giving assistance in the struggle of God’s people against both the prince of Persia and the prince of Greece (10:20-21).

And now again, at the time of the end, the last years of the post captivity history of Israel that coincided with the reign of the house of Herod—Michael would stand up as guardian of Daniel’s people. When we turn to the gospels and the book of Acts, Michael does not appear by name. He is mentioned only five times in the Bible—three times in the vision we are considering, once in Jude where he is pictured as the one who contended with the devil over the body of Moses (9) and once in Revelation where Michael and his angels are pictured as fighting against the dragon (Satan) and his angels (12:7). But angels were operative as the New Testament opens. It was Gabriel who appeared to Zacharias in the temple (Luke 1:19) and again it was Gabriel who was commissioned to announce the birth of Jesus to Mary (Luke 1:26). But the angel who appeared to Joseph in a dream twice is unidentified. First he reassured Joseph concerning the pregnancy of Mary (Matt. 1:20); after the birth of Jesus he warned Joseph, again in a dream, to flee to Egypt for the safety of Jesus (Matt. 2:13). On the night Jesus was born it was “an angel of the Lord” who made the announcement of His birth (Luke 2:9). The book of Acts reports that it was an angel of

the Lord who freed the apostles from prison (Acts 5:19), who delivered Peter from prison the night before he was scheduled to be executed by Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:7), and who struck down this same Herod when he blasphemed God (Acts 12:23). Furthermore it was an angel of the Lord who assured Paul that he and all the passengers aboard ship would survive shipwreck (Acts 27:23). In none of these cases is this “angel of the Lord” identified, but in each case he is standing up for and on behalf of Daniel’s people. Could this angel not have been Michael “the great prince”?

II. The time of trouble: “And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation.” The Dispensationalists, of course, are certain that this “time of trouble” will be the “great tribulation,” which according to their interpretation of “the time of the end” is to occur after the alleged rapture of the Church and the appearance of the end-time antichrist. But again, the Dispensationalists and all futurists overlook the past fulfillment of this prophecy. When past fulfillment of prophecy is ignored, prophecy is twisted out of shape.

In his great covenantal prayer that preceded his receiving the prophecy of the “Seventy Sevens,” Daniel had spoken of the first destruction of the nation by the Babylonians as a disaster of such magnitude that he described it in these terms: “for under the whole heaven such never has been done as what has been done to Jerusalem” (9:12). In the vision under consideration the angel is advising Daniel that his people will experience something worse than what they had so recently experienced. “There shall be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation.” That time of trouble came upon the Jewish nation at “the time of the end” when the Romans came and destroyed the temple, the city, and the nation under Titus in AD 66-70. with a final mop up at the time of the Bar-Cochba revolt at the time of Hadrian (132-135). The former is the “great tribulation” that Jesus foretold in His Olivet Address (Matt. 24:15-28).

Usually in the time of war a nation becomes unified in its common defense. We expect bipartisanship at such a time, as we experienced it during World War II. The lack of it we experienced during the Vietnam War. The destruction of the nation by the Romans was actually a case of national self-destruction. The Romans conquered only after the Jews had destroyed themselves with endless bitter factional strife. The Jewish historian Josephus gives a vivid account of this national self-destruction. In addition he makes this assessment: “That neither did any other city ever suffer such miseries, nor did any age breed a generation more fruitful in wickedness than this was, from the beginning of the world.”

Where was Michael at this time? How was he standing watch over Daniel’s people? The answer is to be found in -

III. The deliverance: “And at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book.” It is one of the remarkable facts of history that the Christian Jews living in Jerusalem escaped the horrors of the siege, the internecine fighting within the city, and the final destruction by the Romans by fleeing from the city and taking refuge in Pella on the east side of the Jordan. How did that happen? When Jesus spoke to His disciples of the coming destruction of Jerusalem, they asked Him for a sign when He would come in judgment. Jesus gave them a sign: “Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place . . . then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains” (Matt. 24:15). St. Luke identifies that “abomination of desolation” when he wrote, “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those in Judea flee to the mountains . . .” (Luke 21:20–21). Once again history reports the fulfillment: The Roman general, Cestius, appeared before Jerusalem and would have been received as a liberator from the factions that were then already destroying the city from within, but for some unknown and unexplained reason he withdrew from the city. That was the sign which gave the Christian Jews opportunity to flee the city and flee from the destruction that was to come. Michael did stand watch over Daniel’s people—the Jews who had accepted their Messiah, but not those who rejected Him and thereby invited judgment upon themselves. Those who were delivered are further described as -

IV. Ones awakening from sleep in the dust of the earth: “And many of those who sleep in

the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt.” If you have been trained as I have, you have been conditioned to understand these words as a prophecy of the coming resurrection from the dead. That would project this prophecy to the end of the world and would destroy the interpretation of it that I have been presenting. Let’s take another look at the passage. The passage speaks of people sleeping and awaking. The sleeping is said to be “in the dust of the earth.” The Old Testament writers did speak of “the sleep of death” (Ps. 13:3) and of “a perpetual sleep” (Jer. 51:39). So “sleeping in the dust of the earth” is an accepted figure of speech for being dead. Awakening from such a sleep would be coming back to life. Notice that the passage makes no mention of a bodily resurrection, just an awakening from the sleep of death.

But Scripture also uses sleep as a figure of spiritual dullness. Isaiah 29 brings a warning of coming woe for Jerusalem. But the warning goes unheeded. Why? “For the Lord has poured out on you the spirit of deep sleep” (10), especially upon the prophets who should have been alerting the people to the danger before them. In the same passage the Lord uses the figures of being blind and drunk to describe spiritual insensitivity or dullness. I am sure that most of you are acquainted with the prophecy of the people of Galilee as “people who walked in darkness.” They would see a great light (Isa. 9:2). Matthew quotes that passage as being fulfilled when Jesus began His Galilean ministry (Matt. 4:12-17). The Apostle Paul adopted this same manner of speech when he wrote to the Ephesians: “Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light” (5:14). In the classic passage on conversion in chapter two of that same epistle Paul describes the unconverted state of man as being “dead in trespasses and sins” and of being brought to faith in Jesus as being “made alive together with Christ” (2:1 and 5). When our Lord conducted His ministry in Jerusalem, He cried out: “Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live” (John 5:25).

When John the Baptist and Jesus and His disciples began to preach and teach and heal, there was a tremendous awakening, a stirring, and arousing. Some who had been sleeping in the dust, who had been spiritually dull and dead, awoke to everlasting life, even as our Lord said: “He who believes in the Son has everlasting life” (John 3:36). Others were stimulated, shaken, aroused, but in the opposite way. They were determined to destroy Jesus and in so doing destroyed themselves. They awoke to shame and everlasting contempt, even as Jesus also said, “He who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him” (John 3:36). Recall also the ominous cry of the Jews after Pilate had washed his hands and declared himself innocent of the blood of Jesus. They cried out: “His blood be on us and on our children” (Matt. 27:25).

The emphasis of the prophecy is on the positive, for “those who are (better, make) wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.” Here are words of encouragement for all who love the Lord and have been awakened from the sleep of death by the Holy Spirit to rest their hope of forgiveness, life, and salvation on Jesus alone. Do you want to make your mark in life? Do you want to do something that will be an eternal memorial for you? Do you want to shine like the stars forever and ever? There is a way! The way is to be instrumental in making others wise—in leading others from their sins to their Savior. That is a work which blesses both doer and receiver, the doer with the reward of shining like the stars and the receiver with the blessing of eternal life.

V. Running to and fro: “But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end.” The vision was over officially. Daniel was to shut up the book and seal it. The book was to be preserved until the time of the end. At that time Jesus referred to this very vision and so called attention to this book when he gave the sign of the “abomination of—or rather that—desolates” as a warning for Daniel’s people.

At that time there shall also be another development: “Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.” Recall that it was at the time of the end, when national judgment faced

the nation of Israel, that our Lord commissioned His disciples: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:16). Mark concludes his gospel in this way: "And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs" (Mark 16:20). Luke reports that on the day of His ascension Jesus repeated that instruction: "You shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Not too many years later the Apostle Paul could say that the sound of the gospel had gone out to the ends of the world (Rom. 10:18; Col. 1:6,23). Think of Paul increasing the knowledge of the true God and His salvation in Christ Jesus as he preached in the pagan city of Ephesus, to the philosophers in Athens, and to Jews and Gentiles in Rome. Many did run to and fro, and the knowledge of salvation did increase at the time of the end—before judgment again fell upon the nation of Israel. So also in our day we are to be running to and fro and spreading the gospel of salvation, for the one thing the world needs to know before the final judgment falls is that there is divine forgiveness, perfect righteousness, peace with God, unquenchable joy, and life everlasting in Christ Jesus, the Messiah Prince promised to Daniel and his people. Amen.

Chapter 12:5-13

In Christ Jesus, whose prophetic word both reveals and conceals, Fellow Redeemed:

The vision had come to a conclusion. Daniel had been instructed to shut up the words and seal the book until the time of the end. What follows now in the rest of the chapter and the conclusion of Daniel's book of prophecy is -

THE CONCLUSION OF THE FOURTH AND FINAL VISION OF DANIEL.

I. The Question of the Angel. Daniel reports: "Then I, Daniel, looked; and there stood two others, one on this riverbank and the other on that riverbank. And one said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, 'How long shall the fulfillment of these wonders be?'" Recall that Daniel was on the bank of the Tigris River when he received this prophecy. He reports that he looked and saw two other angelic persons standing on either bank of the river. The Hebrew word for river is the customary word for the Nile, but it is used here of the Tigris. One of the angels began to speak to the man clothed in linen who was above the river. This is the same glorious Person that Daniel had seen at the beginning (10:56). We identified that Person as The Angel of the Lord, the pre-incarnate Son of God. Other interpreters, however, believe that this "man clothed in linen" was a mighty angel. One of the angels on the riverbank asked the man clothed in linen: "How long—the end of the wonders?" The question wasn't "How long TILL the end of the wonders?" as though the angel were asking how long it would be from the time of Daniel till the end of the wonders. The question was rather "How long, how much time will it take for the end of the wonders to take place?"

You will recall that the time term that is characteristic of this prophecy is "the time of the end." We have already informed you that Dispensationalists interpret this time term as the time of the alleged resumption of the Lord's dealings with the Jewish nation after the alleged rapture of the church, followed by the appearance of the antichrist and the great tribulation. Other interpreters, as Leupold and Young, believe the term refers to the end of the New Testament era. I believe that the term refers to the end of the second period of Israel's national history, which began with the return from captivity and came to an end with the destruction of the Jewish state by the Romans in the first century. "The time of the end" is thus seen as a contracting period of time. We speak the same way. For example, we speak of a person as suffering from a terminal illness. For that person it is "the time of the end." Finally the person dies. A friend may ask, "How long did the end take?" The question is concerning the final death throes. So here. The prophecy had revealed that there would be a time of trouble for Daniel's people, such as had not been since there was a nation. That would be a time of decision for Daniel's people, some awaking to everlasting life and some to

shame and everlasting contempt. At the conclusion of the vision Daniel was instructed to shut up the words and seal the book. But then Daniel saw an angel on either riverbank, and he heard one ask the man clothed in linen: "How long—the end of the wonders?" The angels are intensely interested in all things pertaining to the Kingdom of God and God's people on earth, even as Peter tells us that the facts and truths of the gospel are things that "angels desire to look into" (1 Pet. 1:12).

The answer came from the man clothed in linen. Daniel reports: "Then I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever, that it shall be for a time, times, and half a time; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished." The man clothed in linen gave two pieces of related information. The first was the time answer to the question, "How long—the end of the wonders?" The answer was "a time, times, and half a time." Now you know, or do you? The first question that comes to mind is: How long is "a time, times, and half a time"? I don't know, and I don't know anyone who does know.

All Dispensationalists, but others also, interpret "a time, times, and half a time" as three and a half years. "A time" is believed to be a year, "times" as two years, "and half a time" as a half a year. But there is no place in the Old Testament that I know of, in which the Hebrew word for "time" means a year. The Hebrew word means something that is designated, appointed, agreed upon. For example, the tabernacle was called "the tent of meeting," "meeting" being the Hebrew word used here. It was the designated place where the people met. The calendar of feasts and festivals of the Jews was designated with this same word. That is where the idea of a year developed, as the annual round of the Jewish system of feasts and festivals. But even then the word wouldn't mean a calendar year because the ecclesiastical month was considered to be one of thirty days. The point is that it is a highly speculative matter to try to reduce prophetic time terms into calendar days and months and years.

But there is something fascinating about this time term "a time, times, and half a time." If the plural "times" is two times, then we have a split seven. Seven is the number of our God at work, most frequently for blessing, but also for judgment. We have the Aramaic form of this term in 7:25 where we are informed that the very humanlike "little horn" that shall sprout among the ten horns on the nondescript beast, replacing three of them, shall exercise control over the saints "for a time and times and half a time."

We have this strange split seven time term appearing in various forms in the book of Revelation. Chapter eleven tells us that the court of the temple will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles for "forty-two months," that is, three and a half years. During that same period of time the two witnesses will be prophesying 1260 days—again three and a half years (vv. 2-3). In chapter twelve we find the woman who had just given birth to the Child being driven into the wilderness to a place of refuge from the fiery red dragon for 1260 days—again the three and a half years. That same thought is repeated again in the 14th verse, where the woman is supplied with two wings of a great eagle so that she can fly for protection in the wilderness, where she is nourished "for a time and times and half a time." Chapter thirteen reports that the composite beast that arose from the sea was given authority to speak blasphemous things for "forty-two months" (v. 5). So we find a repeated use in the prophetic Scriptures of the split seven as both a period of persecution and suffering and as a period of testifying and safety from persecution unto death.

What does the term mean here? Historically we do know that the final end of the Jewish nation took some three and a half years from the time of the investment of Jerusalem by the Romans and its final destruction, but it becomes a matter of manipulating dates to make this fit exactly. The expression may express intensity. At that time there was pressure building up, then redoubled, but then it fell off, for God does not test beyond what His people are able to bear, and judgment is tempered with mercy. We have to await fuller illumination in the world to come for greater understanding.

But the man clothed in linen did give the “terminus ad quem” of the prophecy –the farthest event in the foresight of the prophecy, the terminal point. “When the power (literally, the hand) of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished.” Dispensationalists characteristically project this into the future and understand the end of the great tribulation for the Jews. This is again ignoring past fulfillment. The hand or power of “the holy people,” the people that God separated from all nations of the earth unto Himself, was shattered, came to a fiery end, with the destruction of the nation by the Romans. That was the end of God’s dealing with Israel as a nation—His onetime “holy people.” Thereafter He dealt only individually with the remnant who, together with Gentiles, formed the new “Israel of God.” Through faith in Jesus Christ as our Sin-bearer and Champion over sin, death, and Satan we have been incorporated into this “Israel of God” as children of Abraham and so children of God.

II. The Question of Daniel: Daniel continues to report: “Although I heard, I did not understand.” It is a fact that the prophets of old did not understand entirely the prophecies given to them. They studied their own prophecies, even as Peter tells us (1 Pet. 1:10). It’s as though Daniel said to the angel: “Wait a moment; I didn’t get it!” Then from a slightly different angle Daniel repeated the question of the angel on the riverbank to the man clothed in linen who was over the river: “My lord, what shall be the end (or the outcome or the resolution) of these things?”

It appears at first as though the man in linen was unwilling to give any more information, for He said: “Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.” Recall that the prophecy had been concluded in this way, for Daniel had been instructed to “shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end.” You will also recall that it was at precisely that time that our Lord referred to “the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet” (Matt. 24:15) to give His disciples the sign when they should flee Jerusalem.

But then the man clothed in linen continued: “Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand.” These words repeated the last words of the prophecy when Daniel was told that many sleeping in the land of dust would awaken, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt. These same thoughts were expressed in part at the end of the Maccabean era (v. 35). During the ministry of our Lord and during the ministry of the apostles after our Lord’s ascension, many were “purified, made white, and refined”—among them the persecutor of the Church, Saul of Tarsus. But the wicked continued to do wickedly. As they had rejected the testimony of Jesus, so they rejected the testimony of His apostles. As they persecuted Jesus, so they persecuted the apostles and the congregation of believers. As they finally killed Jesus, so they killed James and Stephen and others. They didn’t understand. Recall that His enemies repeatedly asked Him for a sign. Jesus replied that they could interpret weather signs but could not perceive the signs of the times. But the wise understood! They saw the “abomination that desolates,” the Roman armies, and escaped the city.

The man clothed in linen continued with another bit of information that must have baffled Daniel as much as it does us today yet. “And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days,” that is three years and seven months. “Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days,” which is 45 days later. Here again the wheels turn. The Dispensationalists see in the three and a half years the second half of the 70th seven in the vision of the “seventy sevens” or the time of the tribulation with the extra month and extra forty-five days as time to set up the alleged millennial kingdom here on earth. For me all of this is gross religious fiction. For others this is a period of testing during a time of great tribulation before the second coming of our Lord. Blessed are those who survive!

We do know that the drought in the time of Elijah lasted 3½ years, and that during the time of Antiochus it did take a period of some 3½ years between the taking away of the daily sacrifices and the cleansing of the temple. So also at the “time of the end” for the Jewish nation there is an

interval of some 3½ years between the investing of Jerusalem by the Romans and the time when the daily sacrifices ceased. But, there is difficulty here in that the two events are reversed in their chronological order. Likewise we also know that the Lord cut short the days of the siege of Jerusalem in an amazing manner so that all flesh was not destroyed. But it would appear to be impossible to nail these things down in a definite number of days. Rather, it would appear that we have here the reassurance that the period of judgment will be limited and that there will be mercy for those who hold out. That's the end of information for Daniel!

“But you, go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days.” Daniel was an old man at this time. He is told that he will die in peace and receive his inheritance at the end of his days and eternally. So ended the life and work of this great man of God, the beloved Daniel. Amen.

Daniel: Summary of the Book

In Christ Jesus, who fulfilled the Old Covenant by making the New, Fellow Redeemed:

Daniel was carried off into Babylon as a teenager. The year was 605 BC. Jehoiakim was king of Judah at that time when Nebuchadnezzar made his first assault against Jerusalem. What a traumatic experience for young Daniel! He had been reared in a pious Jewish home. He lived his life according to the law. The law touched the life of a pious Jew every day. Every meal was a test of obedience, for no common food could be eaten and nothing consecrated to idols. The same Lord who had given the law had also previously given the promise. He had made a covenant with Israel. He would send the Sin-Bearer, as Isaiah had foretold. He would establish His everlasting Kingdom. That was the great hope of Daniel and his friends as they walked those hundreds of miles as captives, going to a foreign land. It would be as though we or our children would be snatched and taken permanently to Moscow.

The first culture clash that Daniel and his friends experienced was in the daily necessity of eating. They took their stand on the law of the Lord, determined to eat only kosher foods. They learned that the Lord stood by them in the capital of the world power that was to destroy Judah and Jerusalem and the temple.

Shortly thereafter another crisis developed when King Nebuchadnezzar dreamed a dream which he insisted his wise men reveal and interpret unto him on penalty of death. Again the living God stood by Daniel, revealing unto him both the dream and its interpretation. Nebuchadnezzar had seen in his dream a huge image, The Great Colossus, with a head of gold, breast and arms of silver, belly and thighs of brass, legs of iron and feet of iron and clay. Then a Stone cut without hands was either hurled or rolled down and struck the image on its iron/clay feet with an unusual devastating effect. The great colossus was crushed and then disintegrated, disappearing like blown chaff. But the Stone became a Great Mountain which filled the whole earth.

Daniel interpreted: Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold. The other parts of the great colossus were succeeding empires, which we identify from history as the Medo-Persian, Greek, and Roman Empires. Four world empires would succeed each other. It appeared as though the Kingdom of God was crowded off the earth, but during the rise and fall of these empires the Lord God was preparing His Kingdom which appeared at the time of the fourth world empire, the Roman. It destroyed the great colossus and grew to be a Mountain filling the earth. Notice that both the destruction of the world empires, the anti-*Kingdom of God* kingdoms of this world, and the establishment of the Kingdom of the Messiah occurred at the time of the fourth world empire, the Roman. Notice also that the entire New Testament era going into eternity is compressed or telescoped. The picture is that of judgment upon the world empires and establishment of the everlasting Kingdom at a historical point of time during the fourth empire, the Roman, but developing on to their ultimate consummation. Observe also that Daniel's people do not appear in the picture.

Years later, after the death of Nebuchadnezzar, in the first year of Belshazzar Daniel had a

dream in which he saw this same development, but under different images and with added details and new developments. The succeeding empires, represented to Nebuchadnezzar in the various parts of the great colossus, appeared under the symbols of four beasts rising from the sea. The Babylonian Empire previously symbolized by the head of gold, appeared as a lion with eagle's wings. The Medo-Persian Empire, symbolized in the great colossus as the breast and arms of silver, appeared as a bear raised on one side. The Greek Empire, represented as the belly and thighs of brass of the great image, was symbolized by a leopard with four wings and four heads. And finally the Roman Empire, symbolized by the legs of iron and the feet of iron and clay, appeared as a nondescript beast with iron teeth, claws of brass, and ten horns. The Stone cut without hands, symbolizing the Kingdom of the Messiah, took a personal form, for Daniel saw Someone like the Son of Man coming to the Ancient of Days and receiving the everlasting kingdom. The Stone had struck the great colossus and destroyed it completely; in his dream Daniel saw the nondescript beast slain, its body destroyed by the burning flame. Again the judgment of destruction of the world empires, the kingdoms that opposed the Kingdom of the Lord, occurred in connection with the fourth empire, the Roman. The Kingdom of the Messiah, previously represented by the Stone which grew and became the Mountain filling the earth, was seen by Daniel as the indestructible eternal Kingdom given by the Ancient of Days to the Son of Man. Again there is no mention of Daniel's people.

There is a progression in these two dreams. Daniel saw more than had Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel saw ten horns on the head of the nondescript beast that symbolized the Roman Empire. He was told that these symbolized ten kings or kingdoms that would arise after Rome. It would appear as though the entire post-Roman history of the kingdoms of this world is represented by those ten horns down to the end of time. If this understanding is correct, the Holy Spirit dismisses modern history and our current international political posturing, for example, the current USSR/USA confrontation, as not really amounting to much. Another factor is the "little horn" that arose, plucked out three other horns and developed in a most human way with eyes of a man and a blasphemous mouth. Daniel received the interpretation that this "little horn" shall speak blasphemies against the Most High and persecute the saints "for a time and times and half a time." This "little horn" is to be identified with the "man of sin," spoken of by Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2 and the Antichrist spoken of by John in his first epistle, 2:18.

Both dreams date the destruction of the world power and the establishing of the eternal Kingdom of the Messiah at the time of the fourth or Roman empire. How can that be, seeing that the kingdoms of this world still rage against the Lord and His Anointed and it seems as though Satan is running this earth with the Kingdom of the Messiah nowhere in sight? Remember that believers are people described as walking by faith, not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7). Satan is described as the "prince of this world"; in the book of Revelation he appears in this role under the symbol "a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads" (Rev. 12:3). In anticipation of His death and resurrection our Lord said that the "ruler or prince of this world is judged" (John 16:11). Satan as the ruler of this world has been judged. This means that all the anti- *Kingdom of God* kingdoms of this earth have already been judged and are doomed to destruction. This is what the cross and empty tomb, the death and resurrection of our Lord, mean as far as world geopolitical history is concerned. All the kingdoms and empires of this world are doomed! Their destruction is being worked out in history and will be completed on the last day. On the other hand the Kingdom of our Lord, which was established at the same time—the cross/empty tomb, death/resurrection of our Lord—will be revealed in its indestructible, eternal glory on the last day when our Lord returns. The Kingdom of our Lord is not to be identified with any visible church organization here on earth or with the Holy Christian Church, the Congregation of believers. Believers are Kingdom citizens, but the Kingdom embraces all things. What Nebuchadnezzar's and Daniel's dreams reveal is the centrality of our Lord Jesus' birth, life suffering, death, resurrection, ascension, and sending of the Holy Spirit—all during a period of a few

short years during the fourth empire, that of Rome. Others—pre-millennialists, pre-tribulationists, and dispensationalists—are blind to the centrality of the life/death/resurrection events of our Lord and look for the fulfillment of the destruction of the world empires and the establishment of the Kingdom with the Lord's alleged coming to establish a millennial kingdom on this earth. Note that Daniel's people, the nation of Israel, do not appear in either Nebuchadnezzar's or Daniel's dreams, the "saints" who are persecuted by the "little horn" being New Testament saints.

But Daniel was a Jew. He lived in Old Testament times when the Kingdom was hidden within the nation of Israel. The promised Messiah-King was to come from the house of David. But how could these things happen as long as Jerusalem lay in ruins? Somehow the book of Jeremiah was brought to Babylon, and Daniel read that the period of indignation would last seventy years. That time was growing to a close. Daniel turned to his God, the Lord of the Covenant, in prayer. He confessed his own and his people's sins. He acknowledged that the Lord had done what was righteous in bringing the judgment of destruction and captivity upon his people, for they had sinned. And yet on the basis of the same righteousness of the Lord by which Israel had been punished and Jerusalem destroyed Daniel prayed the Lord to turn His anger and fury from Jerusalem and restore the city. Daniel appears in this prayer as a great patriot who, even as Moses before him, interceded and pleaded for his people.

Before Daniel had finished praying the answer to his prayer came in a special-delivery vision brought to him by Gabriel. The vision served both as correction and instruction but also as comfort for Daniel. His prayer had revealed his heartfelt longing and love for his people. He had pleaded for the restoration of Jerusalem. The answer came that what had caused the destruction of his people and their beloved city would be fully and finally and officially handled—namely, the problem of his people's transgression, sins, and iniquity. Jerusalem would be restored in troublous times, but it would one day be destroyed again. Desolations were determined. What a blow that must have been for Daniel, who quite possibly envisioned his people as especially privileged in the coming Kingdom of the Messiah.

Daniel was, however, assured that within seventy sevens the transgression which had brought such national havoc upon his people would be finished off, restrained, shut up. Their sins would be officially sealed up, and the annual ritual of the great Day of Atonement would be consummated in that their iniquity would be, for once and all time, covered up! Not political glory but everlasting righteousness would be brought in. The visions of the prophets would cease, for the time of the Messiah would have come with fulfillment. All the symbolism of the ancient temple, which was to be restored to his people, would find its realization in a new anointing. Verse 24 of the ninth chapter of Daniel is one of the great verses of the Bible, though neglected in our midst and misinterpreted among others. It all centers and revolves around the promised Messiah, the Prince, the Sin-Bearer and the King in one Person, our Lord Jesus. In connection with His death He would confirm the ancient covenant to Abraham, which had been reaffirmed again and again by the prophets. He would bring all the sacrifices and offerings to an end by offering up Himself once and for all time. Though He would be cut off, yet He would come as judge and destroyer of Daniel's people, for they knew not the time of mercy. The prophecy stands fulfilled in the light of the accounts in the four gospels, the book of Acts, and the subsequent history of the Jewish-Roman wars.

Daniel was a patriot; he was concerned about his people. In the vision of the seventy sevens there was a period of sixty-two sevens that was passed over in silence. That period of time for his people was enlarged in a final vision, as recorded in the final three chapters of Daniel. It's a remarkable vision in that it outlines in greater or lesser detail the history of the Jews amidst the nations from the time of Daniel down to the fulfillment of the covenant and the second destruction of the nation and Jerusalem by the Romans. This is the most extensive prophecy of its kind. We are led through the history of the Persian monarchs with the mighty campaign of Xerxes against Greece, the rise and fall of Alexander the Great's empire, its division into four separate kingdoms.

Then the prophecy takes up the history of the two kingdoms that affect the Jews, that of Syria and Egypt, for Israel was geographically located between them. The prophecy revealed the career of one of the Syrian kings, Antiochus Epiphanes, who would make it his business to destroy God's people. But he would fail, for the lord God would raise up a family of heroes, the Maccabees. Thereafter, after some five centuries, Daniel's people would again have a king—Herod and his descendants. It would be during those days, the time of the end for the nation of Israel, that the national judgment upon Daniel's people would take place. His people would be judged, their city once again destroyed, but some among them would be marvelously delivered. They were the Jews who were taught by the Spirit of God to embrace in saving faith their Messiah—Jesus of Nazareth. They were the good olive tree of which Paul spoke. They became the nucleus of the new "Israel of God," the Holy Christian Church. With that dim view of the future, made clearer to us by its fulfillment, Daniel was instructed to take his rest and enjoy his inheritance. In closing our study of Daniel let us remember that the hope of Daniel is our hope—the Messiah and His Kingdom, Jesus the Christ who has atoned for our sins and who bids us come to Him, become and remain citizens of His Kingdom for ever and ever. Amen.

A BRIEF ISAGOGICAL TREATMENT OF 1 THESSALONIANS

Delwyn Maas

With the experiences of their ministry in Philippi behind them, Paul, Silas, and Timothy made their way through Amphipolis and Apollonia to the city of Thessalonica. Over the course of three Sabbaths the new Christians in the city of Thessalonica were thrilled to hear that the long-promised Christ had come. They had gone from being believers waiting for the first coming of the Messiah to believers waiting eagerly for His second coming. They were eager for His glorious return because they had heard of the Christ's atoning death, victorious resurrection, triumphant Ascension, and His promise to come again. Yet, even as the believers were just beginning to hear the most delightful message ever to touch their ears and hearts, the enemies of the gospel had already begun their campaign to drive out the missionaries and silence the gospel. Paul and Silas were eventually compelled to leave. Made up mostly of new converts, the congregation was left on its own after having no more than four weeks of teaching. Talk about having a crash course in Christian doctrine! Add to this the fact that they were facing determined opposition. Could the new flock possibly survive? If anyone had been expecting that church to fizzle out, then they were mistaken. The Holy Spirit had worked a faith in the hearts of those Christians that made them vibrant, dedicated witnesses of the gospel of Christ everywhere they went. Not only did they survive, by the grace of God they thrived!

Paul and Silas had been sent away to the safety of the city of Berea. Later, Paul went to Athens and then to Corinth. However, all the while he could not stop thinking about the Thessalonians. How were they doing? What temptations and persecution would Satan be sending their way? Would they remain faithful? From Athens Paul sent Timothy to Thessalonica "to establish and encourage" them in their faith. Timothy joined Paul again in Corinth, and with him he brought the heartening "good news" about the faith and love of the Thessalonians. Even before that, Paul had begun to hear from Macedonia and Achaia about the steadfastness of the Thessalonians. They were not merely hanging on, they were not just getting by, they were actively engaged in the work of spreading the gospel! They were an encouraging example to other believers in how to bear up and even flourish in the midst of persecution.

It was then, with such a buoyed spirit, that Paul wrote the first letter to the Thessalonians. We know that Timothy returned to Paul while Paul was in Corinth, and he wrote the letter shortly

after Timothy arrived (3:6). Since Gallio was proconsul of Achaia when Paul was in Corinth (Acts 18:12), and the term of his proconsulship was from AD 51-52, then it is likely that Paul wrote the first letter in AD 51 and the second in AD 52.

Thessalonica was a bustling seaport that was also at a major crossroads. With a population of about 200,000, there were terrific opportunities for mission work. Of this situation the Thessalonian Christians took advantage, as Paul wrote: "For from you sounded out the Word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad . . ." (1:8). It was a great place for mission work, but the location was not without challenges. There was the direct opposition that came from men who had formerly been considered brethren. When the missionaries came to Thessalonica, they entered the synagogue and began teaching there. "Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and not a few of the prominent women" (Acts 17:4 NIV). However, it was not long before the congregation split. Many of the Jewish members of the synagogue had rejected the message that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ. They did this in much the same manner as many Jews in Jerusalem had also done when Jesus Himself walked there. The disagreement turned to hatred, turned to violence. There were other challenges the congregation faced just by virtue of being in a large city with an abundance of temptations, the kind of temptations that would be especially taxing for someone who was a recent convert. After all, a wild and undisciplined way of life had been normal for some before the Holy Spirit converted them. We can easily envision worldly friends and colleagues beckoning them to take part, saying, "Come on, join us! Don't you remember how much fun we used to have? There was a time when you really knew how to party!" That was in their former life, a life repented of and left behind. Now, they were living for Christ!

This letter was sent to a collection of believers who had been filled with a fervor for the gospel, not only to possess it as their own but also to share it. Just think of what the Holy Spirit had accomplished in a such a short period of time! As mentioned before, the congregation was also faced with remarkable adversities. The Lord's mercy was evidenced in all these things which He used in the process of maturing and strengthening their faith.

Paul wrote his letter to reaffirm the message they had received, to remind them of the great love they had for each other in Christ, to further their understanding of certain truths, and to encourage them to keep on going strong. More than once, Paul told them that they were already on the right track, they were already doing the right things (5:11; et al.). Great! So now, in this letter the Apostle Paul is telling the Thessalonians to turn it up a notch! Take it to the next level! ". . . the Lord make you to increase and abound in love . . ." (3:12). ". . . we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more . . ." (4:1). ". . . ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another . . . we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more" (4:9-10). As good as things were in the congregation, Paul did not want them to be satisfied with the status quo. "Grow! Increase! Abound more and more!"

Of course, such an increase comes only through the Holy Spirit who works in hearts through the Word of God. The congregation had a fantastic beginning, but there was so much more to learn. After all, the time for instruction had been brief even when calculating in the time that Timothy spent there when sent back by Paul.

To that end, the Holy Spirit brings His Word to bear on the hearts of the Thessalonians through the pen of His servant—the Apostle Paul. The following division of the epistle is suggested.

In his letter, Paul—

1:1-10

Is thanking God:

1. For the power of the Word when it first came to them.
2. For the power of the Spirit who moved them so that the Word sounded forth from them far and wide.

2:1-16

Is remembering their beginning and:

1. How the Word was preached despite opposition.
2. How the reasons and motive behind the preaching were clearly honest and upright.
3. How the missionaries went out of their way to give no offense.
4. How their manner in dealing with them was in fatherly fashion.
5. How they all were and will remain the objects of hostility because they received and believe the Word of God.

2:17-3:13

Tells us how he was longing to:

1. End the unwanted separation but being prevented.
2. Assure them that the separation is not in spirit but only in body.
3. Send Timothy to establish and encourage them in their faith (which he did).
4. Hear from Timothy the good news of their faith and love (which he did).

And is longing to:

5. Come himself and see them again some day, and praying for their love to increase and for the Lord to make them ready for His Parousia.

4:1-12

Is reminding them to:

1. Walk in a way that pleases God as is fitting for those who have been sanctified.
2. Avoid sexual immorality and pursue self-control.
3. Know that rejecting this warning is rejecting God' s Word.
4. Walk more and more in love, while avoiding those things which could cause conflict.

4:13-5:11

Is comforting them regarding death and encouraging them to be ready for the Parousia by:

1. Knowing that those who have died in faith are with the Lord.
2. Looking forward to when they will meet together before the Lord on the Last Day with all believers, past and present.
3. Being assured that all believers shall be forever with the Lord.
4. Not being surprised at or deceived by the foolishness and the wickedness of the world in the days preceding the Last Day.
5. Avoiding the kinds of things that could make one unprepared to meet the Lord. Spending their time holding on to the things that will keep them safe and strong, while encouraging and edifying each other.

5:12-22

Is admonishing them to:

1. Respect those who deserve respect.
2. Live in peace.
3. Warn those who need warning, encourage those who need encouragement.
4. Avoid revenge and follow after kindness.
5. Rejoice, pray, and give thanks at all times.
6. Engage in those things which edify and stay away from those things that could harm

them or quench the Spirit' s work.

5:23-28

Is offering a benediction, reminding them to:

- I. Rely on God' s power and mercy in order to be ready for His second coming.
- II. Rely on God' s power and mercy in order to be ready for His second coming. Greet one another in Christ and to edify the congregation by sharing the letter with everyone.

Far from being fly-by-night charlatans looking for some quick, personal gain, Paul and the others with him were truly servants of the Lord. They always went out of their way not to give offense. The welfare of the Thessalonians was of primary importance to them. It had not been their intention to leave so soon. Even while many miles away and serving in other congregations, the beloved Thessalonians were ever on their hearts and in their prayers.

There is a special emphasis in this letter on the expectation of the Lord' s Second Advent. The word *parousia* is used four times in this letter, more than any other New Testament book save Matthew. What an exciting, new outlook the Gospel of Jesus Christ had given to the members of the congregation. No matter where they were, no matter what they were doing, everything was always with a view toward watching and waiting for the Lord to come and reunite all His followers in a grand, eternal reunion. No wonder they had such a verve for serving the Lord! No wonder their love for fellow believers was so strong! No wonder the "Lord' s message rang out from" them! The record of the Thessalonian Christians is a marvelous testimony to the power and nurturing of the Holy Spirit who brings forth great success even in the midst of opposition.

This epistle St. Paul writes out of especial love and apostolic solicitude. ... he praises them because they received the Gospel from him with such earnestness that they remained steadfast in it despite suffering and persecution, and became a beautiful example of faith to all congregations everywhere. (*LW* 35:386)

More reading on this subject:

Concordia Self-Study Bible, Robert G. Hoerber, ed., Concordia 1986

The Interpretation of St. Paul' s Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus and to Philemon, R.C.H. Lenski, Wartburg Press, 1948

The Word of the Lord Grows, Martin H. Franzman, Concordia, 1966.

AN EXEGETICAL STUDY OF ROMANS 1:1–7

G. Radtke

The inspired author of this epistle to the Romans:

The Apostle Paul was led by the Spirit of God to write this letter in the year 58, at the end of his third missionary journey, near the close of his three month' s stay in Corinth (Acts 20:1 -3).

Paul had left Philippi early in April after the Jewish Passover. Paul would have departed from Corinth in March of 58 when the shipping season opened. Together with eight delegates from the congregations, they would deliver the great collection to Jerusalem for the famine stricken brethren in Palestine (Acts 20:4 and 24:17). Before Paul left Corinth he wrote the Epistle to the Romans. The epistle is carried to Rome and delivered by Phoebe.

The Roman Christians addressed by the epistle:

The church at Rome, as at Antioch, began when Christians who had been converted elsewhere found each other in the great city of Rome and gathered together for mutual edification, strength and comfort. This may have occurred around the year 40, about eighteen years before Paul wrote this letter. No details of the founding of this congregation are available to us, but we may conclude that they were former Jews, more than likely some of those who escaped when the mother church at Jerusalem was scattered by the persecution following Stephen's martyrdom. At Pentecost we hear of a "number of Romans, Jews, and proselytes who were temporarily residing in Jerusalem" (Acts 2:10).

From Acts 28:17-29 we learn that the Roman Christians had quietly pursued their way without invading the synagogues of the city, attempting to convert any of the Roman Jews. After Paul received his call and arrived at Rome (Acts 23:11), missionary work among the Jews began and was blessed with wonderful success.

There has been considerable debate as to the composition of the church at Rome. Yet Paul himself acquaints us with the entire Roman congregation, naming its leaders as well as leading groups; he identifies those who were once Jews, and those who were not. Chapter 16:3-16 gives us the proportion of former Jews and former Gentiles in the entire congregation. In his greetings, Paul did not omit any part of the membership, and we can see the proportion of slaves in the Roman church, a rather large number.

From this information, we now see why a congregation of this complexion had, in its eighteen years of existence, never attempted Jewish mission work in Rome. When Paul was called by the Lord to testify in Rome as he had testified in Jerusalem (Acts 23:11), we note that he had testified in Jerusalem among the Jews. Now Paul was called to do Jewish mission work in Rome. Thus in Acts 28:17-31 we learn why Paul, on arriving in Rome, sent for all the Jewish leaders of the synagogues, why they actually came to him, *οἱ μὲν* and *οἱ δὲ* in Acts 28:24 show that Paul's first effort won about fifty percent of the Jewish leaders during one day's discussion with them.

In the list of greetings in chapter 16:3-16 we see the actual membership of the entire congregation: the Jews, Gentiles, and slaves. The whole epistle shows that Paul is approaching the whole congregation, with concerns for unity and unanimity.

R. C. H. Lenski, in his comments on Romans has left us with a fine directive with which to undertake the study and use of any of Paul's epistles:

It has been suggested that Paul wrote over the heads of the Romans, many of whom were merely slaves. As far as the latter are concerned, many of them were better educated and more intelligent than their owners. But the main point is that the divine truth is a stream in which a child may wade and an elephant must swim. All of Paul's letters were certainly above the heads of their recipients; they are above ours today, and yet they are also under our feet like solid ground. None of them is grasped by the intellect alone, all of them require spiritual insight. . . .

and we add, the spiritual insight that belongs alone to those who remain in a child-like faith worked by the Spirit of God.

The inspired text and its message:

1:1-7 The salutation

1 Παῦλος δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, κλητὸς ἀπόστολος ἀφρισμένος εἰς εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ,

2 ὃ προεπηγγείλατο διὰ τῶν προφητῶν αὐτοῦ ἐν γραφαῖς ἁγίαις
 3 περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ τοῦ γενομένου ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ κατὰ σάρκα,
 4 τοῦ ὀρισθέντος υἱοῦ θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν,
 Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν,
 5 δι' οὗ ἐλάβομεν χάριν καὶ ἀποστολὴν εἰς ὑπακοὴν πιστεως ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ὑπὲρ
 τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ,
 6 ἐν οἷς ἐστε καὶ ὑμεῖς κλητοὶ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ,
 7 πᾶσιν τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν Ῥώμῃ ἀγαπητοῖς θεοῦ, κλητοῖς ἁγίοις, χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ
 θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

This salutation is longer than usual through the extended information concerning its first member, Paul. There were certain of the Roman Christians who knew Paul from prior contacts, but to the majority of them Paul was a stranger. This epistle is a first contact. In Paul's opening sentence the Romans are clearly informed of the capacity and spirit with which he approaches them.

1) Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God . . .

Δοῦλος is a servile term used by the Greeks to denote a slave. Usually one born as a slave. Death alone could loose the bindings to the master; he would serve his master with disregard for his own interests (selfless) as one swallowed up in the will of his master. Paul was born a slave to sin via his physical birth, but a bond slave via regeneration. Paul names himself a bond slave of Christ (genitive of possession), of the King of Kings.

The term δοῦλος identifies Paul as belonging to and totally at the disposal of his Lord. An expression of humility yes, but also a high claim. A backward look from Paul's identity as a called slave brings to mind Moses, Joshua, David, Amos, Jeremiah, Daniel, et al. And Jesus had applied this high identification (δοῦλος) to the disciples and apostles whom He called and sent.

Luther: 'Paul calls himself a servant to confess that he has received the apostolic office from God above others. What he means to say is this: 'I preach the gospel, teach the church, baptize, and do other pastoral works which truly are God's. But I do them NOT as a lord to rule over you, but as a δοῦλος to whom the ministry means nothing else than that which Christ desires me to do among you.' This cannot be said of that other ministry with regard to which all believers are in equal measure called servants of God. The one is a special ministry of some; the other is a general ministry which applies to all believers.'" (We note Luther's care to keep all ministries of the Lord in the context of the keys.)

Κλητὸς ἀπόστολος sends a warning against all efforts or means to enter the public ministry without a divine call. Luther reminds us that in ancient times the people felt the greatest of fear when they received a message of God or from an angel. Even Moses could hardly endure this great terror. Since the Word had not yet become flesh, they could not understand it because of its abounding glory and their own great weakness. But now, after the Word has been made flesh, it has become very captivating and important to us through men of our own flesh and blood.

This is followed by his call to apostleship (a called apostle). Κλητὸς ἀπόστολος is used as: called to assume an office, called for a specific purpose. Αποστέλλω is frequently found in secular writings in a clause: "sent for this purpose." Αποστέλλω is found in a context that means "sent on a commission", to represent another person, one sent with the credentials and the responsibility of carrying out orders of the one sending him. The word "apostle" is not a translation of the word, but a transliteration (and that in a shortened form). Our English word "ambassador" adequately translates it. Paul designates himself as a divinely and effectually summoned ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of kings, and is sent by Him on a commission with credentials to

evangelize the Gentile world.

Although Paul did not travel about with the Lord during his lifetime as the twelve had, he yet lacked none of the other prerogatives of apostleship: eye-witness and ear-witness. Paul saw the resurrected Lord with his eyes (1 Cor. 15:8 “...and last of all He appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born”). And Paul received directions from Him concerning the things he should teach: ‘For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you . . . [The words of the institution of the Lord’s Supper]’ (1 Cor. 11:23).

Ἀφωρισμένος means separated, marked off by boundaries, used here in the perfect passive participle, a past completed action with present results. This term may have been used by Paul with reflection upon his past rebellion as a Pharisee, a persecutor of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. The name Pharisee means literally “one set apart”. The Pharisees were set apart from all others by their self-righteous practices which called forth rank legalism in dealing with all others. The hearers (recalling that allusion to Paul’s past or not), as a people who lived with the Old Testament, recognized in the words “set apart” the consecrating hand of God.

Set apart for the gospel of God. Luther admits that the words may be understood in two ways: 1) As in Acts 13:2 . . . *the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work for which I have called them.”* Paul is separated as an apostle of the Gentiles, the public ministry but directed to the Gentiles. 2) As in Galatians 1:15-16 *But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not consult any man, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus.*

God’s promise of His universal justification was extended to all peoples from earliest prophecy—‘In thee and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed’—and verified in John 3:16 (‘the world’), and in the gospel accounts of Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Paul is enslaved and set apart and called to give full attention and ministrations to the spiritual care of the Gentiles.

Ἐυαγγέλιον θεοῦ with no article stresses the quality or character. It has reference to good news, the good news by which the Holy Spirit brings to our ears and hearts forgiveness, life, and salvation, all from the love of the Father and the sacrificial ransom paid in full by His Son, Jesus the Christ. Ἐυαγγέλιον deals with the substance (what it is), not the activity of communicating it. The term εὐαγγέλιον was found in an inscription of 9 BC with reference to the birthday of Emperor Augustus: ‘but the birthday of the god (Emperor) was for the world a beginning of tidings of joy on his account’ (Moulton & Milligan’s Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament). Paul may well have been aware of both a sacred and a secular popular use of this word εὐαγγέλιον. He marks it as the good news for which he was separated by God to tell the Gentile (Roman) world God’s Good News!

2) . . . which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures. . .

Note the emphasis on the aorist “*He promised in advance.*” It is the Old Testament gospel, complete in its message and promised content, brought to fulfillment in the fullness of the time with the birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord. With these words Paul, with one stroke, cuts away all objections to his message from the Jews who said he was introducing something new and opposed to the Mosaic writings. Vincent comments:

Paul’s Old Testament training is manifest. Naturally, in beginning the more precise description of the new revelation, he refers to its connection with ancient prophecy.

‘Promise beforehand’—The most convincing and persuasive proof (of the truth) of the gospel is the fact that it was witnessed by the Law and the prophets. God’s good will concerning the reconciliation of condemned sinners to life eternal was foreordained in detail before it was carried into effect (Amos 3:7 – *Surely the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing His plan to His servants the prophets.* And Isaiah 48:5 – *Therefore I told you these things long ago; before they happened I announced them to you so that you could not say, ‘My idols did them; my wooden*

image and metal god ordained them.”).

Of this eternal promise made before the world was created Paul writes to Titus (1:2) . . . *a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time.* These are eternal truths clearly made known by His prophets in time and in human speech.

Διὰ – God issued the promises, the prophets were merely the chosen, called, inspired conveyors of His words (messages). Διὰ, underscores the medium through which and by which the gospel is proclaimed and written word-for-word, His words. The term προφητῶν as Paul uses it here, does not limit the writers to the major and minor prophets, but includes Moses, David, and others who also communicated the good news. We find no article (γραφαῖς ἁγίαις: so once again quality and character is basic. The writings of the called writers were a Spirit-given and Spirit-guided transmission of the voiced promises of God to all mankind. They were “holy, sacred writings” of God’s holy will for all mankind.

The phrase “in the Holy Scriptures” is highly significant. Had God merely said, “by His prophets,” some might rationalize that those prophets are now dead and so passed away together with their prophecies. The Sacred Scriptures record the existing prophecies and their complete, detailed fulfillment.

3) . . . regarding His Son, who as to His human nature was a descendant of David . . .

περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ (the very heart and essence of the holy writings); τοῦ γενομένου ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ κατὰ σάρκα, the One coming from David’s seed according to flesh. The divine Son of God takes on human lineage through His birth, entering His state of humiliation. He who was God became man without ceasing to be God, no change as to His deity.

Luther counsels:

It is necessary at this point carefully to consider the manner in which the apostle most peculiarly expresses himself; for he does not say: “He was made the Son of God with power,” as He says: “He was made the Seed of David according to the flesh.” From the very moment when Christ was conceived, it was correct to say, because of the communion of the two natures (in His person): “This God is the Son of David;” and: “This man is the Son of God.”

The form γενομένου, a second aorist participle signifies the entrance into a new condition. The verb means “to become” as John used it in 1:14 “The Word became flesh,” that is, entered into a new state or condition by assuming a human body and putting Himself under human limitations.

4) . . . and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by His resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord . . .

Luther translated verse four: “*...und kräftiglich erwiesen ein Sohn Gottes nach dem Geist; der da heiliget; seid der Zeit er auferstanden ist von den Toten, Jesus Christ, unser Herr . . .*” (and with power established the Son of God according to the Spirit which sanctifies since the time He is risen from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord . . .).

The Greek-to-English translators have various readings for this verse—indicating that the words ἐν δυνάμει κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν, in power (with power) modify **a.** ordained (ὀρισθέντος), or **b.** God’s Son (υἱοῦ θεοῦ).

e.g., KJV: “. . . and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.”

NKJV: “. . . and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead”

NIV: “. . . and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by His resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord”

Phillips: "...and patently marked out as the Son of God by the power of the Spirit of holiness which raised Him to life again from the dead"

It is not easy to determine which of the scholars and authorities have put their finger on the Greek technology to reach a grammatical reason upon which we can base the "correct" translation. The comments and literal translation offered by a Vincent are of interest:

"With respect to His humility, our Lord came from the royal line of David; with respect to His divine essence (spirit of holiness), He was demonstrated to be such in the sphere of the resurrection power of God which raised Him from the dead." Be careful! The Greek text does not have ἐκ νεκρῶν (out from among the dead) but only νεκρῶν (of the dead). The phrase refers to the resurrection of all the dead in other places in the New Testament, and also here, to their resurrection as included and involved in the resurrection of our Lord. It is Christ's resurrection which demonstrates His deity after assuming humanity, but His resurrection viewed together with the resurrection of all the righteous, the resurrection of the latter being made possible by the former. ". . . which He promised aforetime through the intermediate agency of His prophet's holy writings, concerning His Son who came from the seed of David so far as His humanity was concerned, who was demonstrated as the Son of God in the sphere of power so far as His divine essence is concerned, by the resurrection of the dead."

God set His seal upon His Son's work and highly exalted Him (Phil. 2:9 "Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name . . ."). The obedient Son was marked out by God as Son of God in power, the Son of Holiness, the vested Godhead that shown through His flesh during His days among men, broke forth in unmistakable splendor in the risen Son. God marked Him out as Son of God by raising Him from the dead. Paul speaks simply of "the resurrection" suggesting that the resurrection of Jesus was an event which involved mankind. "But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep . . ." (1 Cor. 15:20). Christ, the Beginner of the resurrection for all, the Man in whom all "shall be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:22).

This declaration, this demonstration of the Deity of the God-Man was, Paul says, in power. It was in the sphere of power that this declaration was made, the power of God that raised our Lord from the dead. The power operated "according to the spirit of holiness."

"The sense* that there is that in Christ which is explained* by His connection with mankind, and that also which can only be explained* by His connection by some peculiar relationship to God, is no doubt converged in this description, and is the basis of the orthodox doctrine of the two natures in the one person of the Lord." (From Denney, who is not too careful to avoid "reform theology" words such as noted by *).

Stöckhardt says at verse four:

Then came a change. To this the second attribute calls attention. "And declared to be the Son of God with power." Was He appointed to be the Son of God? Absurd, for He is that by origin. It is the Son of God become flesh, who is declared to be God's Son with power. He is in the state of absolute divine majesty and exercise of power, translated into the state of glory. In the state of humiliation He had yielded to the weakness of the human nature. He had kept His divine majesty behind the form of a servant. Then, however, He entered into full possession and use of His divine omnipotence and glory. That is what is stated concerning this Son of God, who according to the flesh came from the family of David. David's Son is now God's Son with power. The Son of God made flesh now rules in absolute divine power, also according to His human nature.

Christ is God's Son with power according to the spirit of holiness. This is the other, higher essence, the divine principle in Christ, His other heavenly divine nature. The Son of God is spirit, as God the Father (Second Corinthians 3:17 "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and

where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom . . .’); and this spirit is spirit of holiness as God is the Holy One, designating “divine other-worldliness.” Christ is the Son of God with majestic power and officiates as such according to the measure of His divine, heavenly nature.

The Lillegard Commentary (based on Ylvisaker class notes, et al.) states:

Κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης is parallel with κατὰ σάρκα by way of contrast and points to His divine power. It does NOT refer to the third person in the Trinity, the Holy Ghost, who is called πνεῦμα ἅγιον and is used with διὰ. Here the phrase means the same as Peter’s “quickened by the Spirit” or “according to the Spirit” (I Peter 3:18). The term ἁγιωσύνης occurs elsewhere only in II Corinthians 7:1 “. . . let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit . . .” It means “holiness.” “The spirit of holiness,” with the qualitative genitive, emphasizes that His spirit is holiness. He is in His essence holiness. The two expressions, “according to the spirit of holiness” and “by the resurrection from the dead” indicate His exaltation, but not in the same way. The first shows what He was capable of and is “active,” the other is “passive” and shows what He was.

5) Through Him and for His name’s sake, we receive grace and apostleship to call people from all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith.

Δι’ οὗ ἐλάβομεν χάριν καὶ ἀποστολήν: Paul regularly speaks of his apostleship as grace given him. “By the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me” (1 Cor. 15:10). “Although I am less than the least of all God’s people, this grace was given to me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ...” (Eph. 3:8). “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has given me strength, that He considered me faithful, appointing me to His service. Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy ... The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 1:12-14).

Paul means the work of his apostleship when he speaks of it as grace, not just the honor of being an apostle. He speaks of his work as the messenger of Jesus Christ here; his task is “to bring about the obedience of faith” by proclaiming his Lord. Paul knows of no obedience, in the religious sense, which is not faith. Faith is created by the proclamation of the Gospel of the Son of God, who came in freedom into the flesh and was designated Son of God in power by His resurrection from the dead; it is created by the proclamation of a divine action that is none of man’s doing or deserving. Faith is therefore pure receiving; faith is an act present and at work in the apostolic Word that proclaims it.

But the apostolic Word also proclaims the Son as Lord, with the right and power to rule. His grace lays total claim to men (2 Corinthians 5:15, “. . . He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died for them and was raised again.”), and faith is therefore always obedience. When the Son of God in power confronted Paul, Paul bowed before Him in the obedience of faith; he said “What shall I do, Lord?” Paul on occasion is free to use “faith” and “obedience” interchangeably. (Martin H. Franzmann)

The final phrase, ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ, is to be construed with all that precedes it in the clause. Here we meet ὄνομα, NAME, and should by all means note that this word occurs throughout the New Testament. Especially important are the phrases with ἐν, ἐπί, ὑπέρ. “For His name’s sake,” is a part of the entire thought expressed by this clause and also joins the end to the beginning. “His name” reverts to “through whom.”

6) And you also are among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

What comfort, what good news, what security in a world dying of insecurity! Luther says: From this verse we learn that divine love precedes the calling of sinners, just as the calling

precedes their sanctification. Paul's hearers were to realize that they were saints, not because of any merit on their part, but because of God's love and call, so that He ascribes all things to God. No one indeed becomes a believer, saint, unless he is called by God. But let us also remember: "Many are called, but few chosen" Matthew 20:16.

7) **To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.**

"God's own," "set apart for God" are basic meanings for the word *saint* in the Bible. One becomes a saint not when he has attained moral perfection, or has an over-supply of good works which he may share with those of lesser works, but when God's call has consecrated him for God's uses. Moral excellence is a result of sainthood, not the condition for it.

To these saints Paul sends his usual greeting, *χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη*. Grace is the free favor of God, His undeserved favor revealed and active in Christ for the salvation of mankind. Peace is the state of whole and sound well-being, the divine health, which God's grace creates, bestows, and perpetually renews.

The fact that one person is called our Father and the other our Lord Jesus Christ does not lower the second. It merely shows that in the Holy Trinity all three persons are not fathers, all three are not incarnate, etc, but each bears a distinct identity of His essence. The first person is "our Father" because we are His children in Christ; and the second person is "the Lord" (our Lord) because He has redeemed, purchased, and won us so that we are His own.

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===== P A N O R A M A =====

A Response to a WELS Critique of the 2002 CLC Convention . . .

Professor Thomas Nass, a member of the WELS Commission on Inter-Church Relations, writing as an official observer, in an article published in the Winter 2003 *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, presented his reaction to the 2002 CLC Convention. Approximately one-fourth of his

article has to do with election matters and fellowship relations which the CLC has declared with the Lutheran Church of East Africa–Tanzania and the Confessional Lutheran Church of Congo. The rest has to do with the resolutions adopted by the CLC in regard to The American Legion. This matter was indeed a very important part of the work of this convention, the culmination of six years of study and discussion.

Nass based his observations on the fact that there was also considerable discussion on the floor of the convention, much of which was delivered with a demonstration of serious and deep conviction. Disagreement was evident, the seriousness of which has been further demonstrated since the convention by the departure from CLC fellowship and membership on the part of one pastor and one former pastor, both of whom have now joined the WELS, finding somewhat abruptly that, in their opinion, there is now no doctrinal difference between the CLC and the WELS!

The adopted resolutions are not ambiguous in their meaning and intent. When they are analyzed, together with the “whereas” clauses on which they are based, this becomes very clear. “**Resolved** that, for the spiritual welfare of souls, patient and evangelical guidance be given to any in our congregations who are members of The American Legion, with the goal of leading them out” (emphasis added). Since it is “for the spiritual welfare of souls,” there is no other option granted by this resolution than that such guidance will be given, with that particular goal.

To consider what the convention meant with “patient and evangelical guidance” we turn to the fifth “whereas” clause (just before the cited resolution). The “goal of leading them out” is based in that clause on the “trust that God’s Word ... will serve to bind consciences where and when they are to be bound and that the gospel will move Christian hearts in a God-pleasing direction.” The intent is certainly clear, then: the convention resolved that, if there are any in the CLC congregations who are members of The American Legion, patient and evangelical guidance will be given to bind their consciences with God’s Word and to move their hearts with the gospel to lead them out of The American Legion, for this is a God-pleasing goal.

No one desires that such Christian guidance would be handled in a mechanical or legalistic manner. Rather, there are important and telling reasons why “leading them out” is so important a responsibility for CLC congregations and pastors. These reasons are set forth in the first four “whereas” clauses demonstrating the necessity of the resolution.

The first of these “whereas” clauses states that God’s Word is unambiguous on the necessity of faithfulness to Scripture and of using it to present a clear witness. If doctrine and practice are not based on this truth, they are bound to be heterodox. The CLC is hereby stating its conviction that what follows in its statement is faithful to Scripture and is also a clear witness.

In the second “whereas” clause is set forth the convention’s conviction that “the religious elements of The American Legion identified in the GPC [General Pastoral Conference of the CLC] Report are in conflict with God’s Word and therefore with our Christian confession” (emphasis added). This is an important statement, remembering our historical background in connection with Romans 16:17-18 and 2 Corinthians 6: 14-18, and it provides a compelling reason for the resolution. It is very specific in referring to religious elements “identified in the GPC Report” as the following: The American Legion’s chaplaincy program, constitutionalized and official; The American Legion’s embracing and affirming all faiths without distinction, which results in a “generic view of God which denies Christ”; The American Legion’s involvement of all its members in the support and promotion of Scouting; and The American Legion’s involvement of all its members in the requirement of supporting the national organization through payment of dues. As stated above, the convention declared that its resolution in this matter is because of and based on its conviction that these “religious elements ... are in conflict with God’s Word.” To do, stand for, or support anything which is “in conflict with God’s Word” is very serious and surely contrary to the holy will of God.

In the third “whereas” clause the CLC convention stated its conviction that “The American

Legion publishes, distributes, promotes and uses prayer manuals, handbooks, and other materials that endanger souls" (emphasis added). This is a strong indictment, indeed. Surely, no steadfast Christian would knowingly want to be a member of an organization which endangers souls in that way. If any member of a CLC congregation should stray into such a group, surely he would hold his congregation remiss if it did not do its utmost to help him to remove himself from such an association. If a pastor should learn of a member of his congregation who has thus strayed, and does not make every effort to show that member what a God-displeasing thing he has done, even though in ignorance until shown, then that pastor is surely accountable before the Lord for his neglect of an endangered soul. He would have lost a golden opportunity to proclaim both sin and grace.

In the fourth "whereas" clause the convention makes reference to membership in The American Legion and speaks of the grave risk of "compromising ...Christian witness" and of the possible "occasion for offense" in which a member of The American Legion is implicated by his membership.

While there were some disagreeing statements made on the convention floor, it is impossible in a virtually (if not entirely) unanimous vote to ascertain for what reason, or in accordance with what statement, the individual member has cast his ballot. In the final analysis one can and must accept the adopted resolutions, together with the undergirding "whereas" clauses, as expressive of the will of the convention. That will was clear and unambiguous.

Professor Nass found an ironic similarity in the CLC resolutions on The American Legion to the WELS actions in the 1950s regarding the termination of its fellowship relations with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. He wrote: "Everyone is agreed on the principles of church fellowship. There is a difference of opinion in the evaluation of a human organization. There is a struggle to come upon uniform application of the fellowship principles" (56). His comment is not valid, however, in regard to the WELS in the 1950s. Everyone was not agreed on the principles of church fellowship. The foundational CLC document, titled *Concerning Church Fellowship*, includes page after page documenting various false concepts of church fellowship that were maintained here and there in WELS, and alluded to or pleaded in convention debates of the time. And after 1955, at least, the debate in the WELS was over the issue of how much admonition should still be given to the LCMS. It was in 1955 that the WELS, in convention, had unanimously affirmed that the LCMS was causing and had caused divisions and offenses contrary to the true doctrine. From then on they continued to debate over whether or not to avoid the LCMS then or later. And it was in 1959 that the false principle was adopted, in convention, and therefore made official WELS doctrine (unchanged by the church body to this day), that "Termination of fellowship is called for when you have reached the conviction that admonition is of no further avail and that an impasse has been reached" (1959 WELS Proceedings). In recent times representatives of the WELS have seemed to attempt to lessen the importance of its 1959 convention's doctrinal affirmation by alluding to it merely as an expression by Professor Carl Lawrenz. It is true that he was evidently the first to use the statement. But the WELS made the statement its own by convention resolution, and it is by its official convention resolutions that the WELS must be judged, and not by other interpretations and arguments.

One great difficulty today in the WELS is that there is disagreement between what some of their leaders or teachers claim to be their doctrinal position and what their convention-adopted resolutions say. For example, in the last series of discussions between WELS/ELS and CLC representatives there appeared to be some agreement among them on some points involving the WELS 1959 official statement. But the WELS/ELS representatives were unwilling to repudiate past official statements of their church bodies which were not in agreement with what the representatives were claiming to be their current stand. That being the case, the discussions were broken off.

There is also disagreement among WELS spokesmen themselves over the doctrine of

fellowship. For example, in the Question and Answer Section of the WELS internet home page, the following statement was made in connection with a question: "The 'litmus test' for fellowship in the WELS is 100% doctrinal agreement by public confession." The WELS individual in charge of answering questions replied, "Your first statement, 'The 'litmus test' for fellowship in the WELS is 100% doctrinal agreement by public confession,' is false. ... There is no need to reply to your statement because it is false and does not represent our view." Yet, a cursory examination of Chapter 2 of Professor John Brug's book, *Church Fellowship* (Northwestern Publishing House, Milwaukee, WI, 1996, People's BIBLE Teachings, 20-21), states the following: "Church fellowship is every expression of faith in which Christians join together because they are united by their acceptance and confession of all of the teachings of Scripture"; "If individuals or groups agree with all of the teachings of Scripture, they should practice church fellowship together"; "We are responsible for judging the confession of all fellow Christians according to Scripture. We are to work together only with those whose confession agrees with all the truths of Scripture"; "... the practice of church fellowship must be based on agreement in all of the doctrines of Scripture" (emphasis added, except for that in italics). While we are in agreement with Professor Brug, we are at a loss to say whether he or the other representative is declaring the true position of the synod.

The present writer has been urged by Professor Nass to determine the true doctrinal position of the WELS on church fellowship by reading official documents recognized by a convention of the WELS. I have, therefore, studied a booklet titled *Doctrinal Statements of the WELS*, prepared in 1997 by the WELS Commission on Inter-Church Relations. Certain "Theses on Church Fellowship" were presented to the 1961 WELS convention and in the resolution suspending fellowship with the LCMS were recognized as "an expression of the scriptural principles on which the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod has stood and which have guided it in its practice for many years" (27). In reading the theses I was amazed to note that the very important doctrinal statement covering the very subject of termination of church fellowship that was officially adopted by the WELS just two years before, in 1959, was not at all mentioned or alluded to. Nevertheless, since we know that the 1959 statement has never been repudiated by the WELS and therefore still stands, we interpret the WELS Thesis B.5.b. in its light: "We can no longer recognize and treat as Christian brethren those who in spite of patient admonition persistently adhere to an error in doctrine or practice, demand recognition for their error, and make propaganda for it" (33). When taken together with the 1959 statement, this thesis states that "persistence" is determined by coming to the conviction that admonition, no matter how patient and enduring, will have no further avail. Even that is not sufficient to determine that divisions and offenses have been caused. The thesis also requires that there must be a demand for recognition (as what?) for their error; beyond that, there must also be propaganda (a pejorative term) made for their error – before there can be a cessation of fellowship! Yet St. Paul did not find it necessary, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to insert all these conditions into Romans 16:17-18.

We have previously mentioned a writing by Professor John Brug. He appears to have become a spokesman for the WELS in the pages of its *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* as well as in other publications. In the Summer 2002 WLQ (Volume 99, No. 3) in an article entitled "Can There Ever be Exceptions to Our Regular Fellowship Practices that do not Violate Scripture's Fellowship Principles?" the following informative statement appears on page 168: "When members of another Lutheran synod which is not in fellowship with us are visiting services in a WELS church because they are disturbed by the liberalism in their church and they are considering becoming members of the WELS for confessional reasons, we will encourage them to regard themselves as communicant members of their present church until they have given their testimony against the false teaching of that church, their testimony has been rejected, and they are, therefore, compelled to leave that church ...". It is clear from this testimony that, if that is current practice in the WELS, there has been no backing away from the practice exemplified by their 1959 convention statement. It is still a requirement there, even for the individual, not to separate from causers of divisions and offenses

until one has the conviction, through the rejection of admonition, that admonition is of no further avail. Only then is that individual “compelled” to leave the heterodox church, according to WELS doctrine and practice, as Professor Brug sets forth.

The CLC fully subscribes to the Brief Statement as a true and faithful confession based upon Holy Scripture. In this statement the following appears: ‘Since God ordained that His Word only, without the admixture of human doctrine, be taught and believed in the Christian Church, 1 Pet. 4:11; John 8:31,32; 1 Tim. 6:3,4, all Christians are required by God to discriminate between orthodox and heterodox church-bodies, Matt. 7:15, to have church-fellowship only with orthodox church-bodies, and, in case they have strayed into heterodox church-bodies, to leave them, Rom. 16:17.’ The God-pleasing response to the situation postulated by Professor Brug is to tell the members involved to resign from their heterodox church immediately in an orderly but firm way and not to subject themselves any longer to the influence of those who, according to Scripture, “do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple” (Romans 16:18).

John Lau

BOOKS IN REVIEW

Richard E. Lauersdorf: *As Luther Taught the Word of Truth – Devotions on the Small Catechism*, Northwestern Publishing House, 2002, paperback, 192 pages.

Do you know where your catechism is? If you don’t know, the chances are strong that you need to find it and reread it, now no longer as a child or as a young confirmand, but as an adult. This book by retired pastor and former vice president of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) Richard Lauersdorf presents brief three-page devotions on the various sections of Luther’s *Small Catechism*. My wife and I used these for our family devotions and found them edifying and refreshing. Each devotion concludes with a very brief prayer.

Devotions on the Apostles’ Creed make up the first half of the book. These are followed by devotions on the Ten Commandments, the Lord’s Prayer, Baptism, and the Lord’s Supper. There are no devotions on the Ministry of Keys and Confession, perhaps because these sections were not part of Luther’s original catechism.

Lauersdorf likes to use comparisons and paint word pictures and is not afraid to coin new terms or present things in different combinations. Many of his illustrations come from his experiences as a father and pastor, and from his travels as a church official.

The work of Christ for our salvation is magnified, as it should be. For example, here is a paragraph on Jesus’ crucifixion (pp. 52-53):

Why didn’t the God-man, with just a flick of his little finger, pluck those penetrating nails from his limbs? Why didn’t he, with just a little glance of his mighty eyes, level those blasphemers parading beneath his cross with the ground? Why did he suffer the god-awful pain of the cross and the even greater godforsaken pain of hell? Listen to the apostle Paul again, “Christ *redeemed* us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree’” (Galatians 3:13). The Son of God humbled himself and *was crucified to redeem us*.”

And here are a couple paragraphs on Jesus’ resurrection (p. 56):

How come we so often act as if the devil were still celebrating? How come we so often

live as if it were still Good Friday and Easter had never come? We can't blame the devil for getting up off the canvass after Easter's knockout blow. We should expect the master chameleon, as he sweats to hold the world captive in chaos and uncertainty, to camouflage defeat as victory.

But we know better. We have seen the Redeemer's victory parade into hell. So let the cheering continue! Let it even increase. Our sins are paid for. Satan has been defeated. Hell's doors have been padlocked. Heaven's doors are propped open. God has exalted Jesus as Prince and Savior.

About the only time I was disappointed with Lauersdorf's emphasis was in connection with his devotion on the second petition of the Lord's Prayer. I would have expected him to explain the "kingdom" of God in terms of the *activity* of the king, as illustrated in Jesus' many parables of the kingdom. But instead, Lauersdorf chose to compare God's kingdom with a *country*. His definition of *kingdom* seemed to me a definition of *church*, for he writes (p. 143): "God's kingdom is made up of people, very special people, people living across the globe." I was reminded of a footnote in Edersheim's life of Christ, where he says: "It is difficult to conceive how the idea of the identity of the Kingdom of God with the Church could have originated. Such parables as those about the Sower, and about the Net (St. Matt. xiii. 3-9; 47, 48), and such admonitions as those of Christ to His disciples in St. Matt. xix. 12; vi. 33; vi. 10, are utterly inconsistent with it" (Alfred Edersheim: *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Vol. I, p. 269).

I am happy to recommend this little devotional book by a college and seminary classmate to all of our readers, including our pastors.

Elisabeth Elliot: *Passion and Purity – Learning to Bring Your Love Life under Christ's Control*, Fleming H. Revell, 1984, paperback, 192 pages.

In case you have forgotten, Elisabeth Elliot was the young bride of missionary Jim Elliot when he, together with a few other missionaries, was speared to death on January 8, 1956 by a band of Auca Indians to whom they were trying to bring the good news of Jesus Christ. After Jim's death Elisabeth and her very young daughter Valerie made their home among the Auca Indians, and many of them were brought to faith. The exciting and inspiring account of those days was written by Elisabeth Elliot in her books *Through Gates of Splendor*, *Shadow of the Almighty*, *The Savage My Kinsman*, and *The Journals of Jim Elliot*.

Since that time Elisabeth married again and was widowed again and married a third time. Her present husband is Lars Gren. Her books generally contain many excellent pieces of advice and counsel from God's Word, and this book is no exception.

The subject matter of *Passion and Purity* is the kind of life young Christians should lead when they are in love and yet are not free to get married. Elisabeth met her first husband Jim in 1947 when they were both students at Wheaton College in Illinois. But it was not until 1953 that they felt free to be married. It seems that they both were convinced for a time that it was God's will for them to be single missionaries, devoting themselves entirely to the work of the gospel, as indicated in First Corinthians 7:32: "He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord – how he may please the Lord." Eventually they became convinced that their marriage was indeed the will of God.

This book stresses the agony and frustration of waiting. As time went on, their passion for each other grew, and yet they kept themselves sexually pure, not even allowing themselves the physical affection of kissing. How great a contrast that is from the style of many today, who are having sex with one another after only a few dates! Christians too often follow the lead of the world instead of setting an example of sexual purity. The aim of Elisabeth's book, in her own

words, is this:

I write in the hope that those who know what honor means will be cheered to see that they are not entirely alone. It may strengthen them to find that, even in recent decades, there are those who recognize something far greater than their own passions, even though for the world at large there seems to be nothing else of any consequence. The majority will sacrifice anything – security, honor, self-respect, the welfare of people they love, obedience to God – to passion. ...A system of fixed values and relations held us apart, each holding the other in reverence for the Owner. (p. 68)

At the same time the gospel of forgiveness of all sins in Jesus Christ is set forth for the benefit of all those who have failed in this area, and of course we have all failed in one way or another. Elisabeth and Jim were sinners too, even though they were not guilty of outward sexual immorality. As her last chapter tells us, ‘Jesus came into the world specifically for us who blew it, not for those who ‘need no repentance’” (p. 187). But as forgiven sinners, we don’t want to keep on blowing it. ‘For the Christian there is one rule and one rule only: total abstention from sexual activity outside of marriage and total faithfulness inside marriage. Period. No ifs, ands, or buts’ (p. 124). May our gracious Lord help us all, young and old, female and male.

– *David Lau*
