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Exegesis Of Paul's First Letter To Timothy

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(Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota, 1906.)

The exegesis is by Dr. Johannes Ylvisaker, author of the textbook, *The Gospels*. The text is drawn from original, mimeographed class notes, duplicated in 1906. These have, to my knowledge, never been published.* The translation adheres to the original Norwegian as closely as the English idiom will permit. In order to be certain of the author's intent, however, the translation may at times seem clumsy and lack the flow that one might otherwise expect. The first installment presents an introduction to all three of the pastoral epistles. Thereafter the exegesis is restricted to 1 Timothy. - *C. M. Gullerud*.

INTRODUCTION

I. The Aim and Goal of the Pastoral Epistles.

From ancient times three of the New Testament writings have received the title *Pastoral or Shepherd Epistles*, namely, the two to Timothy and the letter to Titus. The above-mentioned men were personal friends and disciples of Paul. He had placed them in charge of a considerable number of congregations, Titus on the Isle of Crete and Timothy in Asia Minor, with Ephesus as the central point.

These writings were titled *Pastoral Epistles*, since they all had the purpose of giving directions concerning the proper organization and leadership of Christian congregations. There is an inner relationship tying them all together. By and large, they have the same characteristics, both with regard to content and the nuances and expressions of language. Certainly there is this difference that Paul in his letters to Timothy concerns himself chiefly with the proper leadership of the congregation, whereas the letter to Titus deals also with the proper organiza-

* The only other English translation of this work of which we are aware is an unpublished translation prepared for class use at Bethany Lutheran Seminary by Prof. Geo. O. Lillegard and Dr. S. C. Ylvisaker. — Editor.

tion. This difference is due to the fact that Paul had labored but a short time in Crete, where conditions were different from those in Asia Minor, where his labors had extended over a longer period of time. The epistles were written for instruction, admonition and comfort. The instruction is given for the purpose of making it clear how the incumbents of the office are to conduct themselves properly in God's house, which is the Church of the living God. What Paul writes in 1 Tim. 3:14-15 can well be called an expression of the common purpose of all three epistles. The admonitions deal partly with faithfulness in the office in general and then specifically with regard to the false doctrines which were threatening to destroy the congregations. For a true shepherd of a congregation will give heed to himself and the doctrine (1 Tim. 4:16) namely in this, (1) that he will take care to remain orthodox for the sake of his own salvation, and (2) that he will defend the flock which has been entrusted to him by faithfully proclaiming the gospel's saving truth and by maintaining true Christian discipline.

These letters, as Bugge says, contain "a wealth of signals and directions which have their application to every incumbent (pastor) in every local congregation. They contain a treasury of pastoral regulations and instructions which will always remain the authentic type for all instructions for those who have been entrusted with the office in the Church of the Lord." In these letters we have the pastoral theology of the Holy Spirit. This gives to them their great importance.

II. The Distinctive Character of the Pastoral Epistles.

One who compares the pastoral epistles with Paul's letters to the individual congregations will find a considerable difference. Certainly the doctrine is the same, and to this we should pay particular attention. The Christological soteriology is the same in these epistles as in the letters to the congregations. Thus we find the same doctrine of sin and grace, law and gospel, the importance of Jesus' death and resurrection, predestination, etc. B. Weiss correctly says in his *Introduction*: "Above all it is an indisputable fact that the essential outline and specific expressions of the Pauline doctrine of salvation are reproduced in our epistle with a clarity not found with any other disciple of Paul" (315). Also in regard to ethics we soon notice that we are standing on the same Pauline ground as we have learned to know

it from the apostle's other writings. The negative critics, such as Baur, Pfleiderer, and others, have correctly enough pointed to the strong emphasis on good works (κάλα ἔργα) in the pastoral letters. But that this stress is unPauline is pure fiction. We need only to point to such passages as 1 Thess. 1:3; Gal. 5:19ff; Eph. 2:10; Rom. 2:6; Rom. 12, 13 and 14, and many other passages. Indeed, far from finding ourselves here in strange territory in the matter of ethics, much more (which was to be expected) we meet with obvious similarities with the apostle's other epistles. For comparison we turn to such passages as 1 Tim. 1:5, Rom. 13:10; 1 Tim. 4:3ff, Tit. 1:15, Rom. 14:14, 1 Cor. 8:4; 1 Tim. 2:2, Rom. 13:1ff; 1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 2:3ff, 1 Cor. 9:24ff, Col. 2:1.

As surely as it is true that the pastoral epistles and Paul's letters to the individual congregations have the same doctrine, so true it is also that the pastoral epistles, in their inner thought development, external form, and manner of presentation, form a group distinguishing them from the encyclicals.

In the letters to the congregations we often notice that the apostle's "bulging fullness of thought" is, as it were, contending with the language, so that the thoughts are gushing forth in such a way that a new thought begins before the foregoing is concluded—which in a considerable degree makes for a difficult exegesis. There are few examples of this in the pastoral epistles. By and large, the progress of thought here is simpler and the connection more straightforward. Typical also of the pastoral epistles is the quick transition from the specific truths to their more general application. Compare, for example, 1 Tim. 1:15 with the preceding verses; likewise, 2:4-6; 4:8-10; 2 Tim. 1:9ff; 2:11-13; 3:12; Tit. 2:11-14; 3:4-7. After the expression of such general thoughts it is peculiar to the pastoral epistles that the apostle, as it were, indicates a pause in particular admonitions and instructions to the recipient of the letter. (Cf. 1 Tim. 4:6,11; 6:2; 2 Tim. 2:14; 3:5; Tit. 2:15; 3:8) Hutter, de Wette, and others have rightly called attention to this feature.

With regard to linguistic presentation, the pastoral epistles distinguish themselves through the typical and oft repeated use of similar sounding and closely related expressions for the same thought and also through frequent use of the *hapax legomena*.

Of these, approximately 170 instances have been found. Examples of Latinisms come to mind, especially χάριν ἔχειν, which is in Latin *gratiam agere*. The connection of ὑγιαίνω, ὑγιαίνους, ὑγιῆς with διδασκαλία or λόγος as the designation for the pure doctrine is quite frequent. The verb, participle, and adjective appear in the encyclicals but not with these or similar nouns. In the pastoral letters we have διδασκαλία ὑγιαίνου in 1 Tim. 1:10; 2 Tim. 4:3; Tit. 1:6; 2:1, λόγος ὑγιαίνοντες in 1 Tim. 6:3; 2 Tim. 1:13, and λόγος ὑγιῆς in Tit. 2:8. Notice also the combinations ἡ κατ' εὐσέβειαν διδασκαλία, ἡ ἀλήθεια ἡ κατ' εὐσέβειαν, ἡ καλὴ διδασκαλία. As an expression designating the essence of the Christian life we often find the word εὐσέβεια in the pastoral letters—ten times there, while only five times elsewhere in the NT; εὐσεβέω only once (Acts 17:23) outside of the pastoral epistles; εὐσεβῶς σεμνότης, σωφρόνος, σωφρονίζειν, σωφρονισμός—all of these only in the pastoral letters, σέμνος, σωφροσύνη—both of these only once outside of the pastoral epistles. Peculiar to the pastoral letters are also the expressions ἀνθρώπος θεοῦ, δεσπότης, the master of servants; δυνάστης, concerning God; also the formulas, πίστος ὁ λόγος, καὶ πάσης ἀποδοχῆς ἄξιός, and πάγλις τοῦ διαβόλου. The word πρεσβυτέριον (1 Tim. 4:14) has received a different connotation than placed upon it by Paul in other passages.

All of these peculiarities and others of a similar nature found in these letters have been dragged out and used by negative critics as proofs for the contention that these letters could not have been written by Paul. But the proofs do not hold. All of the seeming foreign element of the peculiarities referred to disappear when we consider the following:

(1) The letters were not written to congregations but to individuals who were the apostle's personal and close friends. Therefore, the letters sometimes take on a more intimate tone.

(2) There was a considerable time period separating the writing of these letters and the letters to the congregations. During this time, conditions had altered. Conditions had changed in Asia Minor since Paul had written to the Ephesians and to the Colossians. New heresies had also come to the surface. These considerations often called for new expressions and different turns of language. Furthermore, we should remember

that in the interval Paul had been in and out of other surroundings, which could account for new thoughts and illustrations. Finally, we should not forget that a writer's language does not stand still any more than does any living language. We see from the example of all profane authors that their language changes over a period of time. When we take these things into consideration, the particularities referred to will not be the cause of offense but be regarded as very natural. If a pseudo-author had written these letters, he would surely have taken great pains to imitate the language of the encyclicals. Concerning the language of the pastoral epistles, Schat Peterson correctly observes: "In general there is nothing in the language of these letters which does not find its adequate solution in the supposition that they stem from about the same time and belong to the last group of Paul's letters" (*Introduction* I.552).

III. The False Doctrine Dealt With in the Pastoral Epistles.

The first question that must be addressed is the question of whether or not these letters deal with one or more kinds of heretics. Credner, in his *Introduction to the New Testament*, finds that there are four distinct kinds. He contends for the proposition that the heretics mentioned in the letter to Titus are non-Christians, Jews, or more closely described as Essenes, while those spoken of in the letters to Timothy are apostate Christians. These he separates into **present** and **future** heretics. Thiersch finds three groups of heretics, namely, (1) Judaizers, that is to say, judaistic teachers of the law who were strongly committed to pharisaism; (2) spiritualistic gnostics who had suffered shipwreck of the faith; (3) soothsayers or sorcerers, conjurers. Thiersch assumes that we are confronted with the first group in the letter to Titus and in isolated places in 1 Timothy, the second group in 1 and 2 Timothy and the third in 2 Timothy 3. But Huther, Weisinger, and especially Mangold (*Die Irrlehre des Pastoralbriefe*) have shown that the heresy dealt with is in essence the same in all three epistles. All the false teachings belong to the same category and point in the same direction. There is only this difference, that some seem to have gone farther on the route they have entered upon than have others (e. g., Hymenaeus and Philetus). In support of a division of the false teachers into separate categories, proof has been advanced from the expression *μάλιστα οἱ ἐκ τῆς περιτομῆς* ("especially those of the circumcision," Tit. 1:10). But this

expression by no means says that these οὐ ἐκ περιτομῆς were yet completely restricted to Judaism (Cf. Acts 11:2; Gal. 2:12). Furthermore, it should be noted that the word μάλιστα ("especially") does not set up an essential difference among the heretics. The word simply says that there were also among them some who were not of the circumcision. In 1 Tim. 4:1ff and 2 Tim. 3:2f, reference is made to future heretics, but it is not said that they would essentially be any different than the present heretics. With reference to soothsayers (orig. *goeterne*), it is obvious that the heretics in 2 Timothy 3 are not distinguished in any way from the current ones. All are ensnared in the same error. All bear the same characteristic marks. The polemics are not used against different heretical principles, but against one and the same heresy.

But the next question that will arise will be: "Which heresy is dealt with in these letters?" We would be carried too far afield to make a closer examination of the many views which have come up in this matter. From the letters themselves, we shall attempt to come to an understanding of the substance of the matter. But it must here be kept in mind that a detailed description of the heresy is not to be found in the letters. This was not necessary. Timothy and Titus were acquainted with it, for in their ministry they had often come face to face with it. Therefore, a detailed characterization would be superfluous for them. We cannot expect to find more than sketches of the full picture. It is true, as Bugge says, that "this circumstance has the consequence that there may arise doubts or a lack of certainty about isolated instances when one attempts to give a comprehensive picture of the heretics referred to in the pastoral epistles. Nevertheless, the references given in the letters are, at any rate, complete and definite enough to permit the leading features of the picture to stand out in clarity" (*Introduction* II.382).

1. Heresies' Spokesmen.

In 1 Tim. 1:7, we are told that the heretics wish to be teachers of the law. According to the context, the law which they desire to teach is the law of Moses; for in the following verse Paul says: "But we know that the law is good." With this we compare Tit. 1:10,14. From the expression in verse 10 ("especially those of the circumcision") we learn two things: (1) that among the heretics there were those who were circumcised,

and (2) that there were those who were not. Nothing more is said of them with reference to numerical strength. In verse 13 Paul instructs Titus to rebuke them sharply that they may be sound in the faith, not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men (14). The fables are spoken of in other places. Thus, in 1 Tim. 1:4, they are spoken of in connection with "genealogies." In 1 Tim. 4:7 they are called "profane and old wives' fables" (Cf. also 2 Tim. 4:4). Titus is admonished to avoid foolish disputations, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law (Tit. 3:9). In no place are these fables and contentions spoken of as Gentile. We surely do not become guilty of too great boldness if, from these passages, we draw the conclusion that the heretics were for the most part former Jews with a sprinkling of a few Gentiles. From 1 Tim. 1:6,19 and 6:10 we learn that these false teachers wanted to have an outward connection with the Christian church. Otherwise they would not have constituted such a great danger for the congregations. Also in the NT, polemics, for the most part, are carried on against such false teachers who, under the cover of Christianity, sought to destroy the true faith. Expressions such as we read in 1 Tim. 1:3 and Tit. 1:11 would be meaningless if the false teachers came from the outside. 1 Tim. 1:20 shows us that certain leaders were placed under discipline.

2. The Essence of the False Doctrine.

Paul writes to Timothy: "O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding profane and vain babbling, and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge" (1 Tim. 6:20). Here the error is described as knowledge, falsely so called ($\psi\epsilon\upsilon\delta\acute{\omega}\nu\upsilon\mu\omicron\varsigma\ \gamma\nu\tilde{\omega}\sigma\iota\varsigma$). Its spokesmen pride themselves on having a higher knowledge, a *gnosis*, a knowing, which surpasses the common man's perspective. In the second letter (2:14), Timothy is charged before the Lord not to strive about words. In verse 16 he is told to disassociate himself from profane and loose talk, to shun ignorant disputes which generate strife. In Tit. 1:10 it is stated that false teachers engage in idle talk, and in 3:9 their activity is spoken of as involving them in foolish disputations, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law. In 1 Tim. 6:4 reference is made to those who are obsessed with disputes and arguments over words.

From all these passages it appears that the false teachers were seeking to attain to a higher *gnosis* with the help of profound speculations. But because the subject matter had the effect of becoming so confining, it degenerated into a fantasy which generated disputes. The musings which occupied their minds are described in 1 Timothy 4 as fables and genealogies. Truly, the genealogies are not set forth with any detail. But if we compare them with the letter to the Colossians, where an error is mentioned which in many respects bears the same marks as the one in the pastoral letters (Cf. esp. Col. 2:18), where the discussion points to the worship of angels, then we will not go far wrong when we suggest that their speculations concerned the spirit world and its genealogies or descendancies and arrangements. Irenaeus and Tertullian in their day favored this interpretation. Indeed, Th. Zahn insists that one can under no circumstances refer the genealogies to gnostic series of aeons, since nothing worse is said of them than that they were "endless" (1 Tim. 1:4). But this view indeed shows that there can be no thought here of an earthly genealogical table. These could be extensive but not "endless." The descent and arrangements of the spirits is something that could be spun out endlessly. By the very nature of the case, there could be no boundaries. It is also well worth mentioning that Paul, in the pastoral epistles, most emphatically stresses the indivisible and incomprehensible nature of God. It must have been an obsession with the aforementioned false teachers to concern themselves with genealogies. In occupying themselves with the spirit world, the apostate heretical Jews would find many passages in the OT as well as in Jewish tradition which they would use to their advantage, impregnating them with the elements of oriental theosophy.

We have heard that the heretics desired to be teachers of the law (Cf. 1 Tim. 1:7). This leads us to another phase of the error. Some teachers of the law held forth the letter of the law, insisting upon a strict observance of the outward commandments, some of which they had set up themselves (Cf. Tit. 1:14). How they emerged with their self-made laws is shown clearly enough in Tit. 1:15, where stress is laid upon the truth that all things are pure to the pure, and in 1 Tim. 4:3, where reference is made to those who forbid marriage and command abstinence from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving. In verse 8 it is emphatically stated that bodily

exercise profits little, but godliness is profitable for all things. Here the false teaching presents us with a false asceticism. The body must be held in bondage and chastened. Therefore, not only were certain kinds of food forbidden, but marriage was even branded as being unclean. This manifestly has its roots in the false *gnosis* and its obsession with the spirit world. Their asceticism was to provide the way to a higher knowledge and to God. Through the mortification of the flesh the spirit must be set free and thus be prepared to plumb the mysteries and find access to God. The material, of course, was evil. It was the source of every disorderly desire, of every sinful lust. God and the *pneuma* were free of the material. Therefore, they were free from every passion. For this reason it follows that the full freedom can only become the possession of the spiritual beings. Thus the freeing of the spirit from all the baser elements is the big liberation, and some of them went so far in their spiritualism that they denied the reality of the resurrection (Cf. 2 Tim. 2:18). One might expect that the spokesmen for the spiritual would be able to tear themselves loose from the sensual, but, as is so often the case, the external things came to the surface. Theory and practice are two different things. A number of passages show us that the false teachers were selfish, greedy, quarrelsome people (Cf. 1 Tim. 6:5; 2 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:11; 3:9).

But who should not be able to detect the erroneous tendency in its first beginnings, a tendency against which Paul warns in the first letter to the Corinthians? But doesn't the apostle in his farewell address to the Ephesian elders express his serious fear that the fatal error might enter the Christian congregation? Indeed, we are confronted with the same heresy in the letter to the Colossians, except for the fact that now it is further developed and is mixed with heathen elements. This has taken place in this way that the doctrine of angels now has assumed an emanating characteristic, and the contrasts between the spirit and matter have been spanned (orig. "er blevet mere spaendt").

Although this peculiar heresy made good headway between the writing of the letter to the Colossians and the pastoral epistles, yet it had not grown to the extent reached in the

second century. These are only sprouts of the tree which in the second century gathered under its broad shade the whole historically developed gnosticism with all its branches, such as Valentinism, Satanism, Marcionism, Carpocratism, Ophiolatry (orig. "Ofitisme"). This also agrees with Hegesippus, as cited by Eusebius (Cf. *Eccl. History* III.32). Here it is stated that the false *gnosis* came out into the open after all of the apostles had expired. We do well, then, carefully to distinguish between the false *gnosis* revealed in the pastoral epistles and the gnosticism which we have learned to know from church history records of the second century. One may say that the basis for the heresy spoken of in the pastoral letters is a Jewish Christianity distorted by heathen speculations. The Jewish element is still the predominant one, while the heathen element came to the foreground in the second century. It was rather rare for second-century gnosticism to seek proof from the Mosaic law. The teachings of Marcion and Valentine were not Jewish fables, not μάχαλ νομικάλ. As Godet says, they were opposed to anything that smacked of Judaism. The word "genealogies" did not belong to the vocabulary of second-century gnosticism. But here the false teachers set themselves up as teachers of the law. The developing gnosticism had dualism as basis. But these ascetic precepts of the heretics seem to be tied in with the added distinction between the clean and unclean of the Mosaic law. When Bugge attributes the strong, ascetic element to heathendom's contribution to the system, this is hardly true. Indeed, already now the error indicates a contrast between spirit and matter in a false, spiritualistic way, but real dualism was not now embraced. At the very best, one can attribute to it a tendency which points forward to dualism. It has also been said that second-century gnosticism drew a distinction between demiurge and the highest God, but such a distinction is foreign to the heresy dealt with in the pastoral epistles. And when Paul characterizes the error as old wives' tales, empty and profane talk, foolish contentions, disputes about words, etc., then this shows that the false teaching had not departed as far from the truth as had the gnosticism of the second century. The latter could never have been thus characterized, for it was in much greater conflict with the truth. Besides, as we have already indicated, the second-century gnosticism was set into a system; but here the situation was, as it has been described: "*keimarlige Anfaenge zu ganz verschiedenen Spekulationen, ein gaehrendes Untereinander von Elementen und Ansaetzen.*"

IV. Date of Composition.

First Timothy 1:3 teaches us that this letter was written in connection with a trip to Macedonia. Second Timothy, according to its own words, was written during the apostle's imprisonment in Rome (Cf. 1 Tim. 1:8,16,17; 2:9; 4:16). Timothy was in Ephesus at this time, or at least somewhere in Asia Minor (Cf. 2 Tim. 1:15,18; 4:19). The letter to Titus must have been written some time after Paul's visit to the island of Crete (Cf. Tit. 1:5). The question now arises: "Does this situation fit into the framework of the book of Acts, and, if so, where?" We will have to consider each letter separately in carrying on this investigation.

A. 1 Timothy.

The well-known Wieseler claims that the situation described in 1 Tim. 1:3 points to the time period of Acts 19, and that, therefore, the letter likely was written during the apostle's long stay in Ephesus in the years 55-57. There is some reason to believe that Paul took a trip to Europe during his stay in Ephesus, a trip not mentioned in the book of Acts. From the letter to the Corinthians one must conclude that Paul went to Corinth one more time than is recorded in the book of Acts. This trip must have occurred during his stay in Ephesus. This presumably was an excursion trip and therefore short. Luke does not speak of this trip in Acts, even as he does not mention Paul's stay in Arabia, either. Certainly the apostle in his farewell message to the elders from Ephesus on the shore of Miletus (Acts 20:31) said that for three years he did not cease to warn everyone night and day. To conclude from this that Paul could not have made a short trip to Corinth is just as unjustified as to conclude that Paul did not sleep during those three years.

Wieseler is of the opinion that it was this trip that was pointed to in 1 Tim. 1:3. With a quick look one might conclude that this fits in well. From 1 Tim. 3:14 we learn that, at the time of writing, Paul expected to return shortly—that the trip he contemplated would be a quick visit. But, as plausible as this might seem at first, closer study will show that this could not be the trip alluded to by Wieseler. In his book, *Kronologie des Ap. Zeitalters*, he sets forth the chronological

sequence much as follows: After Paul had labored for over two years in Ephesus, he took a trip through Macedonia to Corinth. Timothy remained, and Paul writes to him from Macedonia. Titus accompanied Paul and, together with him, went from Corinth to Crete, where Paul left Titus. He now returned to Ephesus and from there wrote to Titus. Thereupon he sent Timothy to Macedonia with instructions that he should proceed to Corinth. Shortly thereafter he wrote his first letter to the Corinthians. According to Wieseler's hypothesis, both 1 Timothy and Titus were written before 1 Corinthians. According to this view, there would be only three letters written by Paul older than 1 Timothy, namely, the two letters to the Thessalonians and the letter to the Galatians. According to Wieseler, 2 Timothy was written in the year 66, during Paul's imprisonment in Rome. There would then be about a ten-year interval between 1 Timothy and Titus, on the one hand, and 2 Timothy on the other. But, if there were nothing else opposing Wieseler's hypothesis, these ten years would overthrow it. The pastoral letters are so interrelated as to content and form that it would be impossible to assume that so many years separated them. Furthermore, as we have heard, the pastoral epistles differ not a little from the other Pauline letters as to the thought process, linguistics, etc.

Other interpreters take the view that 1 Tim. 1:3 points to Paul's journey from Ephesus after his visit there in the spring of 57. In Acts 20:1 we read that Paul at that time went to Macedonia. But this supposition can be defended even less than Wieseler's hypothesis. In 1 Timothy, Timothy receives the instruction to remain in Ephesus and contend against the false doctrine which had gained some headway in the congregations and seemed to be very threatening. But Acts 19 is completely silent about the circumstances prevailing in Ephesus at this time. Neither does Luke say anything about the false doctrine in Galatia or about the situation in Corinth. But the truth is that Luke not only is silent about the situation in Ephesus, as described in 1 Timothy, but the historical sequence rules it out as well. In Acts 20:29 Paul prophesies that after his departure savage wolves would come in, not sparing the flock. But this declaration by Paul comes later than the trip mentioned in Acts 20:1. From this fact it follows that the trip mentioned in 1 Tim. 1:3 and the trip alluded to in Acts 20:1 cannot possibly be identical. Then from 1 Tim. 3:14 and 4:13 we learn that

Paul, at the time of the writing of his letter, expected to return shortly. But he could not have expressed such a hope at the time when he set out on the journey to Macedonia after a stay in Ephesus. That trip was of such a nature that he could not expect to be free to return so soon (Cf. 1 Cor. 16:6,7 and Acts 20:3). He remained in Corinth for three months, and on his return from Greece he sailed past Ephesus so that he would not have to spend time there (Cf. Acts 20:16). He was hurrying to be at Jerusalem.

Arguing against the identification of Acts 20:1 with 1 Tim. 1:3 is the circumstance that Timothy was with Paul when he wrote his letter to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 1:1), and, according to Acts 20:4ff, Timothy accompanied Paul from Corinth to Philippi. But in 1 Timothy he is asked to stay in Ephesus.

Besides, the first letter to Timothy must have been written after the letter to the Ephesians, for there is no trace in this letter to indicate that heresies had developed and spread in the Ephesian congregations as was shown in the first letter to Timothy. The letter to the Ephesians contains very little polemics. One can well understand that the apostle has false prophets in mind in his farewell address at Miletus and likewise in his polemics contained in the letter to the Colossians, but this does not appear in the letter to the Ephesians. Rather, he seeks to impress upon the readers certain truths which would serve as a protection against the errors dealt with in Colossians and the pastoral epistles. Is it reasonable, then, to believe that 1 Timothy was written some time before the letter to the Ephesians? No, 1 Timothy could not have been written before Ephesians and Colossians. The heresies specified both in 2 Timothy, as well as in 1 Timothy, manifestly were further developed than in Colosse. The content, therefore, makes it indisputably certain that 1 Timothy must have been written sometime after the letter to the Colossians. Besides, if Acts 20 deals with a time previous to the heresies, must it not be much more the case with Acts 19? A number of facts can be advanced to show that 1 Timothy has no place in Acts 19 and 20.

Before we leave this letter, it must be mentioned that a couple of learned men, Superintendent Otto and Koelling, have translated 1 Tim. 1:3 in such manner as to indicate the very opposite of what one would normally gather from it. Otto trans-

lates: "As I in Ephesus commanded you to hold fast when you proceeded to Macedonia." He takes προσμεῖναι as an absolute and connects ἐν Ἐφέσῳ with παρεκάλεσά and ἵνα is for him the elliptical ἵνα with the imperfect. That would mean that Paul is the one who remains in Ephesus and Timothy the one who proceeded to Macedonia, and the letter is given to Timothy on the journey. The heretics, then, would not be located in Ephesus but in Corinth, where they were to be opposed. Then it is further maintained that the false doctrine dealt with in 1 Timothy is the same as in 1 Corinthians. But 1 Corinthians speaks not so much about sin in doctrine as sin in life. Surely there were those who denied the resurrection of the dead, but, by and large, the Corinthian congregation was afflicted more with vice than with false doctrine. The linguistic errors of these men will be dealt with in the exegesis.

B. Titus.

According to chronological sequence, this letter finds its place between 1 and 2 Timothy. Therefore, we are considering it here as we try to determine if the writing of this letter may be fitted into the book of Acts. We may say at once that this is just as impossible as it was with 1 Timothy. Much of what has been said in regard to 1 Timothy applies also here. Besides, the letter to Titus shows that he was left in Crete to continue the mission work initiated by Paul but carried on by him for a comparatively short time. But the book of Acts and all the other epistles of Paul are silent concerning this missionary journey. It is impossible to include it with the journeys from Ephesus to Corinth as Wieseler maintains. It would not, then, have been such a quick trip. Besides, a mission trip to a new location would be much too important to be omitted by Luke in his historical work if he, indeed, had known about it when he wrote, and, furthermore, it would not be in harmony with the plan in Acts to leave it out. Acts sets out to show how the preaching of the gospel spread from the Jews to the Gentiles. But Crete was largely populated by Gentiles.

Another consideration—Tit. 3:12 shows that Titus was to remain in Crete until Artemas and Tychicus came, and then he should meet with the apostle in Nicopolis, where he had decided to spend the winter. It has, indeed, been correctly said that Paul could not have spent the winter in a heretofore unknown

place. But as true as this might be, one may surely surmise that he would not in advance make the decision to spend a long period of time in a place which he had never seen before and where there were no people with whom he was acquainted (Cf. Zahn, *Einleitung* I.433).

Other attempts to place the letter to Titus in the book of Acts, which we do not consider worth taking the trouble to include, can be found in Pastor S. Sondresen's article in *Teol. Tidsskrift*, 1904, 150ff.

C. 2 Timothy.

Least of all is it possible to find a place for this letter within the framework of the book of Acts. Attention is called to the fact that Paul wrote 2 Timothy during his imprisonment in Rome where he was allowed to receive visitors and to write letters as he freely did when he wrote the letters to the Ephesians, Colossians, and to Philemon. Besides, in 2 Timothy he speaks of certain co-workers who are named also in the aforementioned letters: Luke, Demas, Mark, Tychicus (Cf. 2 Tim. 4:10-12 with Philem. 24; Col. 4:7,10,14). It has therefore been assessed that these letters were written about the same time during the first imprisonment in Rome with an interval of time separating them. For Col. 1:1 indicates that Timothy was with him but that he was absent when 2 Timothy was written; that Col. 4:10 speaks of Mark as being present but about to leave, while 2 Tim. 4:11 indicates his presence in Asia; that in Col. 4:14 the apostle brings greetings from Demas, while in 2 Tim. 4:10 he complains that Demas has forsaken him. If 2 Timothy was written during Paul's first imprisonment in Rome, it would have had to be during the very first part of it or the last. But it could not have been written during the first part, for then it would have preceded the letters to Ephesus and Colosse. Against this supposition one can cite the conditions mentioned in 2 Tim. 4:6ff, and especially verse 16, in agreement with the information given in Acts and the other four letters written during this imprisonment. Of course, all of this would harmonize if we date 2 Timothy in the last part of the imprisonment. But this solution runs into a number of difficulties and cannot, therefore, be accepted. Paul's trip to Rome, according to 2 Timothy, cannot be identified with the trip from Caesarea to Rome as presented in the book of Acts. This

is shown from the following:

(1) In 2 Tim. 4:13 Paul asks Timothy to bring certain possessions which he had left with Carpus in Troas. But, according to Acts, Paul did not pass by Troas on his way to Rome, and it would be most unnatural to think that he had left these things in Troas from some earlier trip which would have had to be his fifth trip to Jerusalem in 58, five years earlier. Some have tried to solve the problem by saying that the possessions had been left with Carpus for his use, but this would have called for another word than ἀπέλιπον. Besides, it wouldn't make much sense for Paul to write so insistently for the return of a cloak that Carpus would now have used for five years!

(2) 2 Tim. 4:20 says that Erastus stayed in Corinth. But, according to the book of Acts, Paul did not come to Corinth on his trip from Asia Minor to Rome.

(3) 2 Tim. 4:20 also records that Trophimus had been left in Miletus, sick. But Paul did not come to Miletus during his trip of deportation. This must have taken place on his trip to Jerusalem as recorded in Acts 21. But in verse 29 we are informed that Trophimus was with Paul in Jerusalem. Of what interest could there be for Timothy to hear that Trophimus had been sick a number of years back when he later had recovered and had joined the apostle? No, the truth must be that Trophimus was now sick and that the apostle feels alone and forsaken. Sure enough, people have sought to solve this difficulty with Miletus in two quite different ways. There are interpreters who explain Acts 27:2-6 thus: Trophimus was with Paul on board the ship of Adramyttium from Caesarea and on. On the way he became sick and, while Paul in Myra continued his journey in a second ship, Trophimus was left in the first ship to be brought to Miletus. Although Paul himself did not go to Miletus, he could still say that he left Trophimus there, inasmuch as he left Trophimus with the orders that he be brought to Miletus. About this explanation it must be said that it does not win any merit for being a natural one. If everything else occurred as related, one might, in case of great need, accept it, but it is not reasonable. One easily gets another view of the matter if one reads the account without any commentary. Then there are those, for example, Bahnsen and Knoke, who would brush aside

the difficulty by considering the word Μελητω as a scribe's error for Μελήτω (Malta). But with an arbitrary changing of the text one can prove most anything.

The conclusion to which an unbiased interpretation must come is that 2 Timothy does not fit into the framework of Acts. We are forced to the conclusion that Paul made a trip to the Orient after the one spoken of in Acts 27 and 28, and that it was on this trip that all those events took place which are narrated in the pastoral epistles, for which also we cannot find a place in Acts. The pastoral letters prove that Paul had a period of activity not mentioned in Acts. Does this make it possible for us to conclude that Paul had been freed from his first Roman imprisonment, or at least that it was likely? We must be satisfied with the latter, and to that question we can respond with an unqualified yes. The first indication of this possibility is given in the book of Acts itself. Luke closes his book by saying that Paul lived two whole years in his own rented house in Rome, during which time he preached the kingdom of God and the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, no one forbidding him (Acts 28:30-31). Since Luke emphasized so strongly "two full years," there must have been a change taking place after this; otherwise he would not have expressed himself as he did. And one may assume that Luke would not have omitted a notice of Paul's death if such a notice had belonged to the historical narrative at the time when he wrote his book. Besides, that event was much too important to be passed over. But one might ask why Luke does not tell of Paul's release from prison and his subsequent activity. To this the answer may be given that this does not belong to the plan of the book. Besides, it is also possible that Luke wrote Acts shortly after Paul's release from the first Roman captivity.

But it is not only the book of Acts that points in this direction regarding Paul's release. A number of letters written during the first captivity give a similar indication. Paul had for a long time desired to extend missionary activity to the West, to Spain (Rom. 15:28). It is as if he could not think of his activity as being fulfilled before he had encircled all the lands by the Mediterranean Sea. In accord with this, we see from the letters written during the captivity that he was more and more convinced that his work was not yet concluded. In the letter to Philemon he expresses the hope that he may be free

to visit the East again (Philem. 22). A little later he writes to the congregation in Philippi, in which letter his hope has turned into certainty (Cf. 1:25; 2:24). Indeed, he does not only say that he is certain that he will be alive, but that he has his certainty in the Lord, which is the greatest certainty a Christian can have. It is not a matter that is based on loose guessing. He knows that his life will not come to an end during this imprisonment. How he had arrived at this certainty we don't need to speculate, nor does the apostle tell us. He simply states that he has this certainty. And the certainty here expressed by Paul is attested to by sources outside of the NT.

Clement of Rome was a somewhat younger contemporary of Paul and lived at a time when tradition had no opportunity as yet to corrupt the truth. Some have claimed that this is the same Clement mentioned by Paul in Phil. 4:3. He died in Emperor Trajan's third year of rule, 101. He writes in his first letter to the Corinthians, dated 96, "Let us consider the holy apostles. For the sake of unrighteous malice Peter endured not just one or two but many sufferings until at last he suffered the death of a martyr and entered the home of glory which awaited him. And for similar malicious reasons Paul received the reward of patience after having seven times been chained, beaten and stoned. He preached both in the East and the West and received a praise of glory for his faith (κῆρυξ γενόμενος ἐν τῇ ἀνατολῇ καὶ ἐν τῇ δύσει). After he had taught righteousness to the whole world and had reached the borders of the West (δικαιοσύνην διδάξας ὅλον τὸν κόσμον καὶ ἐπὶ τὸ τέρμα τῆς δύσεως ἐλθών) and had testified before (perhaps more correctly: suffered martyrdom under) princes, he departed this life and became the greatest example of patience." Wieseler interprets "borders of the west" to mean Rome, monument of the West, the most remarkable place in the West. But it must be remembered that Clement wrote from Rome and could not have designated that city in this way. Besides he wanted, of course, to set forth the wide range of Paul's activity. When he in the first place says "in the east and west" and then adds "the borders of the west," then, in his way of expressing it, he makes it more emphatic: in the West, yes, in the western-most part of the West. This must have been Spain. Its very geographic location points to this. Cabo Finis terre was the most western point in the known world at that time. And now we think of Rom. 15:28, where Paul names Spain as his ultimate goal.

The Muratorian Canon, which dates after the middle of the second century, speaks definitely of a Pauline journey to Spain. There we read: "*Acta autem omnium apostolarum sub uno libro scripta sunt. Lucas optime Theophile comprehendit, quia sub praesentia ejus singula gerebantur, sicuti et semote passionem Petri evidenter declarat, sed profectionem Pauli ab urbe ad Spaniam proficis centis.*" The connection may be obscure, but this much is certain that the author has assumed that Paul made a trip to Spain. But if this trip took place, then Paul must have been freed from the first Roman imprisonment, and his hope thus was fulfilled.

Eusebius writes in his *Church History* (II.22) that it was commonly accepted that the apostle was set free but that, in his second entrance to the same city, he suffered death as a martyr.

Such Old Testament interpreters as Jerome, Chrysostom and others are agreed in speaking of Paul's second Roman imprisonment. It has been objected that it was not Nero's practise toward Christians to do such a thing as to free Paul. But the apostle himself expresses the hope, yes, even the certainty, that this would take place, and he must have known much better than we what the conditions were. It will not do for anyone now to say that this was impossible when Paul himself has considered it possible, yes, likely. We shall also take note of the fact that Nero had not at this time stepped forth as a definite opponent of Christians. This first took place after the burning of Rome. Besides, it must not be forgotten that also the hearts of kings are but water-courses in the hand of God. If it was God's will that the apostle's work was not yet ended, then He could arrange things so that Paul would be set free.

There have been many and long discussions concerning the apostle's travel route after his release, whether he first traveled westward to Spain and thereafter to the Orient, or the reverse. Nothing definite can be said about this. The impression that one gets from the *sparse* sources of information left to us is that he traveled eastward from Rome. On his journey he came to Crete and, for the sake of the mission work there, he remained for some time, preaching the gospel in a number of cities (Tit. 1:5). Then, as he left the island, he permitted Titus to remain. His trip brought him to Ephesus, from which location he wrote the letter to Titus. He very likely did not stay long in

Ephesus, but when he now passed over to Macedonia (1 Tim. 1:3) he left his faithful co-worker, Timothy, to care for the congregations. The first letter to Timothy was sent from one or another place in Macedonia. The apostle's journey touched on Troas, where he left a number of possessions with Carpus (2 Tim. 4:13); Miletus, where he left Trophimus sick (2 Tim. 4:20); and Corinth (Ibid.). He spent the following winter in Nicopolis, presumably the Nicopolis located in Epirus across from Italy. In spring he passed over to Italy and Spain, where he was taken captive and brought to Rome, since the persecution of Christians by the heathen government had now spread out far and wide. From an ancient inscription, knowledge has been passed along that Spain equaled Nero's fury against the Christians. With his forth-coming martyrdom in view, Paul wrote from Rome the last of his letters, the second letter to Timothy. Shortly thereafter, toward the close of Nero's rule in the year 66 or 67, Paul was executed by means of the sword. Presumably because he was a Roman citizen, he was spared a more dishonorable death.

V. The Authenticity of the Pastoral Epistles.

Only in recent times have definite doubts been raised in the church concerning the authenticity of the pastoral epistles. It can be said that such doubts arose in the nineteenth century. Certainly, individual voices were raised in the more ancient times; but they were isolated and restricted to the heretics. Marcion did not include the pastoral letters in his canon, but this omission was due to his whole subjective approach. An apparent basis for such an omission might have been the fact that they were written to individual persons. The Assyrian Tatian—a later convert to gnosticism and called "Patriarch of the Encratites"—rejects the letters to Timothy, but he accepts the authenticity of the letter to Titus. Basilides rejects all of them. As far as we can tell, these are the only doubts than can be referred to from ancient times.

J. E. C. Schmidt, professor at Giesen, was the first one in modern times to raise objections to 1 Timothy. Schleiermacher became his most famous follower. In his letter to Gass, Berlin 1807, he speaks of "Paul's so-called first letter to Timothy." He acknowledges the authenticity of the other two letters. His reasons may be gathered into the following three groups:

(1) Language. It lacks the impression of authenticity. There are so many words and expressions foreign to Paul's vocabulary or imitations of those found in 2 Timothy and Titus. In Schleiermacher's view, 1 Timothy is the words of a plagiarist.

(2) Content and Mode of Presentation. Here the author shows himself up as one who is afflicted with "a weak uncertainty," a vacillating wavering, an anxious striving to imitate, a striving in which the writer does not succeed. He has not been able to record a single moment in the life of Paul in a striking manner or to carry through a single important idea worthy of the apostle.

(3) Time of Composition. It is not possible to find an appropriate time for the dating of this letter. He who has written this letter is characterized by Schleiermacher as a "*zwar gutmeinender aber sehr schwacher und ungruebter Mann.*"

A careful reading of the pastoral letters will show that their language, mode of presentation, spirit and tone are so closely related that, if the objections raised against one of them are legitimate, they would likewise be legitimate for all of them. If one of the letters should stand or fall as a result of the objections, then the others should suffer the same fate. Eichhorn takes that drastic step and declares them all as spurious, but he disagrees with Schleiermacher regarding his judgment of the writer. Eichhorn says that he displays a clarity, eloquence, and carefulness of production which is praiseworthy. Then along comes rationalism's great expert, de Wette, who walks in Eichhorn's footsteps. With a great spirit of superiority and in an outright blasphemous manner, he declares it had always been maintained among men of science that the three letters were not authentic. Baur and his school, the well-known Tuebingen school, naturally seek to disprove the authenticity of these letters. Baur himself makes the assertion that they were written in the second century by a contemporaneous (yet unknown) falsifier (orig. falsator). He bases his claim chiefly on the assumption that the pastoral letters represent second-century gnosticism or more exactly, Marcionism. This is basically a new period which has its inception with the Tuebingen school. While the attacks of the earlier critics were only negative, this school took both a negative as well as a positive approach. This school, with Baur

at the head, wishes to find a cause for this false literature in "the so-called NT." There is very little in the NT which this school accepts as authentic. The assertion regarding the pastoral letters is the claim that the author wrote our present 2 Timothy first. His purpose was to describe the contemporary heresy and to combat it. He sought to find a situation in the life of Paul which would make the letter interesting and credible. So he chose the captivity in Rome. He painted himself into this situation and then wrote the letter. Here the author was very fortunate. He knew a number of things regarding Paul's situation in Rome, namely, all that has to do with the historical has the mark of intelligence. In the meantime the goal of his letter was not attained, and therefore he writes two more letters, 1 Timothy and Titus.

But since 2 Timothy had been devoted to the apostle's imprisonment (and that shortly before his death), therefore it was not possible to date the writing of these letters from the time of the imprisonment. And so it became necessary for the author to give to the situations of 1 Timothy and Titus a date previous to the captivity. But here the author gets himself into trouble. He has constructed a situation in complete variance with the life history of Paul. From this proceed the unspeakable difficulties with the chronology of Paul's life. It was not possible for the author to write all the letters to the same person, and so Titus got one of them. Although these theories of the Tuebingen school are not that ancient, it must be said that they are entirely muted. No one dares to defend them anymore.

Besides the objections raised by Schleiermacher (which were sufficiently answered in par. II), the negative critics have taken the view that the letters were written in a post-apostolic time because of the hierarchical tendency in the apostolic letters, the churchly widowhood spoken of in 1 Tim. 5:9ff, and the organizational thoughts which find expression in the letters.

To make the hierarchical tendency more plausible they have tried to make out that Timothy and Titus were archbishops according to the pattern of later times. But this attempt has totally failed. There is no shred of a proof to show that these men occupied an office similar to the later office of archbishop. Their positions were definitely temporary. To one of them it is written: "Do your utmost to come before winter" (2 Tim.

4:21); and to the other: "Be diligent to come to me at Nicopolis" (Tit. 3:12). As Zahn says, "They had their authorization from the apostle, and as such they had no successors." Far from supporting the view that their office points to the second century, the very opposite is true. From the very beginning of the second century the bishops were placed over the presbyters. This is brought out already by Ignatius. In his letter to Polycarp, chapter 6, he distinguishes between bishops and presbyters and assigns to the former a higher position. Such a distinction is completely foreign to the pastoral letters. The office of bishop and presbyter are identical in the pastoral letters, as is the case in the NT, for that matter (Cf. 1 Tim. 3:1 with 5:17ff and Tit. 1:5 with v. 7), and this testifies most emphatically for the apostolic time-dating contrary to the hierarchy hypothesis.

The objection that has been made on the basis of 1 Tim. 5:9-16 will be met when this section is studied in detail.

That the thoughts expressed in the apostolic letters on matters of organization point to a post-apostolic time is a pure fable. That there is a good deal of discussion in these letters on the organization of congregations and the ecclesiastical office is surely true, but it must also be taken into consideration to whom the letters were addressed and the time when they were written. They were written to men in the office, shepherd letters, and it must be remembered that the congregations in and around Ephesus had existed for some time and were well organized. Besides, Paul knew now that the day of his departure was close at hand. Was it any wonder, then, that he showed concern for the welfare and leadership of his congregations when he was gone? But also in NT writings of an earlier date the ecclesiastical office and what is connected with it were discussed. A congregation without the office cannot subsist. Acts 14:23 speaks of elders (presbyters) who are to be appointed and installed with prayer and fasting; Acts 20:28 speaks of elders (presbyters) and overseers (bishops) who are to shepherd the church of God; 1 Thess. 5:12 speaks of those who are over the flock in the Lord; the letters to the Corinthians speak of various ministries (δουλοῦντάς) and of stewards. Eph. 4:11 relates that Christ has placed some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists and some pastors and teachers. Mention is made of deacons and deaconesses.

When all this is taken into consideration, it must be said that there is nothing in the pastoral epistles pointing to a post-apostolic dating, but rather a great deal which argues against it. This is something that the more recent negative critics have sensed and therefore have turned in another direction to weaken the authenticity of the letters. What they have come up with may be designated as the "*Patchwork Theory*." Credner begins with the idea that 2 Timothy is a fitting together of two authentic mini-notes, the one written during the first imprisonment and the other under the second. Others who supported this theory were Hausrath in 1865, Immer in his *Neutest. Theologie*, 1877, and Krenkel in 1869. Gran in his *Entwickelungs Geschichte*, 1870, maintains that Titus and Timothy, with the help of personal remembrances, have filled in the notes received from Paul. Some others of the modern school speak of Pauline remnants which have been expanded. Thus Hesse, Julicher and others.

As an answer to this "patchwork theory" (as it has fittingly been called) we have these striking statements from F. Godet:

Picture, if you will, the author taking in hand certain pieces of it to give it an apostolic genre, then casting into the wastebasket the remainder in which there could be important information, substituting his own material and then, without blinking an eye, giving the composite mixture the heading: "Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God."

Truly does not an acceptance of such an unreasonable procedure require more than the most daring harmonization that has ever been offered to the critics? And when the negative critics go so far, do they not admit their own helplessness, and should they not turn back to the pure and clear authenticity which they have deserted? (*Pauli Liv og Breve* 573)

The pastoral epistles have the testimony of the whole ancient orthodox church on their side.

VI. The Content of 1 Timothy.

The epistle falls most nearly into three main divisions:

- I. A basic introduction, 1:1-20.
 - A. Heading and greeting, 1:1-2.
 - B. An exhortation to oppose false teachers who were addicted to musings of fantasy, 1:3-4. In opposition to these Paul presents the sound doctrine
 1. regarding the law, 1:5-10.
 2. regarding the gospel or the free grace in Christ, with examples from his own experience as illustrations, 1:11-17.
 - C. Command to contend for the truth with Hymenaeus and Alexander as warning examples, 1:18-20.
- II. Directions concerning church gatherings and the persons who occupied offices in the congregations, 2:1-3:16.
 - A. The church prayer. This shall be for all even as the grace in Christ, whom Paul preached, embraces all, 2:1-7.
 - B. The persons leading the prayers in the public service, 2:8-13. These are to be men, 2:8, while the women are to adorn themselves with propriety and moderation, 2:9-10, and not usurp authority to attain public position in the church assembly, 2:10-12. For that their position of submission to the man would rule out public activity in the church is based
 1. on the record of creation.
 2. the fall into sin.
 3. and the call to motherhood, 2:13-15.
 - C. The ecclesiastical offices in the Church, 3:1-13.
 1. Bishops or presbyters, 3:1-7.
 2. Deacons and deaconesses, 3:8-11; with recapitulation, 3:12-13. The apostle's

commands and exhortations provide a proper emphasis by means of a gripping reference to the spiritual building which these are to serve, 3:14-16; and which lead the way to the following section -

III. 4:1-6:21. Over against the shining picture presented in 3:14-16, we have now presented to us

A. A dark picture of false teachers who are pictured as present and future heretics, 4:1-2. Their errors are characterized as a false asceticism, 4:3a, from which Timothy and the brethren are to separate themselves

1. by the instruction regarding
 - a. the intention of God's gifts, 4:3b,6.
 - b. the distinction between godliness and bodily exercise, 4:8; followed by affirmative references to the faithful saying and to the apostle's own example, 4:9-10.
2. by themselves being examples to the believers and by continuing steadfastly faithful in their office, 4:11-16.

B. An exhortation to Timothy regarding his ministry to individual members of the congregation, 5:1-6:2:

1. to the older and younger men and women, 5:1-2;
2. to the widows, 5:3-16;
3. to the presbyters (elders), 5:17-21;
4. to those who seek ecclesiastical offices, 5:22, with a warning to Timothy and reference to the revelation both of the good and the evil;
5. to servants, 6:1-2.

C. Closing exhortations and wishes, 6:3-21.

(To be continued)

In the reference to Romans 16:17-18 the King James Version (KJV) has been quoted because of the familiarity of usage in connection with the many studies and discussions produced by the controversy over the meaning and application of this passage.

In the above passage the KJV translates *skopein* with “mark.” To guard against a misunderstanding due to the concepts of “mark,” it would be better to translate the Greek word as: “keep on watching for . . . keep the eyes open for.”

As the born again of God, we are confronted with an on going struggle to control our flesh; a flesh that is so willing to be influenced by, and to be subject to, the unbelieving world about us; a flesh that is ever fascinated by the deceptions of the devil; a flesh that insists on countering, by way of reason, the faith that is in us.

In the daily struggle, our faith is on guard that we may walk faithful to the Way of the divine Word of Truth. At the occasion of this joint meeting, we are conscientiously concerned about walking faithful to Him and to His Word, especially His Words concerning church fellowship, admonition, and separation from an established fellowship. We have prayed that there will be evidence of divinely created doctrinal unity among us in these areas. That is a good desire, and a God-pleasing petition.

The way toward such restoration lies along the path of dealing Scripturally and forthrightly with those matters which are keeping us apart. Essentially, those matters are:

I

In the past the WELS, the ELS and the CLC have not spoken the same thing in the application of Romans 16: 17-18 to an erring sister church body; and

II

The WELS and the ELS have published teachings that are new and strange to the CLC, teachings that refer to the role of “admonition” in connection with the application of Romans 16:17-18 to an erring sister church body. In particular:

A. That “one may still have an unpaid debt of love to those whose fellowship we have cherished so many years”¹ although they have been marked as causers of divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine we have learned;

B. That the marking body has the sacred duty of love to attempt to “extricate innocent souls” from the marked body before avoiding them;²

C. That the debt of love has been satisfied when the admonishing body officially recognizes that “admonition would be of no further avail,” and that “an impasse has been reached”;³

D. That “when a person or church body with whom we are in fellowship causes divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which we have learned, we mark them immediately, then admonish, and if this proves fruitless, avoid them.”⁴

In the hope that we will once more speak the same thing (1 Cor. 1:10) concerning these controverted and divisive issues, we will make every effort to carefully and accurately restate our

convictions concerning them.

FELLOWSHIP — ADMONITION — SEPARATION

We herewith set forth that which we of the CLC believe, teach, and confess concerning the Scripture doctrines of Christian fellowship, admonition, and separation from those who claim to teach the Word, but in fact teach otherwise than God teaches in one or more doctrines.

FELLOWSHIP

Christian fellowship is at one and the same time vertical and horizontal, but not without specific order. Fellowship comes into being vertically from God to man through the work of the Holy Spirit. The fruit of that one-way vertical fellowship is a reciprocal vertical fellowship between God and the believer, as well as a perfect fellowship with all the saints.

Christian fellowship is a gift from God and a product of the Holy Spirit. By the Word from God the Holy Spirit effectively works faith in the hearts of the elect. That faith recognizes the eternal Father's love that reconciled the whole damned world unto Himself, forgiving sin and guilt through the sacrifice of His own Son, and imputing the perfect obedience of His Son to all sinners—a righteousness that avails before God and presents the sinner before the throne of God as a holy child, a joint-heir with Christ in the Kingdom.

Lost sinners, brought to the Christian faith worked by the Spirit, rejoice in the Father's love for them. They are free from the guilt and burden of sin, they have the victory over Satan and death, and they look forward to their welcome home, where they will abide in the family of God forever.

Until their day of homecoming, the believing children are earth-bound, flesh-bound, and are admonished to walk in faith, lest they lose it and suffer eternal death.

The Father's love abides with His children in His Word to them, and by that Word the Holy Spirit establishes them in a perfect fellowship that is both vertical and horizontal. It comes from the Father to His children, fills them with His love, and results in a vertical fellowship that returns in that love from man to God. It also results in a fellowship of love with all the children of God, the Church.

The Church, the *Una Sancta*, is that glorious fellowship of perfect unity: a unity that knows of no distinction between saints at home and saints on their way home; no distinction between Jew or Gentile, male or female, rich or poor, weak or strong, wise or simple, white or black—all alike are the joint-heirs with Christ of His kingdom, and are in a fellowship that passes all mortal ability to know the hearts that are included.

On earth, the believing children of God long for a tangible Christian fellowship. The Holy Spirit responds by creating a horizontal temporal fellowship made known to the believers through their agreement in faith, doctrine, and practice.

When such believers are thus joined, that precious visible fellowship will be used to strengthen, aid, admonish, direct, comfort, and encourage one another. It will serve them well as they shoulder the great commission given to them by their Savior, and faithfully bear witness to the love of God as they make their way homeward through the wilderness of this life. What a gift of His divine love—the vertical/horizontal fellowship of believers!

ADMONITION

In the context of Christian fellowship, admonition is another fruit of Spirit-worked faith and love. Divine examples of admonition are demonstrated by our heavenly Father. From the time of creation He has continued to admonish, because He cares, He loves, He is patient. He is long-suffering, for He would not have the sinner die. In love He warns, cautions, exhorts, reminds, urges, and informs His people in view of specific weaknesses, dangers, faults and errors.

The Scriptures themselves are sent by God by His Holy Spirit to be specific admonitions to all mankind for all time. "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). As the Father loves the world, He admonishes the world; as He loves His own, He admonishes His own.

The Lord Jesus in love admonished His parents (as a twelve-year-old in the temple), His disciples (follow Me . . .), His hearers (and He taught them saying . . .), and also His enemies, as is evident from the list of "Woes" in chapter twenty-three of Matthew.

The Apostle Paul in love wrote letter after letter of specific admonition to a number of congregations, admonishing them to admonish one another in love. John also admonished in his seven letters to the seven congregations of Asia Minor.

Man, by nature, is in constant need of admonition. He easily forgets, strays and rebels. He cooperates fully with his reason and flesh in loving self and in putting things above God and His Word.

It is the nature of our God's love to admonish His children lest they be lost; lest His children forget His Word, stray from the security mark He set, rebel against His truth and the Spirit's work, and lose the faith.

It is therefore the nature of the child of God that he, like his heavenly Father, also admonishes, even as he himself is in constant need of admonition from the Father's Word. In the horizontal visible fellowship there is an ongoing need for reciprocal admonition—so that especially in time of weakness, danger and the appearance of error the people of God may remember what the Lord said. Peter was saved from an end like that of Judas by remembering the words which the Lord spoke to him. Remembering, he repented, was comforted, was strengthened and restored. That is the objective to be accomplished through admonition.

Recall some of the specific directives given to us in the Word for application in our horizontal fellowship:

Matt. 28:19-20: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you . . ."

John 13:34-35: "A new command I give you: love one another. As I have loved you so you must [NO "MUST" IN THE GREEK -ED] love one another. All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another."

John 15:9,12: ". . . now remain in My love . . . Love each other as I have loved you."

Rom. 12:10: "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves."

Rom. 13:8: "Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another . . ."

Gal. 5:13: “You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.”

Eph. 4:2-3: “Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”

Phil. 2:3-4: “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

1 Thess. 4:9-10: “Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. And in fact, you do love all the brothers throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers, to do so more and more.”

1 John 4:20-21: “If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ yet hates his brother, he is a liar . . . whoever loves God must [NO “MUST” IN THE GREEK -ED] also love his brother.”

Matt. 18:15-19: (Here the Lord gives specific direction in dealing with a brother who sins against you, stressing the objective of winning over the brother. In connection with this instruction He makes reference to the use of the Keys.)

Rom. 15:13-14: “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. I myself am convinced,

my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another.”

Col. 3:12-17: “Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”

Col. 1:28: “We proclaim Him [Christ], admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.”

Tit. 3:9-10: “But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless. Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him. You may be sure that such a man is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.”)

SEPARATION

Alas, how sad and difficult it is for the members of a visible Christian fellowship to part company. Why would they do such a disturbing thing? The Father Himself so directed. Leaving nothing to hearsay or rumor, He directed His children to (*skopein*) keep on watching for, to keep their eyes open for those who openly teach otherwise than the Father’s Word teaches. “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid

them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple” (KJV, Rom.16:17-18).

Such errorists are no longer weak brethren who have misspoken, who have erred in not recalling what the Lord has said, who are willing to be corrected by the Word. They have become false teachers making propaganda for their falsehood. They have broken the horizontal fellowship line because they have missed the mark of the vertical Truth and are no longer speaking the same thing with their brethren. They are causing divisions and offenses that are contrary to the Word; they are deceiving the hearts of the simple.

Prior to the marking there will have been many or few admonitions. Generally, the infiltration of error into a sister church body surfaces subtly. First in private; then a whisper; then a brief soft-spoken word in public; then stated openly here and there. If tolerated and not quickly uprooted, it boldly makes propaganda and teaches; then demands equal doctrinal status with the Word. During this period, sister church bodies as well as some of the membership from within the troubled body will find ample time and many occasions for concerned, fraternal, Scriptural admonition.

Scripture is clear: When causers of divisions and offenses have been identified (by their rejection of Scriptural correction and/or their ongoing teaching of error), they are to be avoided. The Lord does not require the subjective judgment that admonition would be of no further avail. He requires that His children objectively recognize those who are teaching contrary to the doctrine which they have learned.

To choose to continue in a fellowship arrangement with such as have been identified as errorists, is to be unfaithful to the Father’s directive and endangers the faithful: “For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.” God teaches His children that there is a time to recognize that the horizontal fellowship has been broken.

We need to recall that a breaking of the horizontal organizational fellowship does not in itself declare that the offenders have lost and broken their vertical fellowship with the Father. Salvation is by faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior. Unbelief damns. But the Lord does direct His children to walk in faithfulness to His Word—together with those of like confession, separate from those who differ.

A horizontal visible fellowship thrives in a complete and dedicated faithfulness to the Father’s Word; unfaithfulness to His Word is a cancer that can lead to mortal illness, and it is highly contagious.

The flesh is not happy about the Father’s instruction to “mark” and to “avoid” those who teach otherwise than He has taught. The flesh begs to at least edit the directive and make it more reasonable and palatable. In order to protect the simple, our Father added the “P.S.” of Romans 16:18. We dare not believe that the Father has given us contradictory directives for the same situation so that we are required to determine which is the better course of action.

Against this dangerous inclination of the flesh, the believer’s child-like faith will simply take God at His Word. The Word will give strength to exercise control over the flesh and do the Father’s bidding.

“Marking and avoiding” according to our Father’s word not only protects His fragile children from the leaven of error, but at the same time is a strong testimony to those being marked and avoided. It is a witness to the former brethren that something is seriously wrong; that something has broken the unity of confession and fellowship. That “something” is, in fact, error—a teaching otherwise than God’s Word teaches. The avoiding itself is a clear and powerful admonition; it calls for a return of the false teaching body to the full truth of the Father’s revealed will. Through this truth alone, the precious gift of the Spirit,

the horizontal fellowship, is restored.

LORD, RENEW THIS PRECIOUS GIFT AMONG US ALSO! AMEN.

Notes

¹ WELS, 1955 *Post Convention News Bulletin*.

² *Minutes*, joint meeting of the WELS and the CLC, 1972.

³ WELS, 1959 *Proceedings*.

⁴ ELS, *Lutheran Synod Quarterly*, June 1962.

P A N O R A M A

Another Attempt to Clarify . . .

John Lau

We have made numerous attempts in the pages of the Journal of Theology to clarify our church's position relative to the doctrine of church fellowship, particularly the scriptural in junctions that come to bear on the problem of withholding fellowship from some individual or group with whom one has been in fellowship. The most recent extensive attempt was in the June 1982 issue, in an article entitled "An Open Letter to Students and Alumni of Northwestern College." (This article was later reprinted in a pamphlet entitled, "There is Still a Difference," available from the CLC Book House.) At that time, the attempt at clarification was occasioned by a comment that had been printed in a publication called Northwestern Today . Speaking of the CLC, the comment was: "This group broke away from the Wisconsin Synod in the late 1950s during the controversy over fellowship with the Missouri Synod. These people claimed that the Wisconsin Synod didn't break fellow ship with LC-MS soon enough; and as a result they formed their own church body, the CLC."

Now, in spite of our previous attempts at clarification, we find the following in the "Turret of the Times" section on page 19 of the October 10, 1988, issue of The Christian News : "The CLC began when a group of pastors within the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Church, at a time when the WELS was still in fellowship with the LCMS, objected to the WELS's remaining a fellowship [sic] with the LCMS. Many still wonder why the CLC pastors did not return to the WELS when the WELS severed fellowship with the LCMS." We know that the editor of The Christian News reads our Journal of Theology . Witness, for example, the fact that the most recent issue of The Christian News (February 6, 1989) reprinted (without indicating the source, incidentally) a 14 1/2 page book review by Paul F. Nolting, published in our December 1988 issue. We really have tried very hard to make it clear to whoever will read and listen, that our continued separation from the WELS is based on a doctrinal difference, a difference that repeated meetings have failed to resolve. There was a time when all the synods which formerly belonged to the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference understood that when there is a doctrinal difference separating individuals or church bodies then it is not God- pleasing for them to exercise the practice of fellowship, on any level! (Cf. Brief Statement .)

It is probably not surprising that The Christian News describes our situation as it does. One would expect that the official organ of one of the participants in the recent WELS-ELS-CLC meeting, namely, The Northwestern Lutheran , would at least identify the differences that exist between our church bodies as doctrinal differences. However, a brief article entitled "CLC Convention Urges Discussions" in the October 1, 1988, issue declares:

The first formal meeting in 15 years was held between the CLC and the WELS last January in Eau Claire and the decision was to continue the meetings in an attempt to resolve the differences between the two bodies.

The CLC was organized in 1960 when a group of pastors broke away from the WELS, charging that the break with the Missouri Synod was being unscripturally delayed.

When the WELS held its Forty-second Biennial Convention in 1972, its adopted resolution summed up what the WELS representatives concluded after a meeting between CLC and WELS representatives that year, namely: ". . . be it resolved, a) That we express regret over the failure at that meeting to reach agreement on the doctrine under discussion." At that time WELS also recognized that it was a doctrinal disagreement that separated us.

It is on the basis of this mutual recognition on the part of the participants that we have been willing to hold discussions with representatives of the WELS and the ELS. Statements such as that in The Northwestern Lutheran do not help, but rather hinder, such discussions. For, as long as the members of the WELS are informed by their spokesmen that the members of the CLC are separated from them merely because the WELS did not terminate fellowship with the LCMS as soon as did the "group of pastors" who organized the CLC (as though congregations did not also take part!), there is very little hope, at least in the opinion of this writer, that subsequent meetings will resolve our doctrinal differences any more than have past meetings. If the suggested thesis/antithesis approach is utilized in any future meeting, perhaps it will have the beneficial effect of placing our divergent doctrines on church fellowship clearly and plainly before the eyes of all.

AALC First Convention

David Lau

We have from time to time reported on the beginnings of the new church body known as the American Association of Lutheran Churches, abbreviated AALC. In this issue we shall be giving a brief report on the First General Convention of the AALC, held in October 1988 at Emmaus Lutheran Church, Bloomington, Minnesota. Our sole source of information for this report is the December 1988 Evangel, the official newsletter of the AALC.

Most AALC congregations and pastors were once associated with church bodies that merged in January 1988 to form the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). An interesting account of how one such congregation in Metropolitan New York joined the AALC is included in the December Evangel. We are reminded of how our own church body began in the late 1950s and early 1960s through similar withdrawals and separations from much larger organizations.

AALC Presiding Pastor Duane Lindberg refers to the past year as "a time of suffering" for many, "a time of great change," a time "of cutting old roots, severing old ties and losing church buildings," "a year of truth" when "shepherds, at significant personal loss, have taken their stand on Jesus Christ and His to tally dependable Word." The AALC was organized so that

congregations and pastors would be able to continue their gospel work apart from the ELCA, which no longer teaches or even claims to teach that the Bible is the inerrant Word of God.

The December Evangel reports that there are now 75 member and affiliated congregations in the AALC, with an additional 50 congregations or so connected to the AALC in some way. It seems that there are congregations in all parts of the United States, from California to Florida and New York, with a high concentration of congregations in the midwest. The 1989 AALC budget proposal calls for a total of \$361,000 in revenues.

Of special interest to us is the decision of the AALC "to explore the possibility of a conservative

Lutheran conference." For this purpose invitations have been extended to several conservative Lutheran bodies; the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is mentioned as one of these. Two other church bodies officially extended greetings to the AALC: the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations (AFLC) and the Church of the Lutheran Brethren (CLB).

The Seminary Question

The most vigorous debate of the convention centered on the previous decision of the Joint Council of the AALC "to develop a Lutheran House of Studies for AALC students in conjunction with Fuller Theological Seminary" (as reported in the November 1988 Lutheran Spokesman , p. 7). In the words of the Evangel , "the Convention set the leadership straight." The Convention approved a resolution "to terminate the interim relationship with Fuller Seminary." The reason for this action was that some Fuller Seminary teachers hold "a weaker view of Scripture than that which the AALC confesses."

We commend the AALC for this action, for we also believe the Fuller position on the Bible is inadequate. But we hope that AALC members will soon begin to realize that, even if a seminary holds to the inerrancy of Scripture, there are other areas of doctrine that must be investigated before we can work together with them in the spiritual task of training future pastors. Our Lutheran confession, the Formula of Concord of

1577, speaks of agreement "in the doctrine and all its articles, also in the right use of the holy sacraments" (Article X, Thorough Declaration). Even if Fuller Seminary had a perfect confession on the inerrancy of Scripture, it would still be in error on many other doctrines. It is our contention that, if the AALC wants to become a truly confessional and orthodox church body, it will have to cut off its ties and associations with all kinds of organizations that tolerate various kinds of false teaching, not just those organizations that oppose inerrancy.

As an example of what we mean, read this brief report from the December Evangel : "In November, with the help of a grant from Lutheran Brotherhood, seven pastors and two lay people attended the 'How to Plant a Church' seminar conducted by the Fuller Institute for Evangelism and Church Growth in Anaheim, California." Why should confessional Lutherans seek to learn how to do church work from false teachers with the help of a pan-Lutheran fraternal organization that also supports the mission efforts of the ELCA? Certainly this cannot be the meaning of God's Word "avoid" in Romans 16:17.

Spreading the Gospel

The December Evangel mentions that a Lutheran parochial school in California has joined the AALC. We assume that such elementary schools are not prevalent in the AALC, but we certainly hope that AALC members will direct their attention to Christian schools and Christian education at every level, from preschool to seminary and beyond.

At the present time their chief educational goal is to establish their own AALC Seminary. Other goals include the formation of new congregations in many places in this country as well as spreading the gospel throughout the world. Twelve Circuit Riders were commissioned at this Convention to respond to calls for help from individuals and groups scattered throughout the country.

One sentence from the report on evangelism caught my eye as something we in the CLC can make use of, namely: "Because of the struggles that many people of the Church have experienced in recent years, it is imperative that we rise up above

these trials and refocus our efforts to reach out to our neighbors and friends with the glorious news of Jesus Christ."

We know that this is what we need to do in our own church body, lest we deserve the epithet of "God's frozen chosen" spoken of in the December Evangel . But this enthusiastic desire to spread the gospel must be coupled with an awareness of the dangers of cooperation with organizations that tolerate false teaching, lest we end up doing more harm than good.

In conclusion, we repeat a couple of paragraphs from the CLC Statement of Faith and Purpose that summarize our position:

4. We are indeed edified and heartened by every testimony, written or spoken, which truly confesses, teaches, preaches and glorifies the Gospel of Christ. But we reject and condemn the false ecumenism which would require us to make common cause in worship and church work with those who, while claiming the Christian name, or even the Lutheran name, publicly adhere to that which contradicts God's clear Word in whole or in part. We equally condemn separatism—that is, a schismatic withdrawal from others for a reason or purpose not in accord with God's revealed Will.

5. We do not deny, but joyfully acknowledge that the Lord knows His elect, even though some are unwitting captives in false-teaching churches where, by their membership, they are partaking of a confession of error and are subjected to grave spiritual danger. We pray that all who now truly believe may persevere in that faith to the end and thus obtain everlasting life.

PAIDEIA

From a Pastor's and Professor's Notebook

Roland A. Gurgel

V

Obadiah

A man of few words but a man of many thoughts was Obadiah. His book of prophecy occupies hardly a page in the Old Testament, but don't pass it by, for through Obadiah's pen the Lord opens up a world of comforting and insightful thought.

It is a book the historian cannot afford to overlook. It is a book the church's enemies should not ignore. It is a book the child of God will frequently use for comfort and direction in times of persecution.

The historian can profit from a careful study of the first nine verses of the book, for they give insight into the other wise often puzzling defeats or victories recorded in the pages of the world's history. Edom, a nation, a people, living to the south of Palestine, to the south of the Dead Sea area, prided it self on the impregnable nature of its country. In valleys and hills surrounded by high cliffs with but narrow entrances, the Edomites had their dwelling place. It took but a few men to guard and protect their homes and people. When the Lord announced through Obadiah that their day of destruction was coming, their reply was, "Who shall bring me down to the ground?" (3c).

"The day of the Lord" (15a) was near for them—a day in which their destruction would be complete and final (5-6). Nor would it take a strenuous effort on the part of the Lord to bring it about. Three things He would use to bring them down (even though they would set their nest in the stars, 4). The three things were: (1) turn their allies against them; (2) give foolish thoughts to their wise men; and (3) make cowards of their brave men.

The historian often ponders why nations with powerful armies, navies, resources, have gone down to defeat before seemingly insignificant foes. The answer: when the Lord determines "His day" for a heathen nation, nothing can halt the ushering in of that day. In Obadiah He gives us insight into why treaties are broken, why otherwise sage men give forth disastrous advice, why war heroes turn coward and run. It is His way of setting "the bounds of their [nations'] habitation" (Acts 17:26b). Apply the God-given insight to the defeat of Persian hordes by the handful of Athenians at Marathon, 490 BC; the defeat of the Moslem Moors at the Battle of Tours, AD 732; the destruction of the Spanish Armada, AD 1588; as well as other similar occurrences. For His purposes, the Lord said "so far and no farther," and to carry out His decree He uses such means as are revealed in the early verses of Obadiah as well as other means that He speaks of in other places in Scripture.

Not only the historian but the enemies of God's people can profit from a thorough study of God's words as found in the book of Obadiah. Obadiah writes at a time when Israel was feeling the hand of the Lord because of its waywardness (most likely in the days of Jehoram of Judah and not, as many would say, at the time of the Babylonian exile. Cf. 11-14 with 2 Chron. 21:16ff; Joel 3:8ff; and 2 Chron. 17:7ff). The Lord frequently used heathen peoples to bring Israel's attention back to Himself. (Recall the period of the judges, as well as later times in Israel's history.) Into such a situation the Edomites stepped; uninvited by the Lord they joined in "the violence against Jacob." Verses 10 through 14 give a vivid picture of Edom's involvement in that violence. It grew from an observing to a rejoicing, to an active participating in that violence. Edom, a people who were descendants of Esau, blood-relatives of Israel (called a brother to Jacob), should have been well aware of God's promises to Abraham and his descendants through Jacob, and yet here they revealed themselves as enemies of God's people.

It is one thing for the Lord to chastise His people out of love and concern for them; it is quite another thing for people in hatred to insert themselves into such a situation and seemingly take advantage of it for their own reasons. The Lord made it clear to Edom that the reason for their impending destruction as a nation was: "For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever" (10).

There is another bit of advice for the enemies of God's people to be found in these verses. The Lord calls attention to the fact that the very people Edom was attempting to destroy were the people through whom God would send the Seed of Abraham, the Messiah. That Messiah was the one hope for Edom as well as the rest of the world to escape "the day of the Lord" in its terrible, eternal disaster. From that very hill on which they sat, drinking in joy at the plight of Israel, would sound forth the message of deliverance (17). Edom should have considered the terrible mistake it was making in attempting to destroy God's people, for therein they were trying to destroy their only hope for eternal deliverance. Their attempt was in vain—God did preserve His people—the Savior was born—and from Mt. Zion goes forth the proclamation of life and salvation in Christ Jesus.

The advice of Obadiah to the enemies of the Church still stands. Don't try to destroy the people of God; don't try to silence their God-given message of sin and grace, for also therein lies their one hope for escaping the wrath to come in "the day of the Lord."

For the child of God, surrounded by those who would do him harm in one way or another, for the people of God, hemmed in by spiritual enemies who would make life miserable for them in many ways,

the book of Obadiah comes with marvelous comfort, assurance, and insight. The Lord is aware of what transpires. He knows what is taking place. He does not forsake His people. The Lord is capable of handling every situation with ease and with success for those who are His in Christ Jesus. The Lord can and will preserve His kingdom (21). Mt. Zion is a place of refuge (*Zufluchts Ort*) for God's people. For God's children, "the day of the Lord" is a day of escape and deliverance, not a day of destruction and wrath.

A few words are in place here regarding the expression, "the day of the Lord." Obadiah was probably the first to use that phrase. Later prophets continued to use it with a great deal of frequency. It has both a temporal and an eternal connotation. There was a day of temporal reckoning for Edom. Enemies came as the Lord had revealed and brought an end to their nation. There will also be a day of eternal reckoning (16), when God's enemies will be cast out forever. For those who oppose the Lord and His Messiah, His day is a terrible day, a day of wrath (Cf. Zeph. 1:14ff).

The expression, "the day of the Lord," should stand there as a firm reminder to the people of God that "vengeance is God's— He will repay." The children of God are to leave the matter of dealing with enemies in the Lord's hands. He has the power. He has the means. He has the know-how. He, also, has the mercy and patience to offer an escape from the wrath to come. (Indeed, the invitation was there for Edom in Obadiah's verses.) This latter thought is all-important for us who are still so easily caught up in the weaknesses of our flesh. We need to recall the words of David in 2 Sam. 24:14: "And David said unto God, I am in a great strait; let us fall now into the hands of the Lord; for his mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hand of man." As children of God we, as David, desire to place ourselves into His merciful and patient hands; should we not desire the same for those who would oppress us? We can well afford to heed the words of our God, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Rom. 12:19).

We have used many more words to develop and apply the thoughts presented by Obadiah than Obadiah used to express them in the first place. Truly, Obadiah was a prophet of few words but of many God-given comforting and revealing truths.

(To be continued)