

# THE EPISTLE

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## ***This Month's Cover***

In recognition of the Feast of the Presentation, February 2, our cover picture this month is *Presentation In the Temple* by Simon Vouet (1590-1649). It is oil on canvas, completed in 1640, and is displayed in the Louvre in Paris. It is about 12'11"x8'2" in size. It shows the Blessed Virgin Mary presenting the infant Jesus to a temple priest in accordance with the Law. Saint Joseph is on her right, behind her is the prophetess Saint Anna (Lk. 2:36ff), and on the priest's right is Saint Simeon (Lk. 2:25ff). The infant on the lower left probably represents Saint John the Baptist. The angels at the upper left bear a banner with the opening words of Saint Simeon's encomium, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace (*Nunc dimittis servum tuum, Domine, ... in pacem*)" (Lk. 2:29ff).

Simon Vouet was born in Paris in 1590. He received his rudimentary training from his father, Laurent, who was a successful albeit not great painter. His brother Aubin and his eventual grandson Ludovico Dorigny were also painters. He began as a portrait painter, and his outstanding talent soon brought recognition that took him to England and Venice, and in 1614 to Rome. He spent 14 years in Italy at the time that the Italian Baroque style of art was emerging. This is a style that uses exaggerated movement and clear, easily interpreted details to inject a feeling of excitement and drama into a painting or sculpture. Vouet received a commission from the King of France, and was supported by several Italian patrons, the most influential being the Barberini Family. He was an avid student, and displayed much of his learning in his paintings. His work reflects the lighting of Caravaggio, the color style and foreshortened perspective of Veronese, and the many unusual techniques of the Italian Mannerists and the

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proponents of the new Baroque style, to which he was strongly attracted. In 1627 he suddenly returned to France, where he introduced the Baroque style, which was received enthusiastically. Louis XIII commissioned paintings, tapestries, drawings and portraits from him, while at the same time he decorated chapels, galleries and palaces of the nobility. His most important student was Charles le Brun, the chief decorator of Versailles, who ungratefully blocked his admission to the Académie Royale in 1648. He also had many other students who went on to achieve international renown. A number of Vouet's decorative plans have been lost, but many are preserved in engravings by Claude Mellan and Michel Dorigny.

Simon Vouet died in Paris on June 30, 1649, aged 58.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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## ***A Word From the Editor***

It's over, and whether we like it or not we are now under a new governmental administration for at least the next four years. The current political emotional spectrum seems to span the range from blind rage to blind euphoria, but this is not really anything new in this country. The people who are saying that this was the nastiest political campaign ever do not know their history. There has never been a more vicious campaign than that of 1800, and 1804 wasn't much better. Both made that of 2016 look like a stroll in the park, and there were several in the 19th century that were almost as nasty as those. They were between two men who had been the best of friends for almost 30 years—John Adams and Thomas Jefferson—and whose friendship devolved into a bitter and sometimes hateful enmity over their political differences.

The reason I bring this up is that we can learn a powerful lesson from it. In 1811 Dr. Benjamin Rush, a friend of both, convinced each that the other was ready to reconcile their differences. They never met again, because in those days the distance between Massachusetts and Virginia was for two old men like being halfway around the world would be today.

Nonetheless, both being prolific letter writers, they wrote hundreds of letters back and forth over the next 15 years, and became dear friends again. Ironically, both died on the same day—July 4, 1826, the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, which they had both collaborated in writing. They were the last two alive who had signed that great document. Not knowing that Jefferson had died a few hours earlier, Adams' last words were, "Thomas Jefferson survives."

It is said that the hatred between those two previous friends was palpable, and to the day they died they never agreed politically—Adams was for a strong central government and minimal states' rights, and Jefferson stood in exactly the opposite camp—yet after they resumed their friendship they never again allowed these differences to get in its way. They loved their country and desired to support and strengthen it, and to them that was far more important than their political positions on how it should be governed.

Those who stand in different political camps today need to strive to do the same. Now is the time for unity against the common enemies of our country. This is more than a practical necessity, it is a moral and spiritual obligation. Rush served as a peacemaker between Jefferson and Adams. Is there any reason that we cannot do the same? We have an important stake in this, because anger destroys the soul. Pray for peace in your own life, and work for it in the lives of others.

*Father Rick Lorch*

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## ***Be Wordly Wise***

### ***Devilish Language***

There are many words in English that refer to the Evil One, including his original name, Lucifer. He was the first and most glorious of God's creations, and his name implied that. Lucifer means Light Bearer, and is the Latinization of the Hebrew *Heilel* (הִילֵל), "Light *or* Shining One of God" (Is. 14:12). The Septuagint (Greek Old Testament) translated this

as *Heōsphoros* (Ἑωσφορος), “Bringer of Dawn,” often translated “Morning Star.” Since because of his pride and arrogance he rebelled and was cast out of heaven, the name Lucifer has become associated with evil and opposition to God.

The name Satan was not originally a name, but a job. It is the Hebrew word *ha-satan* (השָׂטָן), “the adversary” or “the prosecutor.” In the Book of Job, which is possibly the earliest of the Hebrew texts, *ha-satan* is the adversary of man, but not necessarily of God (Job 1:6). In later books Satan is used without the definite article *ha-* (the) as a name, and he is seen as the clear evil opponent to God.

The word devil comes to us from the French *diable*, from the Late Latin *diabolus*, which in turn comes from the Greek *diaballein* (διαβαλλειν),<sup>1</sup> to slander. This comes from *dia-*, across or over, and *ballein*, to throw. To slander someone, then, is to overthrow him or throw him over (the more modern expression is “to throw him under the bus”). The Devil is the slanderer, often called “The Prince of Lies.”

Originally the word demon meant a good spirit such as a tutelary or guardian angel. Today when it is used in that sense it is usually spelled daimon. The word comes from the Late Latin *daemon*, from the Greek *daimōn* (δαίμων), protective spirit. In modern usage the word demon usually means an evil spirit. While the origin is unclear, this usage probably came from the Late Latin *daemonium*, from the Greek *daimonion* (δαίμωνιον). This grammatical construction implies the opposite of the root word. Thus a *daimōn* is a good spirit, while a *daimonion* is an evil spirit.

Richard R. Losch+

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<p><i>Don't take yourself too seriously—nobody else does.</i></p>
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<sup>1</sup> We get both diabolical and devil from *diabolus*. In linguistic development the sounds *b* and *v* are generally interchangeable. In many scripts the two letters are written almost exactly alike. In Spanish they are pronounced alike, (in Spanish the capital of Cuba is Habana) and in Hebrew the same letter (*beth*, ב) is used for both sounds.

## *Shrove Tuesday*

On February 28th, at 6:00 p.m., in observance of Shrove Tuesday we will have a Mardi Gras dinner. Signup sheets for Creole and Cajun dishes, other foods and for those who plan to attend are posted on the bulletin board in the vestibule/narthex so that we may know how many for whom to plan. In addition to bringing a dish you are invited to bring your favorite wine to share. For more details, please speak with Hiram Patrenos. As always, there will be plenty of good food and fellowship. Please make your plans to attend.

*Hiram Patrenos*

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## *And You Shall Give*

A palindrome is a word or phrase that is the same forward or backward. “Madam” and “Able was I ere I saw Elba” are palindromes. Hebrew has many palindromic words. This is not just coincidence, however, but in most cases is intentional. The reason is that in Hebrew these words indicate a reflexive action—what you put out comes back to you. One of my favorite Hebrew palindromes is *unattanu* (וּנַתַּנּוּ), which means “And you shall give.”<sup>1</sup> The root is *nattan*, gift.<sup>2</sup> A gift freely given without thought of reward will always come back to you in some form. Jesus said, “Give and it will be given to you” (Lk. 6:38). On the other hand, a gift given with expectation of a return is not a gift, it is an attempt at a deal in which the “giver” will get the best of the bargain. It sounds like a paradox, but it is usually true that a gift freely given with no thought of reward is usually rewarded—*unattanu*.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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<sup>1</sup> In classic Hebrew this is pronounced as it is spelled (*oo-na-tá-noo*), but in modern Hebrew it is pronounced “v’nattanu” (or in some dialects “v’nassanu”). In many dialects *t*, *th* and *s* all sound very much alike. In northwestern Great Britain all three are pronounced like a soft *s*: “kitten” sounds like “kissen.” Consider also the *ti* in nation.

<sup>2</sup> This is the root of the names Nathan (Gift), Nathaniel (Gift of God) and Jonathan (God Gives).

## ***The Language of the Bible***

When we speak of the language of the Bible, most people immediately think in terms of Jacobean v. modern English.<sup>1</sup> These, however, are simply languages of translation, not the original languages of the writings. The Bible actually has three languages: Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. Most of the Old Testament was written in Hebrew, although some of the latest books were written in Aramaic. The New Testament was written in Greek,<sup>2</sup> and one of the first and most important of the Old Testament translations, the Septuagint, was also in Greek long before the Christian era.

In the 6th century B.C., two languages were spoken in Judah. One was Hebrew, which had been the tongue of the Jews for centuries. The other was Aramaic. This is a Semitic language that is closely related to Hebrew, much as Latin and Italian are related. It was the language of Aram, which is mainly today's Syria, and was commonly spoken throughout the Middle East. It was the main language of Mesopotamia, where Babylonia was located. When the Jews wrote in Aramaic they used the Hebrew alphabet, just as we use the Latin alphabet today to write almost all Western languages.

Much of what we today call the Old Testament, although it was based on very ancient oral traditions, was not written down until after the 6th century B.C. When Nebuchadnezzar conquered Judah and carried most of its population off into exile in Babylonia, the Babylonians spoke Aramaic. This was their primary language, and it was a secondary language for most Jews. It gave them a common language, however, and

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1 Although it is usually called Jacobean, the English of the King James Version is actually Tudor English. We will explain why in the article.

<sup>2</sup> The New Testament as we know it, although all of its writers except Saint Luke were Jews, is not a Greek translation of originally Hebrew or Aramaic documents. All educated people in Jesus' time, including Jews, knew Greek. This was the *lingua franca* of the known world, much as English is today. The early Christians, although Jews, were writing for a primarily Greek-speaking Gentile audience.

by the end of the exile in the 5th century it had become the primary language of the Jews as well. By Jesus' time only educated Jews knew Hebrew, which was by that time strictly a religious language rather than one of common communication.<sup>1</sup> Jesus preached to the people in Aramaic, not Hebrew, although when he read the Scriptures in the synagogue he would have read them in Hebrew (Lk. 4:16ff).

When the scribes wrote down the histories, poetry and prophecies of their tradition, even though their common language was Aramaic, they wrote in Hebrew. Also, the Hebrew that they used would have been considered archaic at the time, because it was the Hebrew of at least a century earlier. This would be the equivalent today of writing in the English of Thomas Jefferson. They did this intentionally as a way of setting these sacred documents apart from the routine of the day. It clearly marked them as something deserving a special dignity. It was for the very same reason that the translators of the King James Version did not use their own 17th century English, but that of the Tudor era a century earlier.<sup>2</sup>

Although the books of the Old Testament were written over a long period of time, the scribes generally followed the same tradition of using an earlier Hebrew than the contemporary Hebrew that was used either as everyday language or as the language of scholars. This is a great help to modern scholars in identifying different writers and periods. It is how we know, for example, that there were at least four different writers of the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible).

*Richard R. Losch+*

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<sup>1</sup> It was spoken by Jewish scholars throughout the centuries and was the official language of prayer (much as Latin was in the Christian west), but it would not become a commonly spoken language again until it was adopted as the official language of the Palestinian Zionists in about 1880.

<sup>2</sup> A large portion of the King James Version was not a new translation from scratch, but a correction and improvement of passages from earlier English translations.



## *And With Thy Spirit*

This Rite I response to “The Lord be with you” in the modern liturgy is also offered as “And also with you” in Rite II. It actually goes back at least 1500 years to the Latin “*Dominus vobiscum. Et cum spiritu tuo*,” of which it is a literal translation in Rite I and an interpretation in Rite II. The Roman Catholic Church has recently discarded “And also with you” and returned to the literal translation, “And with your spirit.” In my humble opinion, I believe the Episcopal Church should do the same. This hangs on the important question, of course, of what is meant by “spirit.”

For at least 2500 years philosophers and theologians have argued as to whether the human being is comprised of a body and soul; a body, soul and spirit; a body, soul and mind; or a body, soul, mind and spirit. Some of the greatest thinkers in history, both pagan and Christian, have struggled with this question over the centuries, so we will not be do arrogant as to try to answer it here. It is worthwhile, however, to consider the meaning of these terms.

The ancient Greeks had two words for the body: *sarx* (σὰρξ), which is base material flesh with all its animal passions, and *soma* (σῶμα), which is the physical body with its more ennobling features.<sup>1</sup> Both are used in the New Testament. “God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh (*sarx*), cannot do” (Rom. 8:3); “This is my body (*soma*) which is given for you” (Lk. 22:19). When we are talking theologically of the general makeup of the human being, however, we generally talk in the sense of *soma*.<sup>2</sup> When we speak of the flesh (*sarx*) we are generally referring to the un-

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<sup>1</sup> The Greeks were deeply involved in athletics. To them it was a religious obligation to keep one’s *soma* as perfect as possible, because to fail to do put the baser passions in control, and so was an insult to the gods.

<sup>2</sup> In Hebrew there is only one word, *basar* (בָּסָר), which can also be translated “meat.” It came from the dust of the earth (Gen. 2:7), and is the basest aspect of mankind. In almost all translations of the Old Testament *basar* is translated “flesh” when it refers to a human.

desirable emotions and passions (pride, greed, lust, etc.).

When it comes to the intangible aspects of humanity things become considerably more complicated. Just what do we mean when we talk about the mind, the soul and the spirit? We often tend to use these terms almost interchangeably, especially soul and spirit. In Hebrew there are two words that need to be considered. One is *nephesh* (נֶפֶשׁ), which is the basic life force. This is the same as what the Greeks called *psyche* (ψυχή) and the Romans *animus*.<sup>1</sup> This is in all animals and even plants, and is the force that distinguishes a living thing from a dead or non-living thing. A rock has no *nephesh* and never has had it, while a dead bird has lost the *nephesh* that it once had. The other Hebrew term is *ruach* (רוּחַ), which is either “breath” or “spirit.” This is the same as the Greek *pneuma* (πνεῦμα) and the Latin *spiritus*, which we usually translate “spirit.” *Ruach*, *pleuma* and *spiritus* can all be translated as breath, wind or spirit, and are used in all three senses in the ancient texts. We often have to consider the context to see more precisely which meaning is intended. This is what God breathed into the man (Gen. 2:7), and it is what distinguishes man from all other animals. It is the faculty of intellect and will that makes us rational creatures—that makes us human. To this mix the Greeks added *nous* (νοῦς), the mind or highest intellectual faculty of the human being. *Nous* allows man to reason abstractly,<sup>2</sup> and thus makes him different from all the other animals.<sup>3</sup> The Christian theologian Origen (A.D. 185-254) said that *nous* is the human mind, while

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<sup>1</sup> We get the words psychic, psychology, animal and animate from these.

<sup>2</sup> Some animals are capable of limited reasoning and decision-making (anyone who owns a dog or cat knows this), but only man is capable of abstract reasoning. Man is the only animal that acknowledges a deity, wonders what is on the other side of the moon, and contemplates his own death. Man is also the only animal that believes that his soul lives on after the death of the body. Voltaire said that if you could get a cow to think about her death you would make a philosopher out of her.

<sup>3</sup> In British English *nous* is often used to mean common sense: “If he had any nous at all he’d stop doing that.”

*pneuma* (spirit) is the human mind filled with the understanding that comes by redeeming grace. The word *Nous*, while it was an important concept in Greek philosophy, was also an important consideration in medieval Christian theology.<sup>1</sup>

Now that we have all this under our belts, two questions arise. Are the soul and the spirit the same thing, and if not, which is controlled by (or controls) the mind? When we speak of the *nephesh* (Hebrew), *psyche* (Greek) or *animus* (Latin) we are speaking of the life force or “soul” that makes the difference between living and non-living things. This is possessed by humans, dogs, worms, pine trees, grass and even bacteria.<sup>2</sup> Christianity has never denied that all living things, including dogs and even trees, have a soul.<sup>3</sup> The big issue is whether it is (a) sentient (i.e. self-aware and capable of thought), and (b) immortal. Christianity teaches that while many lower creatures are sentient, only man has an immortal soul—the souls of all other creatures cease to exist when the body dies. The reason we believe this is that as we said above, only man is capable of abstract thought. This implies a spirit that transcends *nephesh*, the simple life force. A dog cannot conceive of such a thing as justice, and it has no sense of morality. It can learn that certain actions are rewarded and others are punished, but it has no concept of anything being morally right or wrong. It can understand the leadership and intervention of the alpha dog or of its master, but not that of an intangible external power such as God.

It is that spirit, of which the higher functioning of the mind (the intellect) is a part, that distinguishes man from all lower creatures, and that we believe is immortal. That spirit

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<sup>1</sup> *Psyche* is used in the New Testament 129 times, and *pneuma* 385—80 referring to the human spirit, and 305 to the Holy Spirit.

<sup>2</sup> Biologists disagree as to whether a virus can be classified as a living or a non-living thing.

<sup>3</sup> Paganism teaches that everything, including rocks and rivers, has a soul. This is the basis of nature worship and the source of such polytheistic belief systems as the Olympian gods and the Nordic Aesir.

can be corrupted and damned (cut off from God), and it can also accept the gifts of the Holy Spirit and become strengthened in righteousness. The intellect is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit that enables us to choose which route we will take—that of going with God or that of rejecting him.

It is for this reason that I believe the proper response to the versicle should not be simply “And also with you,” but the fuller “And with your spirit.” This implies God’s full involvement in our total spiritual being, while “And also with you” simply implies God’s protection and the assurance of his love. I want the Lord to guide my spirit, not just my *nephesh*.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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## ***Counting the Days***

We generally say that Christ lay in the tomb for three days, when he was resurrected. This raises a question, however, when we realize that he actually lay in the tomb for only a little over a day and a half. He was buried sometime between 3:00 p.m.<sup>1</sup> and sundown on Friday, and emerged from the tomb about dawn on Sunday. This comes to roughly 36 hours, which we would call a day and a half.

The confusion comes from the difference between the way we count days in our Western culture and the way the ancients counted them. In modern Western culture if I tell you on Friday that I will see you in three days, that means Monday to most people, because we normally count the next day as the start of the sequence. The main reason for that difference is that we are used to precise time measurement in terms of hours and even minutes, while in ancient times, without the technology to be so precise, time was seen much more loosely. For example, the calendar day began and ended at sundown, not at midnight, and the working day began at sunrise and ended at sunset. Sunrise started the “first hour”; when the sun was at its highest point was the “sixth hour,” and sunset the “twelfth hour.” This made daytime hours much longer in

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<sup>1</sup> The “ninth hour” (Mt. 27:46)

the summer than they were in the winter. In counting days, the starting day of the sequence was the day of the event itself, and the ending day was the last, even if you started late on the first day and ended early on the last. Thus Jesus was buried on Friday afternoon and rose on Sunday morning, making three days. If something started late Tuesday afternoon and ended early Wednesday morning it would be said to have lasted two days, even though in actual time as we count hours today it would have been considerably less than twelve hours in the summer.

The Jewish law requires that a male child be circumcised on the eighth day after his birth. By our counting, if a child were born on a Monday, that would mean that he would be circumcised on a week from Tuesday. By the ancient counting, however, the day of the birth would be counted as well, so the circumcision would be exactly a week later, on Monday. This is why we celebrate Christmas on the 25th of December, and the Feast of the Circumcision (also called the Feast of the Holy Name) exactly a week later on January 1.<sup>1</sup>

In the same vein, because of the imprecision of time, the expression “forty days” was not meant to be taken literally. It did not mean forty cycles of the sun, but simply a long time. “Forty days and forty nights” was an idiom meaning an extremely long time, much longer than just “forty days.” These are similar to the modern expression, “I’ve told you a thousand times,” which is not intended to be taken literally.

Today the time on our smart phones is accurate to a fraction of a second. In ancient times, without this technology, precision of time was taken much less seriously.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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<sup>1</sup> For the same reason the Presentation (February 2) is 40 days after the Nativity (December 25) only if we include both of those feasts. Likewise Pentecost (the word Pentecost means 50 days) is exactly 7 weeks (49 days) after Easter, but it is 50 days if we include Easter Day.

## *The Mark of the Beast*

Last month we explained the “Number of the Beast,” 666 (Rev. 13:18). No discussion of that can be complete without a consideration of the Mark of the Beast (Rev. 13:16f). Modern conspiracy theorists love to interpret this as some kind of computer chip that will be implanted under the skin to allow “Big Brother” to monitor our every action. That may be a great Orwellian science fiction theme, but it is not consistent with what the Book of Revelation means. The Mark of the Beast in Revelation will be visible to all—it is a mark “on their right hands or on their foreheads” that demonstrates their loyalty, or at least their obedience, to the Beast. The question is, then, what is the nature and meaning of that mark?

An important part of the prayer life of Orthodox and many Conservative Jews is the use of what are called Phylacteries. The Hebrew word is *Tefillin* (תפילין)<sup>1</sup>, and there are two. They are small black leather boxes, each containing four scrolls bearing passages from the Torah.<sup>2</sup> Attached to them are leather straps that are used to tie one to the upper arm<sup>3</sup> and the other to the forehead. The arm straps are wound down the arm and around the hand. These represent the first sacrifice offered after the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai, and are in accord with Ex. 13:16, “It will be like a sign on your hand and a symbol on your forehead that the LORD brought us out of Egypt with his mighty hand.”



In the 13th century Archbishop of Canterbury Stephen Langton codified the Bible into chapters and verses. We do

<sup>1</sup> This is a plural form (the singular is *tefillah*, תפילה), although it is generally used as a singular: a tefillin is placed on the right arm (the *shel yad*), and one on the forehead (the *shel rosh*).

<sup>2</sup> Ex. 13:1-10, Ex. 13:11-16, Dt. 6:4-9 and Dt. 11:13-21. The arm *tefillin* has a single compartment that contains all four scrolls, and the forehead *tefillin* has four compartments, each containing one scroll.

<sup>3</sup> It is placed on the non-dominant arm: the left if one is right-handed, and vice versa.

not know whether or not it was coincidence that Ex. 13:16 ties so closely to Rev. 13:16, “[The Beast] also forced all people ... to receive a mark on their right hands or on their foreheads.” While the *tefillin* are worn as a visible sign of one’s obedience to God, the mark of the Beast will be worn as a visible sign of one’s obedience to the things of this world, and thus of rejection of God.

In ancient Rome slaves were marked as such, usually with a mark either on the right hand or on the forehead. Those who were condemned to slavery for life were tattooed or branded with this mark. The mark was the owner’s name or a symbol of his household. The mark of the Beast, then, is an indication of ownership by Satan, and it is either his name or his number, 666 (Rev. 13:17). In Holy Baptism the priest makes the sign of the Cross on the child’s forehead, saying, “You are sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ’s own forever” (BCP p. 308). While that sign is invisible to the world, it is visible to God as a sign of Christ’s ownership.

Early Christians in the Roman Empire faced the question, is it possible to obey the Law of God and also the law of Rome? They were aware of Jesus’ teaching, “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s” (Mt. 22:21), but in daily life this distinction is not always clear. One Roman requirement was that on certain occasions everyone must make public obeisance to the Roman gods. Failure to do so could mean imprisonment or death, and this was the cause of many localized persecutions. For a number of complicated reasons Jews were exempted from this, but Christians, who were no longer considered a sect of Jews, were not. The Book of Revelation, however, makes it patently clear that for Christians there can be no compromise: bear either the mark of Christ or the mark of the Beast (Rome). On cannot do both.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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People who enjoy meetings should not be in charge of anything.

*Thomas Sowell*

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## ***“The Epistle” Is Online***

The last four years’ issues of *The Epistle* are online. Go to <http://rlosch.com> and click on the “Epistle” tab at the top, then click on the issue you want to see. You can read it online or download it as a .pdf file.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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*Without tradition, a revelation  
is merely an epiphany. It can  
inspire nothing more than art.*

*Leon Wieseltier, Kaddish*

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**JAMIE**

**by Richard R. Losch**



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