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Arthur Schulz

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Chapel Devotion
Immanuel Lutheran College
Ecclesiastes 8:10-13

John K. Pfeiffer

Lord, grant unto us open ears, ready minds, and hearts willing to embrace Your Word, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

“How come he always gets away it?” Have you ever thought this about someone? As you see it, you are the one who always gets caught, while your brother or friend or classmate gets away with everything. It just doesn't seem right.

Such thoughts pass through the minds of many people, because they are envious of those who don't get caught. But is this right? Should we envy them? Or should we feel sorry for them? Listen to Solomon, as he observed the world around him.

Then I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of holiness, and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done. This also is vanity. Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. Though a sinner does evil a hundred times, and his days are prolonged, yet I surely know that it will be well with those who fear God, who fear before Him. But it will not be well with the wicked; nor will he prolong his days, which are as a shadow, because he does not fear before God.

The prisons of our country are filled with criminals. So, people **do** get caught. But there are still a great many who do not get caught.

Then there are those who are guilty, not of crimes against the nation, but of crimes against God. And they too seem to get away with it. Solomon speaks of the sinner who “*does evil a hundred times and his days are prolonged....*” It seems like a mixed up world into which our God has placed us.

Think about the white collar criminals. The *Enron* executives got away with their crimes for quite a while. Some of them became very wealthy. This kind of thing is going on all over the world and it is not new.

And what about the mafia? A lot of them don't get caught? — And what about the guy who lives down the street? — And what about that bully in the dorm, who's always picking on others and getting away with it? — And what about that guy who races past me on the interstate and doesn't get caught? But if I go five miles over the speed limit, sure as shoot'n, the flashing lights will be right behind me.

Solomon observed the funerals of wicked men. He noted that they were treated with honor while they were alive and were given an honorable burial in their death. And at the funeral, people just forgot about their wickedness. One can almost hear the eulogies at these funerals. “*This also is vanity (emptiness).*” — It just doesn't seem right.

So what do you want God to do? Let you, too, get away with wickedness? Let you break the speed limit and not get caught? You know what will happen if God does this: “*Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.*” This is what would happen. You would be encouraged to continue in your wickedness. You would go from bad to worse.

It is not a blessing when the wicked are not caught. Their hearts become fully set to do evil. They plunge more deeply into their wicked ways.

You, on the other hand, are blessed if you do get caught. Those who catch you are usually people who care about you and want to help you. Getting caught forces you to think about what you did and gives you the opportunity to repent. And what is repentance, but seeking

forgiveness and turning away from the evil? When you are told that you are forgiven, your life changes. Darkness gives way to light. Such is the blessing of getting caught.

“Though a sinner does evil a hundred times, and his days are prolonged, yet I surely know that it will be well with those who fear God, who fear before Him.” It will be well with those who fear the Lord.

How so? The wicked man, who gets away with his wickedness, becomes more wicked. Even though he may seem to enjoy the fruits of his wickedness, in the end he will plunge headlong into the eternal fires of perdition. *“It will not be well with the wicked; nor will he prolong his days, which are as a shadow, because he does not fear before God.”* His life is as empty and meaningless as a shadow on the ground, and the final outcome for him is everlasting hell.

On the other hand, you, who get caught and are led to repent, all is well with you. You find forgiveness at the foot of the cross of Jesus. And you are given the assurance that Christ has earned for you a place in heaven.

Earlier I said, “It just doesn’t seem right.” Well, do we still think so? Thank God that, when we are so foolish as to commit sin, He makes sure that we get caught.

Show us, Lord, the path of blessing;
When we trespass on our way,
Cast, O Lord, our sins behind Thee
And be with us day by day.
Should we stray, O Lord, recall;
Work repentance when we fall.

Guard, O God, our faith forever;
Let not Satan, death, or shame
Ever part us from our Savior;
Lord our Refuge is Thy name.
Though our flesh cry ever: Nay!
Be Thy Word to us still Yea!

[T.L.H. 226:3,8] Amen!

Preachings from Daniel

Paul F. Nolting

Chapter 10

In Christ Jesus, our glorious Lord who is the Lord all history, Fellow Redeemed:

We have now arrived at the fourth and final vision that Daniel saw. Chapter ten brings the introduction, chapter 11:1 to 12:4 the vision, followed by the conclusion. Recall that the first vision that Daniel saw was that of the four beasts that symbolized the four succeeding world empires: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. That vision paralleled the dream of the Great Colossus that Nebuchadnezzar had seen.

Then Daniel saw the vision of the ram and the goat which was an enlargement of the beast vision, stressing the second and third kingdoms with special emphasis on later developments in the Grecian Empire that brought on the stage of history the “little horn,” Antiochus Epiphanes, the persecutor of the Kingdom of God as it was represented by the pious Jews.

The third vision was that of the “Seventy Sevens.” That vision was heaven’s response to Daniel’s prayer to the Lord to keep His covenant promises. Daniel was assured that within seventy sevens the problem of sin would be officially solved, but that his people would cut off their Messiah who worked out that solution and thus bring the judgment of destruction and war upon the city and the temple.

In that vision the seventy sevens were divided into three unequal time periods: seven sevens, sixty-two sevens, and a final seven. We observed that the vision revealed nothing concerning the longest period, that of the sixty-two sevens, which represents the inter-testamental era. That period of time, roughly between Malachi and Christ, is the subject of the fourth vision. Just as the vision of the ram and the goat was an enlargement of part of the vision of the four beasts, so Daniel’s final vision was an enlargement of the sixty-two sevens era of Daniel’s vision of the Seventy Sevens. We begin, therefore, the study of —

DANIEL’S FOURTH AND FINAL VISION.

I. The occasion: It was the third year of Cyrus, two years after Cyrus had made the proclamation giving permission to any Jews who were willing to return and rebuild the temple at Jerusalem (2 Chron. 36:23; Ezra 1:2-4). That had been a time of rejoicing! It was evident that the Lord God had remembered His covenant and would, indeed, send the Champion who would solve the problem of mankind’s sin. Daniel must have rejoiced; his faith must have been strengthened.

But two years later we find Daniel in a state of mourning for three weeks, beginning at the Festival of the Passover. Daniel reports: “I ate no pleasant food, no meat or wine came into my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all.” He afflicted and neglected his body so that his outward condition corresponded to his inner mental, emotional, and spiritual condition.

What brought on this mourning? Daniel doesn’t speak of that directly, but the historical records of Ezra and Nehemiah report the morale problems in Jerusalem, the opposition by the Samaritans, and the intrigues at the Persian court. It appeared to Daniel that hostile forces were at work that would frustrate the fulfillment of the covenant promises. Daniel mourned for a period of three full weeks. He certainly once again turned to the Lord, the faithful God of the covenant, in prayer. What was the Lord’s response? First --

II. The theophany: Daniel was standing on the bank of the Tigris River. He lifted up his eyes and looked, “and behold, a certain man clothed in linen, whose waist was girded with gold of Uphaz. His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like torches

of fire, his arms and feet like burnished bronze in color, and the sound of his words like the voice of a multitude.” The question is: Who is this person?

Ezekiel, a contemporary of Daniel, also saw a vision of a man. He saw “the likeness of a throne, in appearance like a sapphire stone; on the likeness of the throne was a likeness with the appearance of a man high above it. Also from the appearance of His waist and downward I saw, as it were, the appearance of fire with brightness all around. Like the appearance of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the brightness all around it. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord” (Ezek. 1:26-28).

The Apostle John also saw such a person standing in the midst of the seven lampstands. He was “like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and His hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength” (Rev. 1:13-16).

Who are these persons? The descriptions are similar, yet each is distinctive. There is no doubt that the persons are superhuman. But are they created angels or a divine Person? Interpreters differ, but it would seem to me that Daniel and Ezekiel saw visions of the Angel of the Lord, the pre-incarnate Son of God, whereas John saw the Son of Man, who is the Son of God, in His glory. What was the immediate effect of the vision upon Daniel?

III. The effect: Daniel alone saw the vision. There were men with him, but they didn’t see the glorious Person, although they felt something was happening. Terror seized these men; they fled to hide themselves. Daniel was left alone. How did the vision affect him? He reports: “No strength remained in me; for my vigor was turned to frailty in me, and I retained no strength. Yet I heard the sound of his words; and while I heard the sound of his words I was in a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the ground.” Daniel simply collapsed. He swooned, falling on his face. How come? What caused this?

Daniel was a good man, beloved of the Lord, but Daniel was a sinner. Scripture records no manifest sin of Daniel, as it does of David and Moses, of Peter and Paul. We know that Daniel’s enemies could uncover no scandal against him. He was beyond reproach. He was respected and respectable. So he appeared to the eye of man. But Daniel did not judge himself according to human standards; he judged himself according to the divine standard and found himself wanting. In his great prayer in behalf of his people, which was answered with the vision of the Seventy Sevens, Daniel freely confessed his sin. He knew himself to be a sinner, to have fallen short of the holiness that his holy God demanded. Here in this instance, when Daniel saw the vision of God, he confessed nothing, he said nothing. He just felt himself “wiped out,” as the modern saying is. The holiness of his God overwhelmed him; he passed out. No sinner can stand in the presence of the holy God! No sinner can survive the presence of the holy God! No sinner can recover from an encounter with the holy God! God must come to the rescue, and He did. And so we see

IV. The resuscitation: Daniel was lying on the ground. A hand touched him—not the hand of the glorious Person whom he had seen, but the hand of an angel. The angel person helped the trembling Daniel to his knees. Picture this octogenarian, Daniel, on his hands and knees, being gently helped to his feet. The angel person spoke soothingly and gently to Daniel: “O Daniel, man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak to you, and stand upright, for I have now been sent to you.”

What made Daniel beloved of the Lord? Why did the Lord send His angel to revive, to resuscitate Daniel so gently? Was there some natural goodness in Daniel? Had he made the right choices in life on the basis of some superior natural spiritual powers? If this were the

reason, why did Daniel faint dead away when he saw the vision of the Lord? The reason is not to be found in Daniel, but rather in this: that Daniel, like Noah before him and like all the saints of God, had found grace in the sight of the Lord. Daniel was beloved of the Lord for the covenant's sake.

The Lord God had promised the Head Crusher to Adam and Eve after they had sinned. To Noah He had blessed the Lord God of Shem. When that promise of a universal Savior from sin and its consequences was about to be dissipated amidst mankind, the Lord God made a covenant with Abraham to cause blessing to come from his seed for all mankind. That covenant was repeated to Isaac and Jacob. Its blessings were foreshadowed in the sacrifices prescribed by the Lord God in the giving of the covenant at Sinai by which the people were painfully made aware of their need for resuscitation from the effects of sin. The covenant was renewed with David. It was the passionate object of Daniel's spiritual life. It found its fulfillment in Jesus Christ, the Seed of Abraham and David, the One who fulfilled the ancient covenant by making a new covenant with the shedding of His blood. It is the forgiveness, the pardon, the removing of sin and guilt and the bestowing of righteousness that revives, resuscitates the sinner.

The angel person revived Daniel because he had found grace in the hope of the covenant one day to be fulfilled by God's own Son. We have been revived and are kept spiritually alive by the same Lord Jesus Christ who fulfilled the ancient covenant by making a new covenant with His blood and righteousness. We also are beloved of the Lord!

Remember that Daniel had been grieved because obstacles had arisen to impede the fulfillment of the covenant promises. For his consolation and encouragement the angel person gave Daniel

V. A glimpse behind the curtain: The angel person said to Daniel: "Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words." Once again there was an answer to Daniel's prayer. But there was a delay. Recall that in his earlier prayer the answer had come while Daniel was still praying. What caused the delay this time? The angel messenger reports: "But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-five days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia."

Here is a glimpse behind the curtain of the stage of history. Recall that Cyrus had originally given permission for the Jews to return and rebuild their temple, but two years later intrigues at the court were threatening to undo the good that had been done. Enemies of the Jews were busy—lobbying and politicking, as we would say. But behind these efforts to thwart the fulfillment of the covenant was "the prince of the kingdom of Persia." This was not a human prince, but a satanically evil angel prince. It appears from this glimpse of the unseen that the devil assigns a special evil angel to do his dirty work against the Kingdom of God in a specific nation. The Lord God sent one of His angels to counter the efforts of the evil angel prince, but he needed help from Michael, the archangel, whose business was especially to promote the good of the Kingdom of God on earth, which meant the fulfillment of the covenant. The evil prince would be overcome; the covenant promises would be fulfilled.

But now Daniel was to receive a fuller vision of things to come for his people as they waited for the fulfillment of the covenant. Before giving the vision the angel made clear to Daniel

VI. The scope of the vision: "I have come to make you understand what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision refers to many days yet to come." The key question is: What is meant by the "latter days"? When we consider the vision proper later, we shall see that the vision begins with the present at Daniel's time and continues to the repeated

destruction of Daniel's people, the same place where the vision of the Seventy Sevens ended. The latter time, then, is the latter time of the history of Daniel's people. God had brought His people out of Egypt and constituted them a nation at Mt. Sinai. They entered and conquered the land of Canaan. There followed then the period of the judges, then the united kingdom. After Solomon the kingdom was divided. The Northern Kingdom was destroyed by the Assyrians in 721 BC. The Southern Kingdom of Judah lasted until 586 BC, when it was destroyed by the Babylonians. That brought an end to the former days, the period of national history before the time of Daniel. The nation was, as it were, reborn after the return to Canaan, but the royal dynasty was never restored. Israel continued under domination by the world empires, except for a brief interlude under the Maccabees, until finally the Messiah came, was rejected by His own people, who thereby brought down a second national judgment upon themselves. The time from Daniel to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in AD 70 is the "latter days." The vision would be concerning those days.

Daniel needed additional strengthening, but he received also the assurance of the angel with Michael's help that all would be well for his people. There would be hard times ahead as the vision would make clear, but the Lord God always sustains His own in the day of trouble. Of that we can be certain! Amen.

Chapter 11:1-35

In Christ Jesus, whose perfect vision of the future is always a comfort to His own, Fellow Redeemed:

The fourth and final vision of Daniel is singular in that it gives a chronological, historical account of events that occurred over some three centuries. The vision deals with the history of the kingdoms of this world as they affect the Kingdom of God in its Old Testament form of the nation of Israel. What is amazing in this vision is the discernible preciseness and detail of the flow of events. It was the heathen philosopher Porphyry who first discovered the close correspondence between Daniel's prophecy and the actual sequence of historical events in the days of the Ptolemies of Egypt and the Seleucids of Syria. He came to the conclusion that Daniel did not pen this prophecy, but that it was written by a contemporary historian who recorded the events transpiring before his eye in the form of a prophecy. To give his work proper prestige he attached the name of the prophet Daniel to his work. That would mean that the book of Daniel is a pious fraud, written by a contemporary to encourage his contemporaries in difficult times of persecution. Today Daniel is still considered nothing better than a pious fraud because many biblical students refuse to believe that the Lord God could or would communicate to man such an exact preview of events to come.

I can still recall my surprise and amazement when I first became acquainted with this prophecy more than a quarter of a century ago. (The book of Daniel was completely ignored in our college and seminary training. The average Christian probably knows little more than the childhood stories of The Three Men in the Fiery Furnace and Daniel in the Lions' Den; beyond that the book is unknown.) I had been taught from earliest childhood that our God knows and sees the future as clearly and certainly as the present and past can be seen and known. So it never bothered me that centuries before the events occurred Daniel could record them in prophetic form. It amazed me and thrilled me that our God would do this and thereby give His children the assurance and confidence that all history is under His control. When He tells us that all things work out for our good, we can take that promise at face value, for He is in complete control.

Over the course of the years I have learned that other prophets foretold specific historic details a century or more before they occurred. We have noted in this series that both Isaiah

(44:27) and Jeremiah (50:38; 51:36) reveal the remarkable and unexpected manner by which the Medes would capture Babylon, namely by diverting the flow of the Euphrates and so marching in under the walls of the city that were believed to be impregnable. Zechariah also gives a blow by blow outline of Alexander the Great's campaign against western Asia Minor (9:1-8). But the vision before us represents the most extensive preview of history. Let us continue our study of —

DANIEL'S FOURTH AND FINAL VISION

I. The Persian Empire: Remember that Daniel received this vision in the third year of Cyrus, the first of the Persian kings. The heavenly messenger informed Daniel: "Behold, three more kings will arise in Persia, and the fourth shall be far richer than them all; by his strength, through his riches, he shall stir up all against the realm of Greece." The three kings after Cyrus were Cambyses, Smerdis, and Darius Hystaspis. Then came the fourth king: Xerxes. He is the Persian monarch who used his vast wealth to launch a military expedition of over two million men to conquer Greece. If he had succeeded, the history of the West would have been completely altered, but he was defeated by the Greeks at Salamis. There were kings after Xerxes, but they didn't amount to much, for the Persian Empire was waning. The vision proceeded on to

II. The Greek Empire: Only two verses are used to sketch this phase of the kingdoms of this earth. "Then a mighty king shall rise, who shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will." This is the fabulous Alexander the Great who conquered the world before he was thirty years old. In a previous vision Daniel had seen him as the goat with the notable horn between his eyes who came from the west so fast his feet never touched the ground. It was this goat that attacked the ram, which symbolized the Persian Empire, broke his two horns and cast him to the ground and trampled him. It was Zechariah who prophetically traced Alexander's campaign down the west coast of Asia Minor. Since Daniel had seen the career of Alexander in a previous vision, his career is passed over rapidly here.

But one point would prove important for the Jews—what developed after the death of Alexander when he was but thirty-two years old. "And when he has arisen, his kingdom shall be broken up and divided toward the four winds of heaven, but not among his posterity nor according to his dominion with which he ruled; for his kingdom shall be uprooted, even for others besides these." This historical development had also been covered in the earlier vision of the ram and the goat (chapter eight). When the large horn, symbolizing Alexander the Great, had been broken, four notable horns replaced it. In the vision before us we are told that Alexander's posterity would not inherit his kingdom. His two infant sons were murdered. His kingdom was at first divided among his twelve generals, but in the power struggle that followed four generals took control over the empire of Alexander. Two of these, Cassander who received Macedonia and Greece, and Lysimachus who received Thrace, Bithynia, and most of Asia Minor fade from the prophetic picture, for they did not come into contact with Israel, with whom the Lord God had made His covenant. The prophecy now turns its spotlight on

III. Egypt and Syria seeking dominion over the Holy Land. This section covers verses 5-20. When you heard this section read, you didn't hear the names Egypt and Syria, except in verse eight where their gods are carried captive to Egypt. What you did hear repeatedly was "the king of the South" and "the king of the North." The "king of the South" is the dynasty established by Ptolemy, the general of Alexander who inherited Egypt. The "king of the North" is the dynasty established by Seleucus, the general of Alexander who gained control of Syria. As you know Palestine, the home of Israel, lay between Syria and Egypt; it could not avoid becoming involved in the power struggle between Egypt and Syria. What we have in this section

of the prophecy is a running history of the military campaigns, the alliances, the political marriages, the intrigue, and assassinations that characterized the power struggle between Syria and Egypt with the land of the Jews always caught in between.

At first the Ptolemies had the upper hand. Ptolemy II, known as Philadelphus, tried to consolidate his control over Syria with a political marriage. He gave his daughter, Berenice to Antiochus Theos, literally Antiochus the God, of Syria. But Antiochus was already married to Laodice. So he had to divorce Laodice to make room for Berenice. Two years later Berenice's father died, so Antiochus divorced her and remarried his former wife, Laodice. Laodice was upset about all this so she caused her husband and Berenice and her son to be murdered. That, of course, didn't sit well with Berenice's brother, Ptolemy III, known as Euergetes (the Benefactor). He launched a campaign against Syria and murdered Laodice and carried the Syrian gods down to Egypt to show that he had really conquered them. He also brought back much wealth, and so received the name "Benefactor." All this is foretold in verses 5 -8; it was politics as usual in those days.

In time the Syrians recovered, especially under Antiochus III, known as The Great, and regained power over the Egyptians, as is reported in verses 8-20. All this is a historical introduction to

IV. The rise of Antiochus Epiphanes, vv. 21-30. Bible students are generally agreed that the "vile person" named in verse 21 is Antiochus Epiphanes, who ruled from 175 -164 BC. You will recall that he appeared on the prophetic screen earlier as the "little horn" that sprouted from one of the four horns that in turn replaced the notable horn on the goat. Antiochus arose from the Seleucid dynasty. He was not the legitimate heir of the kingdom; he seized the kingdom by intrigue, v. 21. Verse 22 possibly refers to the murder of the Jewish high priest Onias by Antiochus, who gained control over Palestine by feigning peace which he followed with ruthless suppression.

Antiochus had to secure Palestine in his rear as he continued to wage his campaign for the control of Egypt. Verse 25 takes note of his renewed campaign against Egypt, which was successfully withstood by the Egyptians. But Antiochus would not be deterred. Verse 29 reports his renewed efforts, but this time he was hindered by a new world power that was rising on the stage of history—the Romans. Verse 30 reports that "ships from Cyrus shall come," as foretold already by Balaam centuries before (Num. 24:24). Those ships carried the representative of the Roman Empire, C. Poppilius Laenus, who met Antiochus outside of Alexandria. With a dramatic gesture C. Poppilius drew a circle around Antiochus in the sand and informed him that he had until he left that circle to make up his mind to desist in his campaign against Egypt. Antiochus had to yield to Rome, but he didn't like it.

It appears that Antiochus returned and vented his wrath on the Jews. His allies were apostate Jews. The prophecy reports: "And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation." We have noted this persecution in connection with the prophecy of the "little horn" (chapter 8). Antiochus attempted to hellenise the Jews, that is, to destroy their God-given worship and laws completely and thereby to convert them into pagan Greeks. He entered the temple and sacrificed a swine on the great altar and poured swine's broth over the temple area, thus desecrating it. He erected a statue of Jupiter on the great altar. He forcibly discontinued all the sacrifices, forbade circumcision and the observance of the Sabbath. On the other hand he made every effort to introduce pagan culture, especially the gymnasium which was the focal point of Greek social life.

But this vision brings into view something that the previous preview of Antiochus did not bring into focus, that is, the reaction which produced a remarkable family in Jewish history, namely

V. The Maccabees, vv. 32-35. We are told: “Those who do wickedly against the covenant he shall corrupt with flattery.” These are the apostate Jews, “but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits.” These are the family of the priest Mattathias and his five sons, among them Judas who became known as Maccabeus, the Hammerer. Mattathias was a priest who lived with his family in Modin. When an apostate Jew was about to offer a pagan sacrifice under the supervision of the commissioner of Antiochus, Matthathias killed both the apostate Jew and the commissioner of the Jews. This, of course, brought down the wrath of Antiochus. What followed was guerilla warfare, in which the Jews repeatedly defeated much larger Syrian forces, but not without many casualties, as the prophecy makes clear. The Asmoneans, however, as the family of the Maccabees was known, ruled Israel for some one hundred and fifty years down to the time of Herod the Great.

What does all this mean for us today? It is all past, but its lessons remain. The Old Testament believers held the same faith that we hold today. They placed their faith in the coming Savior; we rest our faith on the Savior who has come. They were hated in the world and suffered persecution; we have been assured that even as our Savior was hated, so believers shall remain at odds with the world till the end of time. Persecutions have arisen and will continue to arise. Yet there is comfort in the fact that our Lord knows the beginning from the end. All is under his control. We are now in another election campaign. We don't know the outcome. So-called political pundits make their predictions, but everyone knows that all kinds of events can arise that will affect the outcome. Our Lord knows who will win the election. He knows whether there will be an intercontinental ballistic missile exchange between the USSR and the USA. He knows whether persecution will come in America and what form it will take. He knows all and controls all. What comfort for us! We place our future in Him who has assured us of forgiveness, life, and salvation in and through Christ Jesus. On Christ the solid Rock we take our stand. He has promised to take us from life through death to life everlasting. As He made promises in the past and caused His promises to be fulfilled, so He will keep His promises to us. He will deliver us from our present evil and when the time is ready for each of us, take us to Himself in the glories of His eternal Kingdom. Hallelujah and Amen.

Chapter 11:36-45

In Christ Jesus, the object of the faith of both Old and New Testament believers, Fellow Redeemed:

The Apostle Paul could summarize his entire message in but two words, “We preach Christ crucified” (1 Cor. 1:23). The crucified Christ was the message. The message of the crucified Christ proclaimed to and conveyed unto the hearer or reader all spiritual blessings that are in Christ: forgiveness, righteousness, reconciliation, peace, hope, joy.

How would Daniel have summarized his message to his people in captivity? Daniel would have put it this way: “We preach the covenant!” The Lord God had bound Himself by a covenant, a solemn agreement or promise, to Abraham, assuring him of descendants, of a homeland, and of a Seed who would bring blessing to all nations. In his penitential prayer, as recorded in chapter 9, Daniel spoke of the Lord God who “keeps His covenant” (9:4). His petition was that the Lord God would cause His face to shine upon His sanctuary, which was desolate (9:17). The restoration of the temple would be evidence that the Lord would remain faithful to His covenant. You will recall that the response to Daniel's prayer came in the form of the vision of the Seventy Sevens. Within that time the problem of sin would be solved for once and for all time, but the temple would once more be destroyed. Observe carefully that the vision delivered by Gabriel emphasized the substance of the covenant as having to do with the removal of sins. When Daniel proclaimed the covenant and when Paul preached Christ crucified, they

were both proclaiming the Lord God's solution to the problem of man's sin. Daniel was looking ahead to that solution; Paul proclaimed the historical solution in the crucified Christ.

In the fourth and final vision that Daniel saw he was informed that the solution of the problem through the fulfillment of the covenant lay in the distant future. During that time his people Israel would experience persecution at the hands of "a vile person," who turned out to be Antiochus Epiphanes. Daniel was assured that the Lord God would not abandon His chosen people but would raise up a house of heroes, the Maccabees, who would accomplish great deeds but who would also suffer losses. That would be a time of refinement, of testing. This portion of the prophecy comes to a conclusion with verse 35. We now continue our study of —

DANIEL'S FOURTH AND FINAL VISION

I. The time frame: Verse 35 tells us that the refining will continue till "the time of the end." Verse 40 resumes the conflict between the king of the South and the king of the North "at the time of the end." Twelve-verse informs us that "at that time," namely, "the time of the end" Michael shall stand up. In verse four Daniel is instructed to "shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end." In verse nine this time term is used again, as it had been used once before in the vision of the ram and goat in chapter 8:17.

This "time term" is peculiar to Daniel. The question is, What does it mean? To what period in history does it refer? There are those who believe that "the time of the end" is a technical term for the last period of the history of the nation Israel, specifically that period which is supposed to begin after the Church has been raptured or taken out of this world and the great tribulation begins, followed by the millennial reign of Christ here on earth. These people believe that at this point the vision takes a gigantic leap over the centuries—now already some two thousand years—to a time yet in the future. The same prophetic leap is believed to occur in the vision of the ram and goat in chapter eight.

I believe that such an interpretation, which interrupts the historical flow of the prophecy, does violence to the text. "The time of the end" is simply the end of the future historic era that is under observation in the vision. The vision in chapter eight is dealing with the time of the persecution that would come under Antiochus Epiphanes. It was, accordingly, during the end of the Seleucid rule over Israel, which coincided with the beginning of the end of the second phase of Israel's national history. This resumed with the return from captivity and was brought to an end with the destruction of the nation by the Romans in AD 70. In the final vision before us we are brought down to the final years of Israel's national history.

The understanding of "the time of the end" is closely related to the identification of "the king" who is introduced on the stage of prophecy in verse 36. We consider, therefore

II. The king-his identification: All interpreters are agreed that thus far the vision has presented a remarkable prophecy of historical events beginning with the Persian kings after Cyrus, through the time of Alexander the Great and the division of his kingdom, through the continuing conflict between the Ptolemies of Egypt and the Seleucids of Syria, including the time of Antiochus Epiphanes and the Maccabees. Then comes "the king," who is not a king of the South or a king of the North, but "the king." Commentators scratch their heads and declare themselves unable to find any historical personage who could fit the description given here. So they conclude that "the king" was the same person that appeared as the human-like horn that came up amongst the ten horns on the nondescript beast as recorded in chapter 7:20. The "man of sin," of whom Paul prophesied in

2 Thessalonians 2:3 is likewise identified with "the king." Thus "the king" is believed to be the "endtime antichrist" who is expected to be a charismatic political leader that is to arise out of the revived Roman Empire after the rapture of the Church, who is furthermore expected to make and

break a covenant with the Jews and so initiate the great tribulation which, in turn, is supposed to be brought to a conclusion by the coming of Jesus to establish His earthly rule in Jerusalem. Luther in his day also identified “the king” as “the Antichrist,” but he identified “the Antichrist” as the Roman Papacy.

I believe that the premillennialists and the dispensationalists who identify “the king” as the endtime antichrist and Luther who identified “the king” as the papal Antichrist are all wrong. More than a quarter of a century ago an interpretation by a layman, Philip Mauro, who was a lawyer and at one time had been a dispensationalist, came into my hand. His simple historical identification of “the king” is that he was Herod the King and his dynasty which lasted until the destruction of the Jewish nation. We have already noted that this prophecy outlines future history in a remarkably chronological manner. Verse 35 brings the Maccabean era to a close. Verse 36 is connected with the preceding with the simple Hebrew conjunction *vav*, usually translated “and,” but in the NKJV translated “then.” The entire prophetic narrative is connected with “ands,” indicating a continuing flow of narrative rather than a break and a leap into the future centuries later.

Who appeared on the scene of Jewish history after the Maccabees? It was the Idumean, Herod the Great, who married the Maccabean princess, Mariamne, and put to death the rest of the family. After being without a king for five centuries, the Jews again had a king: Herod the Great. He was king when the King of kings was born; he tried to murder Jesus. His son, Archelaus, was on the throne when Joseph returned from Egypt. It was his son, Herod Antipas, who beheaded John the Baptist. Herod Agrippa I executed James and imprisoned Peter. Herod Agrippa II sent the Apostle Paul to Rome in chains. This prominent man and his family played a leading part in the “time of the end” of the Jewish nation when Jesus fulfilled the ancient covenant made to Abraham and the Jewish nation was destroyed because they rejected both Him and the covenant made with their father, Abraham.

III. The king—his description: “Then the king shall do according to his own will.” This same description has been used in this vision to describe Alexander the Great (v. 3) and Antiochus the Great (v. 16). The words can describe a self-willed person, but that description would fit many people. It rather describes a person who puts his will through, who achieves his aims and goals. Herod the Great was such a person. He was a foreigner, an Idumean, who became king of Israel—the Herodians even hailing him as the “messiah of the Jews.” Herod ingratiated himself with Julius Caesar and so received his crown. Then he aligned himself with Mark Antony whom he assisted militarily in his power struggle against Octavian. But when Herod saw how the wind was blowing, he shifted sides and joined Octavian against Antony. Octavian became Caesar Augustus.

“He shall exalt and magnify himself over every god, shall speak blasphemies against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the wrath has been accomplished; for what has been determined shall be done.” Herod exalted himself over “every god.” Remember that rulers are referred to as “gods,” Jesus using the word thus in His dispute with the Jews (John 10:34,35). For example, Herod appointed his wife’s brother, Aristobulus, as high priest. He was only seventeen at the time; the high priest was supposed to be at least twenty-one. Shortly thereafter Herod caused him to be murdered. Herod made a career of ruthlessly cutting down any official in church or state that threatened his rule. From the religious point of view he took care not to offend the Jews. He did not violate the temple, as had Antiochus Epiphanes. As a matter of fact he rebuilt the temple so that it became the most beautiful building of the world. But Herod did commit the ultimate blasphemy of attempting to kill the infant Jesus, God’s Son. Recall also that Herod Agrippa I, when he received the acclaim of the people who cried, “The voice of a god and not of a man,” was struck down by an angel of the Lord, Acts 12:20-24.

“He shall regard neither the God of his fathers nor the desire of women, nor regard any

god; for he shall magnify himself above them all.” Herod used religion for political purposes. He identified himself with the Jews, but had no time for the God of Israel who had given them the covenant. That is evident by his disregard of “the desire of women”—the desire of every Jewish woman to be the mother of the Messiah. Think of Herod’s murderous attempt to kill the Baby Jesus (Matt. 2).

What was Herod’s “religion”? You could say that it was “Might is right.” “But in their place he shall honor a god of fortresses; and a god which his fathers did not know he shall honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and pleasant things. Thus he shall act against the strongest fortresses with a foreign god, which he shall acknowledge, and advance its glory; and he shall cause them to rule over many, and divide the land for gain.” The translation “in their place he shall honor a god of fortresses” would be better translated “for his establishment he shall honor a god of fortresses.” Herod established and maintained his rule by building one fortress after another and naming them after prominent Romans. He rebuilt the temple into a fortress which he called Antonia and which was the key to the defense of both the city and nation. Time does not permit more detailed interpretation.

Verses 40-45 resume the history of the conflict between

IV. The king of the south and the king of the north: Time only permits a speedy summary of what happened “at the time of the end,” that is, of the nation of the Jews. A new power had appeared on the scene: the Romans. The king of the south is now Cleopatra who was in league with Antony and assisted by Herod in their struggle against Octavius. Antony and Cleopatra pushed the campaign up to Greece where the deciding battle was fought at Actium in the year 31 BC. Plutarch in his “Life of Antony” describes the campaign and battle. The prophecy especially mentions ships. Antony had the advantage on land, but yielding to the desire of Cleopatra he fought the battle at sea. His ships outnumbered the fleet of Octavius two to one, but his ships were clumsy and ill-manned. Before the issue was decided at sea, Cleopatra began to retreat with her portion of the fleet and Antony abandoned his ships and men and fled with her, thereby giving the victory to Octavius (v, 40). Octavius continued the campaign on land toward Egypt entering “the Glorious Land.” At this time Herod switched his allegiance from Antony to Octavius. Octavius sent one of his generals, Aelius Callus, on a campaign against Edom, Moab, and the chief of Ammon, but the campaign was unsuccessful. He was chiefly concerned with capturing Egypt and its vast treasures, being afraid that Cleopatra would put a torch to all her riches rather than surrender them. So he kept on sending her messengers to reassure her. Antony committed suicide; Cleopatra was captured by Octavius but also committed suicide. And the Roman general, Cornelius Balbus, conquered the Libyans and Ethiopians in accordance with the prophecy (v. 43).

Meanwhile “news from the east and north shall trouble him,” that is, Herod. The wise men brought the news from the east concerning the newborn king of the Jews and the news from the north came in the form of plotting of his oldest son against him. “Therefore he shall go out with great fury to destroy and annihilate many.” The fulfillment came in the slaughter of the babes of Bethlehem and the senseless execution of many Jews before his death, including his oldest son five days before Herod died. “And he shall plant the tents of his palace between the seas and the glorious holy mountain”—between the Mediterranean and Dead Seas on the mountain on which Jerusalem was built. “Yet he shall come to his end, and no one will help him.” Herod died of advanced syphilis; his body just rotted away. No one mourned his death.

So the prophecy is brought down to “the time of the end” of the Jewish nation. The prophecy continues in the first three verses of the next chapter, which we shall consider next.

Amen.

A House for the LORD, a Home for His Servants

Peter E. Reim

We worship an extraordinary God, whose ways are supremely higher than our ways. We know that His Word endures forever, that He never changes, and that He is true to His covenant. But that doesn't mean that His wisdom can be mastered by any man. Many are the pious men who assumed that events should go one way, only to have their Sovereign deem otherwise. When King David, victorious from his wars, sat back and gazed at the cedar paneling of his royal palace, he suggested that it was time to build a house for the Lord. (2 Sam. 7:1ff.) But the Lord vetoed that idea, directing the king to be content with his own house, and to leave the Temple-raising to another generation. After the Captivity, though, in the days of Zerubbabel, the Lord sent a prophet to rebuke the people who 'prudently' procrastinated with the building of the new temple while they resided in their *'paneled houses'* (Hag. 1:2,4).

The Holy Spirit, of course, does enlighten the reader as to the Lord's thinking behind these two contrasting incidents: David was prevented from going ahead because of ethical reasons (he was a man of war); while the post-captivity Jews were simply hindered by selfishness and faithlessness. But this sort of thing does illustrate the sort of uncertainty that many congregations have faced in the course of building programs they've undertaken – or delayed!

Our congregations are blessed with opportunities to worship God and often are privileged to have His servants reside in their midst. But finding ways to provide houses suitable for both is no mean task. Knowing what to do, how to begin, when to begin, IF to begin, and whether their goals are realistic are daunting issues for congregations of any size, but especially the smaller ones so common in our fellowship. Sometimes, groups can almost be paralyzed by all that seems to be involved. Yet, the testimony of Scripture and the extraordinary experiences that can be related even within the CLC would assure us that there is little need for hesitation, if the Lord wills to bless us with a church-related structure.

But are we as good at seeking the Lord's direction as we ought to be? Have our ideas and their execution, in retrospect, been the best that they might have been? Are we accustomed to thinking in terms that will serve the purpose? Can our membership achieve a collective wisdom that favors the needs of this field?

In the following effort, we hope to offer guidance to congregations with building projects. Some of the guidance will be presented in propositional form, but much will also be put in the form of questions. This is intentional. When a developer graciously offered us the limited use of his land-planning architect to start the process of developing our property, his comment was "she can at least help you to ask the right questions." It may be that formulating the right question might prevent getting a dozen wrong answers.

The need for assessing your needs

"For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it—"

(Luke 14:28) When Jesus said this, the building project He had in mind was spiritual. But He drew upon some conventional wisdom to make His point. Any project worthy of effort deserves some good, sanctified planning before the first shovel is turned. That is doubly true of any project carried out by a body of people dedicated to the service of God's Kingdom. When talk arises to the effect that "You know, it's time we started this" or "what are we going to do about that?" – then the leaders of the congregation should be ready to lead the congregation into some thoughtful reflection about "who we are, what do we need now, and what needs can be foreseen coming down the pike?"

So, what *do* we need as congregations entrusted with the eternal Word? When we try to raise the funds for a new church, or look at a quote for re-roofing the present one, are we shamed to hear of the need for tin roofing, the lack of which prevents a sister church in Nigeria from finishing their mud-wattle structure? Are we perhaps too self-indulgent and extravagant in the buildings we provide for our activities, compared to the buildings erected by believers in less-developed parts of the world?

Perhaps a valid counsel would be the one from the Savior, again, not entirely to this point, but fitting nonetheless: *‘to whom much is given, from him much will be required’* (Luke 12:48). Whether or not we spend enough to aid the efforts of our brethren overseas is really a separate issue. The issue at hand is – are we, who have been so richly blessed both materially, and with the wealth of the gospel, free to do justice to the structures we erect to the glory of God? They are, after all, our structures, intended to furnish a setting for the labors that are expected of us.

So what are those labors? What are the true needs of a congregation? From the days that Christians met in the porches of the temple and from house to house, the activities of the Church have been evident to us: corporate worship, instruction in the word, fellowship as believers, celebration of the sacraments (Acts 2:42). There were also administrative and charitable functions (Acts 4:34-35; 6:1-7). Now, one might argue from the example of these early days of the church that the gospel ministry can function without expensive and elaborate structures; but it is another thing altogether to suggest that, were they in our place today, the apostles would have refused the use of a thoughtfully-designed church, or spurned the use of a classroom with chairs and a whiteboard. They certainly weren’t ashamed to meet daily with the faithful in the polished plazas of the Temple (Acts 2:46).

The congregation has a need for a place to worship: a place to hear the word, to celebrate the sacrament, to lift her voice in song, and to grow under the influence of the Holy Spirit. The church needs a place to study and learn the Word of God; it needs a setting conducive to educating both the lambs and sheep of the Lord in His pastures; it needs places to fellowship and operate as a community of believers.¹ Churches operating a Christian Day School must recognize the need, not only for teaching the Word, but also for preparing their students to function in twenty-first century society. Congregations do not well honor the Lord if they are inconsiderate of the needs of their servants and their families. In all of these functions, we should think of providing nothing less than the best and most suitable place to work.

With these things in mind, we propose a procedure for a congregation that should move in this general direction: first, the congregation should determine its functional needs, then it should reflect on how they can be executed to the glory of God, and finally, it should consider what means are necessary to bring this to pass.

Determining these needs

It is important, within congregational life, for the pastor and other leaders to help the congregation to come to a consensus about the needs that call for a given project. Two aspects of this leadership effort are education, and dialogue. The place of education is for us first to go back to the Word, and to learn from it what our Lord’s will is, and in what spirit we should approach all of life. That study will also serve to direct our church to the work at hand and not lose sight of its calling and purpose. Education will also be necessary in the matter of informing the congregation of more practical matters involved in a building program – design issues, costs, legal requirements, and the many other practical problems of achieving its goals. Finally, pastors and church leaders should be ready to encourage a desire to incorporate beauty into whatever the church seeks to do, or be ready to defer to those who are able to speak to such things.

Again, on the subject of determining one’s needs, an e-mail from someone involved in corporate systems analysis may offer some valuable advice:

[A congregation] needs to define what functions the structure must serve. In technical terms, the congregation needs to perform some "Systems Analysis". Only the congregation knows what the congregation wants or needs. It is easy to say "it's a church— everyone knows what functions take place" but once the structure is completed, it may be too late to say "you know, it would have been nice to have..." I suggest beginning with a list of functions the congregation intends to be involved with, such as church services, voters meetings, different classes offered, etc. It may seem a little silly listing "worship services" since it is rather obvious, but it is a function and very important. Ever had a hard time seeing something your looking for only to find it right in front of you? The more familiar a function is, the less obvious are important aspects of the function and the needs to perform the function. EVERYTHING is worth describing and defining, no matter how minor. One mistake usually made during the analysis stage is the failure to account for growth and expansion. Do not focus on just the current needs – future needs have to be taken into account as well. I cannot stress this enough. DEFINING the goals will make the planning process smoother. Like writing a paper – one needs to create the outline first. After defining the functions – PRIORITIZE them. This will help with budgeting the project. Considering alternative designs and construction materials will help with budgeting as well. Do not immediately eliminate an option because it may seem too expensive. A little more spent in one area may eliminate some in additional areas. The RELATIONSHIPS between functions/issues need to be considered and defined as well.²

The other important aspect that leadership should generate within the congregation is dialogue. We would like to see people talking about the project at hand, generating ideas, and registering their reaction, with the leaders seeking to bring people to a consensus about each major step to be taken. The need for this may vary somewhat, depending on the type of project and the extent of direct impact it will have on the larger assembly. It may be reasonable to leave the purchase of a parsonage in a large congregation to a committee, while leaders of a small congregation will be wise to work very closely and openly with the whole congregation on the design of their new church building.

Some will look at the list of items that fall under the activity of the congregation and see merely a list of functions for which we need only build sufficient space. Better still if we can combine several functions into one space! But should we halt our efforts at mere functionality? Or, to argue from another perspective, do we see so many beautiful, stately, magnificent structures that house false-teaching churches that we react against doing something beautiful merely for fear that the results will lead us into heterodoxy ourselves? What an example of "cutting off one's nose to spite the face" that would be! But I fear that we fall into that thinking from time to time. F. R. Weber, in the book, *The Small Church*, caustically notes that "orthodoxy need not necessarily mean ugliness."

Functionality should not be the death of beauty. It does not suit a people who are, and are to be, the Bride of the King to despise virtue and form. David urges us to "*worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness*" (1 Chron. 16:29). It is a beauty that is bestowed – the beauty of our Savior's righteousness covering the ugliness of our sin. But if there is such a thing as the "beauty" of holiness, then there is also room for discussion of "the holiness of beauty." It may be that too few among us that have been given, or have stopped to cultivate, an awareness of beauty. It seems that we Lutherans often cultivate an appreciation of musical aesthetics, but not a great effort is made to consider what is beautiful in terms of the visual, and we have even less courage in trying to apply these ideals in the visual arts. There can be a "holiness" to beauty – the sanctified attempt to incorporate it into the things that we create. But if we don't appreciate it in other areas, that lack will certainly reveal itself in the structures we erect.

Obviously, when they hear this discussion of needs-analysis, and of designing our

structures with beauty, there are those who meet these prerequisites with a nervous twitch, seeing only escalating dollar signs. Our response would be that our structures should be regarded as offerings to our Lord long before the Dedication! One of the most instructive portions of the Bible on the subject of giving comes from 2 Samuel 24:18-25, where David refused to accept the gift of Arunah's threshing floor, because he would not be deprived of the opportunity to give of himself for the altar that would be erected in that place.

The answer to concerns about funding a project that needs doing is simply to encourage within the congregation a spirit of good stewardship – to realize that all our gifts, talents, and resources are the Lord's to begin with. He has made us His own, and it behooves His people to steward these resources with a sense of thrift, but not miserliness; of liberality, but not license, of faithfulness, not faithlessness. Faith will respond to that which glorifies God, not man; faith will be more comfortable with endurance than transitoriness; it will delight in beauty and simplicity more than in gaudiness.

Buying Property

Speaking of David going to Arunah, engaging in any building project I can think of typically means obtaining land. That may come with the building you've chosen to buy, but in many cases, churches will seek out bare property on which to build. Two issues to raise here are how much land is needed? and what about location and terrain?

A good consideration of its needs and goals will help a congregation determine how much land it can deal with. A congregation that intends only to build a church, but does not plan a Christian Day school can get by on less land than the one which foresees the need for a church, school, and workers' residences. But in many cities, the days are past where a church could be placed on a couple of street corner lots. The congregation will need to check into local and state requirements that may require more land for certain functions. One congregation sold off some of its original parcel, only to discover that they could not then open a day school on the remaining site. Most communities allow no on-street parking and require any new building to have a prescribed number of on-site parking spaces. At least one suburb of Denver will not allow a church to be built on less than three acres. In another, a congregation building a church designed for 180 worshipers required a full 1.25 acre parcel to accommodate the building and parking.

Not surprisingly, CLC congregations have tended to become more urban/suburban over the course of our history. Land is usually quite expensive, and the cost is partially governed by the other big factor in buying property: location. How visible, and how accessible will this property be? Is it in a neighborhood that suits the congregation's mission? Usually, the more desirable a location to be found, the higher the cost (often determined in dollars/square foot). The one exception to this is when the congregation finds acreage well out of town, but which is accessible and is likely to have a neighborhood grow up around it within a few years. This may be one of the wisest planning moves a congregation can make. On the other hand, a congregation should consider that an economically-priced lot that is buried in a low-traffic residential area may simply not be worth the sacrifice of visibility and exposure.

Another area the congregation needs to take into account when it approaches a project is that it needs to operate within a secular community. It will soon find that it is necessary to deal with building codes, neighborhood reaction, and the way society moves. We may consider this an intrusion (it is!), but church builders have always had to deal with outside forces (wind, rain, heat, cold), changes in technology (Romanesque style gave way to flying buttresses), and local temperament and uniqueness. Both environment and background have made New England frame churches quite different from southwestern Spanish missions, but one style is not inherently better than another. They do, in part, simply reflect and complement their various settings.

Society impacts our way of looking at church-building in another way. We need to realize that differences in the way we live will require us to think differently about our design. Social and legal attitudes about handicap accessibility have had a significant aspect on church design. The parking issue is also a good example—we are more mobile than ever before. We used to build churches (100 years ago) designed for people to walk to. That's out of the question. The confessional nature of our fellowship, especially in a heavily 'churched' society, tends to work against our congregations becoming "neighborhood" churches, much as we would like them to be. How do these things impact our design? On the other hand, what if we deeply want to concentrate our mission on a particular community. How will that then affect our design?

Growing Pains

Besides dealing with different locations, we in the CLC can observe our congregations going through some marked stages in the life of the group. There are some brief generalizations that can be made, according to typical needs experienced along the way. Three stages of life can be suggested:

1. From Preaching Station to Mission Congregation

Were it not for the insistence on the part of sincere Christians to seek fellowship with only those who are like-minded on the teaching of scripture, many CLC congregations would simply never have begun. There are plenty of other places to go. But by the conviction of the Holy Spirit and the grace of God, such has been the case. Many congregations have begun with just a few souls, meeting in a living room or community hall, glad to receive the Word of God from preachers traveling scores or even hundred of miles. As God grants stability, and hints of growth invite the bold move of calling a full-time shepherd, a major step has been taken. But some major issues must be addressed: among the largest—where to house the pastor (and family), and where to continue to worship and carry on all the other functions of the fledgling congregation. Also, how can the material goals of the congregation be met upon the backs of so few members?

There is, of course, one overriding answer to these common mission dilemmas: the grace of God works mighty things with the Gideon bands that gather in His name. The simple assurance remains that God will bless the faithful preaching of the Word. Not always in the visible way we hope to see, but the blessings are there, nonetheless.

There are also a couple of external helps that our mission congregations have realized: the financial support of CLC home missions, and the Church Extension Fund, with its low-interest, easily-arranged financing. Still, the mission congregation that seeks to establish itself needs to address big challenges and to make some big decisions.

In the past couple of decades, we've seen several churches at this stage which have felt it the best course of action to purchase property and construct a combination parsonage/church facility. This is an approach that has been encouraged by the CLC Board of Missions, at least to the extent that they have made available a number of Church/Parsonage designs that a congregation may review, adopt, or adapt to its own preferences.

There are both pros and cons to every such arrangement. Some positives to this approach might be:

- This approach provides a quick solution to all immediate needs. Once a property has been obtained, a facility can be erected, using the Board of Missions' plans, that will comfortably house the pastor's family and provide a place for the group to worship and teach its classes.
- These arrangements incur a relatively low financial burden on the congregation; it allows them to be making an investment rather than losing money to rent.
- Such a setting quickly sends a message of permanency to those who hesitate to worship with a dozen people trying to look like they actually can fill a grade-school gym.

- Should the mission effort not succeed, the unit is house-like enough that it should easily be saleable on the housing market. This seems to have been one guiding objective in the Board of Missions' designs.

There are some negatives that should be mentioned with regard to these combination arrangements:

- The close proximity of church and parsonage (sometimes with a great deal of overlap) tends to create some discomfort for members and the pastor's family life. (More on this below)

- Although the home can be made reasonably comfortable, and the chapel may be cleverly worked into the plans, such arrangements seldom reach the high standards of form and aesthetic that we maintain a church deserves. (Again, more on that later)

- Congregations may find that a lack of foresight in the early stages can make things very difficult to work around. (e.g. not buying enough land for expansion; not designing in such a way that space can be added for more members, or more activities).

It's easy to forget that there are other options that have been tried by such congregations. Several, for instance, have begun with property, and built a house that would serve the long-term need as a parsonage, and a very short-term need for a meeting place for worship. The congregation in such a situation has more motivation to move on to the construction of a house of worship better suited to the congregation's mission. There is also the alternative of buying a house for a parsonage, and renting a hall for worship until a parcel large enough for a church, or an existing church, becomes available.

2. From mission situation to established congregation

As the mission congregation matures it may find itself presented with another set of possible needs: constructing a larger worship facility, moving out of a previously constructed multi-use section to a sanctuary designed for the purpose of worship; increasing education space or room for fellowship; instituting a Christian Day school, conversion of a Church/Parsonage into full church or full parsonage use.

Along with these changing needs are some changes in factors: there is likely to be more internal financing available; there will be a need to consider how changes to existing building affect architecture and usefulness.

3. Larger congregations coming of age

Larger congregations have the advantage of being more well established, and are often more well-endowed. Usually, in our circles, they have long ago erected their permanent sanctuary. They may, from time to time, need to consider things like more fellowship or educational area; or erecting a full-use school building. The hope would be that, by this stage of its existence, the large congregation will have had a fair amount of experience in projects like this, and may be blessed with a good supply of people talented and skilled in areas that will come into play during such projects. Although the ideal remains for the leaders of guiding a congregation into a project with education and dialogue, gaining a broad consensus on various matters may be much more difficult. More decisions will fall to committee work.

Designing a House for the Lord

F. R. Weber maintains that when building a church, the building should be designed from the inside out. That doesn't mean that the floor plan must be complete before thought can be given to its outward appearance. But it does mean that the primary space of the church needs to receive careful thought in relation to the primary use that will occur in that space. "A church is a place whose very interior is contrived skillfully to awaken man's devotion."³ The space in the church building which most requires this consideration is, of course, the sanctuary.⁴ When I was a youngster, growing up in a sizable congregation, I would sometimes walk from the school wing

to my father's office/sacristy by going through the sanctuary. In the quiet coolness of the church, it seemed almost sacrilegious to make a sound. The afternoon light playing through the faceted glass created a mosaic of lights and shadows. White plaster walls rose far above the individual and were lost in the darkened roof structure overhead. I was often overtaken by a feeling that I found hard to describe. Thirty years later someone gave me a word for that feeling. A church like that one had a sense of the 'numinous.' Numinous, according to Webster, means "(1) supernatural, mysterious; (2) filled with the sense of the presence of divinity; (3) appealing to the higher emotions or to the aesthetic sense."⁵ That is why, as someone observed, "people act differently in a cathedral than in a Wal-Mart."⁶

Two objections are raised here: honesty, and feasibility. First of all, is it dishonest to pour our resources into creating a sanctuary with a 'numinous' atmosphere, rather than simply to prepare a space where word and sacraments can be served up in an efficient manner? Will effort in that direction suggest that we have lost the confidence that the Church is nourished solely on the Means of Grace? Our response is that the one who feels that way is looking at the design question from the wrong side. We cannot think that design and scale and atmosphere are the things that God is giving us; they are rather a part of what the believer gives to God in response to faith. He is moved, by faith in God's grace, to prepare a space suitable to resonate with the praises arising from his heart. The deep emotions and awe that can arise within such a chamber, as the Word sinks down into one's heart, or as a host of voices "lift the roof" while singing *Crown Him with Many Crowns* attest that creating a good setting for the worship we offer to God is only a fitting part of our act of worship.

The other objection, feasibility, protests that it is all well and fine for us to speak of the grandeur of a cathedral, but few of us need or can afford an eight-hundred seat auditorium. So if that's what it takes to achieve the 'numinous', forget it. The answer here is that even our small churches can be creatively designed and built with those values of beauty, piety, and sincerity, all inclined toward the worship of God. They should be built to cultivate the desirable aspects of Lutheran worship—the preaching of the Word; the fact of atonement; the ministry of reconciliation; the praise of the redeemed in instrument and song; the communal nature of the Holy Christian Church as a ship of saints, delivered from the flood of God's wrath through the water of baptism (does anyone remember what a *nave* is anymore?).

We cannot go into a detailed discussion of all that should enter the consideration of a suitable worship setting, but we will give a short list of characteristics that should be considered. First of all, a couple of early decisions should be discussed and settled up front: will the needs of congregation in worship be better suited by traditional liturgical design – longitudinal floor plan (or even cruciform), with a deep, remote chancel set back from the assembly of worshipers, or by the broader plans we see more recently, with a non-recessed chancel area, or still more popular today, a theater-in-the-round design, with semi-circular pews around a chancel that is exposed to the congregation on three sides of the altar. There are liturgical and value differences that come into play with each different design. But little further can be done until this question is settled.

Then come elements that deserve consideration in every design, especially for Lutheran worship – one that I call "altitude" – the lines of the interior and exterior should draw our gaze heavenward. Better still if the observer feels that his gaze is lost in the heights of the ceiling. Weber's rule of thumb is that a chapel should be higher than it is wide. "Height contributes decidedly to atmosphere. A church with a low, flat ceiling is annoying. Even a small church, on the other hand, whose height is somewhat greater than its interior width, is impressive."⁷

Another consideration is orientation and the resultant natural lighting. Traditional orientation is with the altar in the east. A discussion of this is found in *The Small Church*, p.17-20. Some of his arguments, though, rest on issues that may not exist today: with the prevalence of air conditioning, his arguments about 'prevailing breezes' may not concern the modern

builder. But an awareness of the effects of light (and shadow), color, and orientation of the building are well worth careful thought.

A final item should be acoustics – altitude within the building here is one key factor. Another, from Weber's standpoint, would be 'remoteness' – the length relative to width, and the depth of the chancel: 'Few things stand out so prominently in the minds of most people than a visit to some church, perhaps years ago, and hearing a clergyman at the altar, far away, intoning a prayer. Every word was heard distinctly, but coming from a distance, in a resonant church, there was something curiously vibrant about it. The same prayer, heard at a distance of a dozen feet, might have proved less impressive.'⁸

Another factor of design that we should realize is that any architecture cannot help but convey a message. It will make a statement that goes beyond function: 'Architecture can't help express values. To refuse to bring Christian imagination to bear on these questions is just to move aside and let some other view express itself.'⁹ Again, it may be that too few of us are schooled in such aesthetics to confidently judge and interpret various trends in architecture, let alone impart an idea of what is good to others. But it wouldn't hurt for us to start studying the topic, as we might study history or literature. 'We need to be clear on what values a Christian architecture might express.'¹⁰

The above-quoted author, a Reformed minister, goes on to suggest some values that might be avoided, and some that might be incorporated, into a structure suitable for worship. Negative values would be 'paganism.' (the author references 'Hellenistic philosophy...also...revivals of pagan architecture, such as found in much Renaissance architecture and much American colonialism.') Christian architecture also might best avoid values born of 'the Enlightenment, parts of the Industrial Revolution, and postmodernism.'¹¹

On the other hand, values that we might seek to incorporate into our design would be the 'mystery of the Trinity,' 'an appreciation of history' (i.e., that we are not ashamed to carry into the new what is beautiful about the old. The antithesis would be a sort of refusal to incorporate established, enduring values.), the realization that 'we live not by sight but by faith;' our appreciation of the spoken voice, in word and song, and finally that the sanctuary and its environs should bespeak 'a Sabbath refuge of warmth and peace.'

There are differences to note between Lutheran and Reformed values. Often, in Reformed Churches, the role of the Word (the law!) in governing the life of the faithful is driven home by a pulpit set squarely in the center of the chancel in a dominating manner. This is done at the expense of the fundamental value of the gospel, which is conveyed among Lutherans by off-setting the pulpit, so that the eye of the worshiper is drawn to the altar and its visual message of the atonement. So, further 'Christian' values to include with the above list would be the atonement, and reconciliation through Christ.

The church building, of course, also contains a number of peripheral areas: passageways, fellowship, education, administration. These areas also are vital to the church's functional purpose, but, their design is not usually so complex. The main goal for them should be to strike a balance between function, form, and flexibility; and above all, to try not to obscure the message conveyed by the design of the sanctuary and the overall structure.

Designing a home for the servants

Churches are typically faced with the task of providing housing for its called workers. This would certainly fall under the admonition that 'the laborer is worthy of his hire.' So some consideration should go into the setting in which a congregation may ask its workers to reside. Luther, in his explanation to the fourth petition, observes that items included in daily bread are 'good masters' and 'good neighbors.' It's readily apparent that the church calling a servant becomes, in a practical sense, that person's 'master,' but it may be easy to overlook the fact that

to a marked degree, the church also becomes the worker's (and his family's) "neighbor." While the worker (and his family) is praying for "good masters, good neighbors, and the like," the church should seek to make itself just that—a good employer in providing a fair recompense for his work, and also a good neighbor in the many areas in which the servant's church life and home life rub shoulders.

There are various ways that the congregation can see to the housing needs of the worker's family. They may buy a parsonage in residential area. This is a more expensive way to do it than some of the other choices, and may require a "commute" of some distance to the church, but also affords the worker and his family perhaps the highest level of an important commodity—privacy—the opportunity to live somewhat removed from the natural scrutiny of the membership. The church, as owner of the house, should be an attentive landlord when it comes to matters of upkeep and repair. It should be clear from the start what maintenance is expected of the church, and what will be accepted by the tenant.

A less expensive course is for the congregation to secure enough land to build both church and parsonage on the same property. Costs go down, but so does privacy and a sense of removal from what goes on at church. This will be more of an issue for some families than others; also, questions of yard work and upkeep tend to get a little muddier.

Certainly, the most challenging setting arises in the church with attached parsonage (or, parsonage with attached church). Pastors entering the ministry in the CLC are no strangers to the unique sacrifices made in the interest of serving in the parish ministry. They and their wives are ready to accept many quirks, stresses, intrusions, and complications experienced in pastoral life that are foreign to most lay members. On the other hand, they do enjoy the security of living in a home provided by and cared for by others. But it will behoove the congregation to realize that many combination parsonage/church settings simply invite casual intrusions by members. They should realize that awkward situations arising in family life that may be observed by members. The small church attached to the parsonage, no matter how cleverly designed, will suffer by its close association to a residence. In many of our churches, portions of the home are used for fellowship or classes because there is not sufficient space in the church part. Such things *might* have a discouraging effect on the visitor or weaker member. They certainly add to the stress of parsonage life.

Another option would be one where the worker provides his own residence, either by purchase or rent. More and more often this has become the norm for church bodies. This arrangement has some advantages:

- There would be a reduced burden on the congregation's trusteeship of property
- It would allow the family relative freedom in choosing where they live, and how; they would enjoy (or learn!) the responsibility of ownership.
- The worker's family would have the benefit (in a purchase), of developing equity and a home for retirement.

An obvious problem of this arrangement is that of making sure that the congregation provides a salary that allows it.

Other disadvantages could include the following:

- The high housing allowance would likely drive up Social Security taxes on salary, and drastically reduce EIC for families.
- Salary would need to be sufficient for maintenance of the home. (Offset, perhaps, by lower maintenance budgeting for the congregation.)
- Many called servants would find it difficult to provide a down payment for home purchase, even if they can afford the mortgage.
- A housing allowance that would allow for only rental would be low-cost in the short term,

but neither congregation nor servant would develop equity in a property.

- Perhaps the church-owned parsonage has tended to favor the philosophy of the call: it makes it much less complicated for the pastor or teacher who is led to take a call elsewhere or accept a call to the calling location.

Odds and Ends for churches to consider

It seems that a good rule of thumb for congregations to cultivate when dealing with housing issues for their workers would be for all members to ask themselves “would I want this (home, carpeting, arrangement, etc.) for my own family?” Obviously, different folks are going to have differing views, but that mind set would probably dampen the temptation to cut corners.

Where construction of a basement is feasible (especially for parsonages), it should be seen as a very economical means of gaining useful space. Care should be taken that it be well-drained and resistant to flooding.

A congregation would be wise to steer away from expecting to use portions of a worker’s living quarters for church purposes, other than office space.

It has become more common for local building codes to require full and detailed landscaping plans in connection with building projects. This may seem like an expensive and burdensome intrusion, but it can be beneficial in prompting the congregation to design landscaping with long-term practicality and attractiveness.

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A building project can be an exciting and challenging time for any congregation. There are, obviously, many things to consider. But there is no question that the most important consideration was laid down long ago by the Psalmist, who advised: *‘Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it.’* (Ps. 128:1). May we seek the Lord’s blessing in every congregational undertaking.

APPENDIX A.

Mr. Doug Schaller: List of things to be considered in “Systems Analysis” for a Church building.

Issues will and may include:

- number of members in the congregation (now and in the future with potential for growth factored in);
- office space (pastoral, secretarial); storage space requirements (a MUST);
- parking and handicap accessibility (walk-in lower level great for this);
- structure designed for possible additions in the future (considering your current member numbers and limited budget but with the potential for growth);
- commercial services (i.e. garbage/refuse removal access);
- classes (Sunday School, Bible Class, school?);
- worship services: sound equipment, Deacon/Elder room;
- bathrooms (central to activities within the facility);
- parents’ room (with possible bathroom or close to one);
- room for assemblies or non-worship service activities;
- landscaping;
- facility security (i.e. ability to unlock one area and not make the whole facility unsecured while still maintaining fire escape routes);
- utility corridors (plumbing, electrical, phone, speaker wires?, coax cable?, fire control);

- attractive architecture;
- playground area?

He also writes: Your sister congregations will be an invaluable source for issues to consider while planning for this large endeavor. Learn from their experiences and that way one will not be “reinventing the wheel.”

APPENDIX B ⁶

Constant Voices by Douglas Jones

JOHN RUSKIN RECOGNIZED THAT “THERE ARE BUT two strong conquerors of the forgetfulness of men: Poetry and Architecture.” Both of these offer a peculiar concreteness, a living directness, not matched by other arts. One can read plenty about ancient Greece or medieval England, but to touch the Parthenon in the sunshine or walk the cool of a Gothic hall forces a peculiar reality upon one's belief in history. It puts flesh and blood into our past. It puts handles on the reality of blessings and curses. Architecture entices humility. We have a better grasp of how poetry can do this. It is language, and it connects thought to world by common agreements. But such a process of expression is more mysterious with architecture. Architecture doesn't have a strict, grammatical means of expressing values, yet it communicates. In this, it's closer to music than to the graphic arts-or to use Goethe's odd phrase: architecture is "frozen music." If Christianity says anything at all about truth and beauty, then it has to speak to architecture as well. I've never been able to grasp that strain in some pockets of Reformed thinking which hastes to assure us that there is no distinctively Christian view of anything--architecture is neutral rock. Non-Christians aren't so squeamish about expressing worldviews in their architecture. Frank Lloyd Wright claimed "the house is an idea" and sought through his architectural style to express democratic liberalism- "I wish to build a city for democracy: the Usonian city that is nowhere yet everywhere." Similarly, those tall, mirror buildings that fill modern cities reveal much about the modern mind. Their architects sometimes tell us that they use mirror windows to blend the building in with the world around it, even to reflect nature. But the result is that these buildings just reflect other mirror buildings. More interestingly, these buildings nicely express that modern obsession with the present tense. Mirrors can only show what is before them at the moment. When present moves, the mirror takes on the latest object, always changing, always new. Moderns hates history, and they successfully express this in their architecture. Every historical architecture wants to express something about what it values most. Architecture can't help express values. To refuse to bring Christian imagination to bear on these questions is just to move aside and let some other view express itself. And that is what has happened to most Christian buildings today. We allow our buildings to proclaim alien gospels. Now the point is not to turn architecture into another bit of propaganda. In every art, subtlety is the key. Whether in literature or painting or music or film, the best work always carefully "hides the art" (Ovid's *Ars est celare artem*). Propaganda always waves gawdy symbols. A message is inescapable, but it should be clear air, filling but unseen. Good architecture would "hide" its values too, leaving leaden propaganda to the postmodernists. But before we commoners can encourage architects to hide the expression skillfully, we need to be clear on what values a Christian architecture might want to express. Even if we do not have an interest in any upcoming building project or lack technical knowledge, we can at the very least try to become self-conscious about architectural expressions (1 Cor. 10:31). It dominates so much of our lives, and it affects the way we live and move. People act very differently in a cathedral than at Wal-Mart. We could begin to meditate on such questions as, what does any given building in fact express? What values does it want us to appreciate? What should a Christian architecture aim to express? Our greatest failing is our simple lack of reflection. It's not that we don't exercise our imagination

correctly; we rarely even try. Imagination is more central to architecture than we tend to admit. When we start thinking architecturally, we often immediately jump to questions about function and then turn to form. But as Roger Scruton observes, function already assumes some imaginative decisions: "what would it be like for that function to be fulfilled in the suggested manner"? Without first answering the imaginative questions, "there is no way an architect can seriously know what he is doing when he begins to build."

Sed Nove Architecture

Architecture is unique among the arts for its public nature. It can't so easily play to the tastes of obscure artistic elites in the way literature and painting have. The public nature of architecture forces it to be accountable to a more general public. This interesting fact of architecture plays nicely into the medieval Christian principle which ought to dominate all of Christian living—*non nova sed nove*, not new but with newness. Scripture directs us to respect the wisdom of the faithful who have gone before, even aesthetic wisdom; yet still we are moving forward in our sanctification. We don't need any new doctrines, but each generation ought to express the same ancient faith with newness, with freshness, with creativity. Modernity rejects the past, and legalism rejects creativity. A Christian architecture should not pretend that it could do anything truly new. It should not be ashamed to work within ancient Christian forms. Yet it shouldn't just duplicate them: It should aim to express them with creativity. And that is no simple task in any art.

Within this *sed nove* context, we can begin to think about what paths a Christian architecture might avoid and what paths it ought to pursue. I'll start with the negative and then move into the positive.

Antithesis: We commonly speak about a theology of antithesis—that stark scriptural division between belief and unbelief, light and darkness—when speaking of philosophy, theology, and culture. But we've not done much thinking about antithesis in architecture. The Apostle Paul even uses an architectural metaphor in one of his expressions of antithesis: "And what agreement has the temple of God with idols?" (2 Cor. 6:16). In Christian philosophy, we complain about syntheses with unbelieving systems and symbols. Certainly the same should appear in regard to architecture. If Hellenistic philosophy has compromised Christian thinking, then should we delight in distinctively Hellenistic forms in our architecture? It seems not. According to some observers, it was a concern for antithesis that motivated Gothic style, abandoning the centrality of columns for something symbolically different. Some nineteenth-century architectural thinkers, such as Augustus Pugin, went so far as to declare Gothic as the only faithful Christian architecture. *Sed nove* architecture need not go all that way to appreciate something of the holy irony in the comments of the Pugins of the world:

The finest temple of the Greeks is constructed on the same principle as a large wooden cabin. As illustrations of history they are extremely valuable; but as for their being held up as the standard of architectural excellence. . . it is a monstrous absurdity, which has originated in the blind admiration in modern times for everything Pagan, to the prejudice and overthrow of Christian art and propriety.

If there is anything good in this sort of sentiment, wouldn't it also affect revivals of pagan architecture, such as found in much Renaissance architecture and much American colonialism? As genuinely beautiful as much of that style is, should a self-consciously Christian architecture be comfortable with it? These sorts of antithetical questions would also come to play from the other direction. Hellenism isn't the only enemy of Christianity. We would also want to reflect in our architecture our distinctness from the Enlightenment, parts of the Industrial Revolution, and postmodernism. In a similar way; when thinking about ecclesiastical architecture, we should not

just think antithetically about styles but also spheres. For example; we believe that the State is a distinct institution from the Church, and so it should be odd if we sought to have our churches imitate the expression of political power which dominate our capitals. Moreover, the Church is not just or even primarily American or Asian or African, and yet it' s not opposed to these either. If we are thinking in terms of centuries, it would be preferable to have our churches express their nationality without being bound by it.

Prothesis: On the constructive side, we should want our architecture to express those values we hold most dear. Of course, the Trinity should be centrally and subtly reflected in our architectural forms. And the Trinity provides not only another reason to have our architecture express our love of history, but it also should express the mystery of Christianity. Whether in music or poetry or painting, the art that lasts is that which has enough depth and complexity to meditate on for centuries. Gothic architecture achieved such rich complexity from a different motive. Gothic style at times sought to reflect that heavenly city of the future, and so they designed one building to depict the complexity of a host of buildings—a city on a hill. Whether we need to duplicate that is a separate question from the fascinating level of Christian imagination involved in such architecture. Perhaps we could extend that vision in a different manner. For example, the city depicted at the end of Revelation is lush with trees, a reminder of the garden of Eden. This sort of garden symbolism and actual living gardens could play a more important role in our ecclesiastical exteriors and interiors than they were able to do in Gothic times.

Garden themes introduce the important element of time, something that often gets lost in all eras of architecture. Goethe' s "frozen music" is striking because it highlights the static nature of architecture (and painting). As much as architects want us to see the movement in their buildings, it cannot come close to the expression of time and movement found in music. Music not only expresses time, it depicts the life of faith. We don' t live by sight as Rome and Eastern Orthodoxy suggest in their liturgies. We live now on the analogy of hearing, and a more scriptural ecclesiastical architecture could reflect that powerfully, as Reformation architecture started to do. Instead of just a concern for exteriors, we should design our churches around music and the spoken voice. We do that to an extent, but we don' t consciously aim to design in such a way as to express the equal importance of time and eternity. Our architecture should also reflect a Sabbath refuge of peace and warmth. This should be true not only of our churches but our homes as well. But churches, especially; should aim to express the peace of heaven, not the plasticity of a TV studio. Our seating should reflect our concern for community where we can speak and sing to one another. In short, our churches should have the feel of a royal feasting hall rather than a funeral home or a theatre. History, antithesis, Trinity, faith, garden, and community—these are the sorts of values we should want our architecture to express *non nova sed nove*. Such an architecture wouldn' t be cheap, but the Church could do it and not neglect her attention to mercy, if she spread out construction over several generations. As Ruskin noted, a Christian devotion to excellence should lead us in many parts of life to say, "better our work unfinished than all bad."

Kuriakos by Douglas Wilson

IN ANCIENT ISRAEL, WHEN THE PEOPLE DRIFTED away from faithfulness to God, this was regularly manifested through their worship on the "high places." It was unbelief that drove them from the place God had assigned to establish His name—but at least they knew that religious worship required height, groves, blood, and a cultivated sense of the numinous. They sought out their false religions, but at least, damning them with faint praise, they were religions. We are just as disobedient in our worship as they were, but are too lazy even to create a false religion. So we just make up something that fits in with the zoning regulations, and call it good. Because modernity is also driven by unbelief, just like the ancient apostasies, an alternative to the right worship of God must be found. But because we are modern, that alternative ends up

being about as numinous as the parking lot at Safeway. In short, for modern evangelicals, worship must be boring and grubby, just like us. And after a time, the vestigial forms of our worship trickle down to join the puddle made by our sorry little secular lives, not distinguished from those lives in any significant way. Not surprisingly, our architecture, like the rest of our lives, will reflect the gods we worship. If we worship the living God in truth, that will of course be reflected, as we discuss elsewhere in this issue. But if we worship the local baals, then our houses of assembly will soon resemble them in all their splendor. Splendor, aye. We build temples to the gods of commerce, and this is why the modern church looks like a shopping mall, sprawling and flat; plenty of parking, Visa and MasterCard accepted. In one city, a church mailed out hundreds of thousands of brochures hawking their wares. Come to *our* church, they said, and we' ll give you higher job satisfaction and a better sex life. Just like Alice' s restaurant, you can get anything you want. Churches now have weight rooms, they have food courts, they have Christian book stores. In the old days, this last item would not have been a matter of shame, but in the old days, Christian book stores had Christian books in them. (I have not heard of any church that has a Victoria' s Secret outlet, but this is probably because I don' t get around much.) We hustle and sell because we think we need the customers. We market the church because we think the gospel is a product. Because we think the gospel is a product, we measure our success by counting the dollars that flow in. If the stream slows down, we do what all enterprising entrepreneurs do—modify the product until it is more to the customers' liking. The customer, as the fellow said, is always right. But Jesus said that you cannot serve God and mammon. And because the modern evangelical church is clearly hot in the pursuit of mammon, it cannot be serving God. Christ cleansed the Temple because the avaricious had made it into a den of thieves. We have thought to do them one better, and have tried to turn a den of thieves into a Temple: We build structures that make people think they are expected to buy something, again, just like they do at the mall. And this is why our churches look the way they do. Another American baal is the god of pragmatism. This ugly little god is why modern Christians gravitate to the multipurpose building. Over the years I have been in many conversations with many Christians about the prospect of building church facilities, and one thing that comes up with metronome-like regularity is the strong desire that the building be "used more than just one day a week." The strange thing is that these comments are never made as a request for divine services on a daily basis. The desire expressed is not for a daily exposition of the Word, or for more opportunities to sing psalms. The assumption is always that the facility has to be usable *by us* for the majority of the week. The thing is like a time-share condominium for God, where He gets the use of the place for a couple hours on Sunday morning. The rest of the time, all that square footage needs to be available for our little occupations – basketball games and concerts, just to mention a few. And thus it comes about that the sermon is preached underneath a backboard and hoop, not as a temporary and regrettable necessity, but as a monument to pragmatic efficiency. The third compromise we make has to do with our willingness for our worship to be captured by gravity. Our contemporary gods, like us, are earthbound. So we worship in long, low, flat rooms, with the acoustic tile ceiling shutting us in tight. What is above our heads doesn' t really matter to us, because we are far more concerned with relationships down here. Our religion is no longer vertical. Besides, in all those old drafty churches, the empty space up in the vault was not very heat-efficient, and God wants us to be good stewards. And so we make our worship centers (gakkk!) very much like a living room, with carpet, padded chairs, curtains, and cushions. Our worship (of one another, apparently) must be cozy. We have a lot of thinking to do, and after that, a lot of work. Our English word *church* descends from the Greek *kuriakos* –house of the Lord. It would be nice to be able to invite one another, as each week drew to a close, to come, worship the Lord in such places. But first we have to build a few.

ENDNOTES

¹ We've certainly seen in our day enough "community" churches cropping up – usually new or existing Evangelical or mainline types jettisoning denominational names in favor of the less offensive "Community" label. One assumes that the use of the term 'community' is meant in an extroverted sense – "we are reaching out to the community." It's almost refreshing to hear how the Catholics use the term – in a somewhat introverted sense. A nearby parish is titled "the Community of Elizabeth Anne Seton-Hall." The dedication is unfortunate, but this seems to render a better picture of the cohesive and organic life that a Christian congregation should have.

² E-mail comments from Douglas Schaller, djs-mail@prairie.lakes.com, November, 1999. Mr. Schaller also offers an informal list of issues to be considered in a planning analysis for a church building. This is included as Appendix I in this paper.

³ F. R. Weber, *The Small Church*, J. H. Jansen, 1939; p. 2

⁴ "Sanctuary" is used differently for certain areas of the church. Liturgically, the area of the chancel is properly the 'sanctuary'. I'm using the term in a more colloquial sense, which includes nave, chancel, and choirs, if they exist.

⁵ Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, c. 1973

⁶ Douglas Jones in *Credenda/Agenda*, volume 11, #3, "Constant Voices," p. 4 Two articles in this journal are superb reading for this topic and are included as Appendix B. Reprinting is done with the permission of *Credenda/Agenda*.

⁷ Weber, 22 (Weber, it might be noted, is vigorously traditional in his approach. For example, good floor plan, in his estimation, is 1/3 chancel.)

⁸ Weber, 21.

⁹ Jones, 4.

¹⁰ Jones, 4.

¹¹ Jones, 5.

BOOK REVIEWS

***The Daily Bible in Chronological Order - 365 Daily Readings - New International Version - With Devotional Insights to Guide You Through God's Word.* Commentary by F. La Gard Smith. Eugene, Oregon 97402: Harvest House Publishers, 1984. 1714 pages, hard cover.**

In the year 2001 I made my way through the New International Version (NIV) of the Bible, making use of this Bible and brief commentary. The particularity of this Bible is that it attempts to present the entire Bible in chronological order. The problem with this kind of arrangement is that one does not arrive at the New Testament until October 18. Nevertheless, there are certain benefits to be derived from reading the Bible in this fashion. For example, one reads the Psalms in connection with the Bible account of David and the writings of Solomon (Proverbs, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes) together with what Bible history says about Solomon.

Some special features of this Bible include the arrangement of the laws of Moses by topic so that, for example, the laws regarding blasphemy are all assembled in one place, whether from Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, or Deuteronomy. In a similar way the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes are arranged topically, so that, for example, all the proverbs having to do with pride and humility are assembled in one place.

The introductions and commentary are generally quite helpful. Sometimes the commentary on the Old Testament could have made more use of New Testament information. For example, the commentary fails to note that Cain's sacrifice was rejected because of his lack of faith, whereas Abel's sacrifice was accepted because Abel was accepted as a believer, even though this is plainly taught in Hebrews 11. So also the commentary says that reference to "the image of God" "probably suggests that, like God, human beings are essentially spiritual beings, having intelligence, moral consciousness, and freedom of choice" (p. 3). Why not make use of the New Testament references to the image of God in Paul's letters to the Ephesians and Colossians?

In general the promises of the Savior to Adam and Eve and later to the patriarchs of Genesis are not given as much emphasis as one would like to see. When the account of Passover is presented, there is no special mention that this Passover lamb prefigured Christ.

The basic chronology that is adopted seems to match what the Bible actually says instead of what critical scholars have devised according to their own theories. Thus Moses' dealings with the Pharaoh of Egypt are stated as having taken place in 1446 BC, not several centuries later, as many critical scholars claim. On the other hand, the account of Job is not located in the days of Genesis, when Job most likely lived, but rather in the days of Ezekiel and Daniel, since it is argued that the book of Job was written at this later time.

The chronology of Holy Week is different from the traditional presentation. The Lord's Supper is said to have taken place on Wednesday, and Jesus' death is said to have taken place on Thursday. In typical Reformed fashion the Lord's Supper is depicted as a meal of bread and wine "as symbols of his body and blood." Chronologically the Lord's Supper is presented before the foot-washing. The notes on Jesus' death do not call attention to the fact that Jesus was being punished for our sins when He was "forsaken" on the cross.

The order of Paul's letters agrees with that of most commentators, with Galatians first (first journey), followed by First and Second Thessalonians (second journey), First and Second Corinthians and Romans (third journey), the four letters from Rome (Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians, Philippians), and the pastoral letters in this order: First Timothy, Titus, Second Timothy. The letter of James is placed in the same time period as the letters of Peter and Jude, whereas it would seem better to place it in an earlier period, before the gospel went out

extensively to the Gentiles.

Do I recommend this book? It may help those readers who want to read the whole Bible in one year and need some kind of schedule to help them work this out. But caution is called for. The notes do not stress the Messianic promises in the Old Testament as much as I would have liked. Also there are too many times when F. La Gard Smith says "perhaps" or "probably" when the evidence is strong enough to say "surely" or "certainly." Of course, when it comes to chronology, very often we cannot be certain of the actual order of events. It would be impossible to edit a book of this type so as to please all Bible students.

Will I read through this Bible again? Probably not. I like the idea of chronological order, but I don't like the idea of waiting for the New Testament until October. Therefore I have devised for myself a plan by which I can finish the whole Bible in one year by reading four chapters a day six days a week. These four chapters generally include two chapters of Old Testament history arranged chronologically, one chapter of Old Testament poetry (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, etc.), and one chapter of New testament history arranged in order. No attempt is made to read the four gospels chronologically. Rather each gospel is read from beginning to end, first John, then Mark, then Matthew, and then Luke. John was chosen to be read first because his book begins the same way Genesis begins: "In the beginning."

Using this plan in former years, I finished the New Testament by the end of October. Only three chapters a day needed to be read from that point on in order to finish the Bible in one year. Anyone wanting to receive a copy of this plan by e-mail may send his request to me at profdavidlau@juno.com.

Boomstra, Harry, *Our School: Calvin College and the Christian Reformed Church*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001. 166 pages, paperback, \$15.00.

This book is not intended as a complete history of Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Rather, the author's intention is to show, as he says, "the interaction, the mutual influence between Calvin College and the Christian Reformed Church (CRC)" (p. ix), the conservative church body that established Calvin College in 1876 and controls it to the present day.

After some brief introductory chapters on the history of the CRC and the history of Calvin College, Boomstra gets to his main consideration: the ties that have bound church body and school together, as well as the tensions that have threatened to destroy this bond. As has been the case in many other church schools, the percentage of CRC students in attendance has decreased as Calvin College's enrollment has grown. In 1940 the enrollment was 499, of which 86% were CRC members. In 1999 the enrollment was 4273, but only 54% were CRC members. At one time 65% of Calvin's College's income came from the CRC, but now it is less than 5%.

The causes of tension between Calvin College and the CRC have been issues of control between faculty and trustees, issues of morality and worldliness, issues of doctrine. Typically the college has moved faster on controversial matters than its constituents in the church body. For example, the Association of Christian Reformed Laymen (ACRL) was troubled by the fact that Calvin's students were participating in worship services "characterized by informal style, casual dress, and guitar accompaniment" (p. 79). Worldly art, worldly entertainment, social dancing, liberation theology were being tolerated, contrary to what was considered the distinctive Reformed viewpoint on such things.

The one issue that caused more tensions than any other for a long period of time was the issue of worldly amusements, specifically movie attendance, card playing, and dancing. In the twenties all three of these activities were labeled as completely forbidden. It was expected that Calvin's faculty would enforce bans on these activities and punish all transgressors. Many of

Calvin's students did not agree with such restrictions, nor did they comply with them. Calvin's faculty did not appreciate the task of enforcing these rules either. Eventually the criticism died down, simply because the CRC as a whole was becoming much more tolerant. Boomstra reports: "The 1962-1963 *Student Handbook* was the first not to print the prohibition against the three worldly amusements" (p. 100). Critics of the college then found fault with some of the movies shown right on campus, such as *Oh, God!* and *Bonnie and Clyde* and *Cabaret*. Some of the student publications also drew fire.

Of more recent vintage has been the controversy over creation and evolution. On the faculty of Calvin College, Davis Young, son of the renowned Old Testament exegete Edward Young, espoused the theory that the world was billions of years old. Other faculty members held similar views. Although these teachers in the field of science still upheld the doctrine of creation by an all-powerful God, they also held, in Boomstra's words, "that the age of the universe must be billions of years; that the creation did not occur in six twenty-four hour days but involved a process lasting billions of years; and that human beings may have been a part of that process" (pp. 121-122). In such a controversy as this, compromise is hardly possible. Eventually, since the false teaching at Calvin College continued, many of those objecting separated from the CRC. The United Reformed Church is the new church body organized by those who left the CRC. Another issue that prompted these exoduses was the matter of women pastors in the church, formerly forbidden, now tolerated.

Is there anything we confessional Lutherans can learn from the relationship between Calvin College and the CRC? **Our school**, Immanuel Lutheran College (ILC), is even more closely tied to its sponsoring church body, the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC). So far in the history of our school (1959 to the present) there has not been a major clash between faculty and/or students, on the one hand, and the constituency, on the other hand. Of course there have been tensions from time to time on various issues, such as hazing, student evangelism, and student attire. But as far as I know, there has never been a sustained charge of false teaching brought against any of our faculty, nor have there been any major debates on creation or on what constitutes worldliness. Both the CLC constituency and the ILC faculty and student body seem to be on the same team. That much of modern music, current television, and recent movies present a continuing adverse influence on all of us is obviously true. That we need to be on guard against the acceptance of so-called scientific theories that go against the plain and simple teaching of Genesis is also true. May God in His grace help us keep **our school** a Christian school.

– *David Lau*
