

# THE EPISTLE

Saint James' Episcopal Church  
Livingston, Alabama



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September 2014

## *This Month's Cover*

Our cover this month, in honor of the Feast of St. Michael and All Angels (September 29) is *The Fall of the Rebel Angels* by Luca Giordano (1634-1705). It is a large oil on canvas, measuring 13'9" x 9'3". It was painted in 1666 and hangs in Vienna in the Kunsthistorischesmuseum (Art History Museum). It depicts the final battle between Saint Michael the Archangel and Lucifer, in which Lucifer and all his rebel angels were cast out of heaven into Pandaemonium (the "Place of All Demons"). Michael's foot is on Lucifer's neck in an ancient traditional symbol of victory. Note that Lucifer's wings, once the glorious wings of an archangel, are now burned and scarred, looking more like the wings of a bat.

Luca Giordano was born in Naples on October 18, 1634, the son of a painter-copyist. His father was not talented in creating art, but was apparently very good at copying other people's work. This was a lucrative trade in the days before photography, when people wanted copies of great works to hang in their own homes. Luca came to be known as Luca Fa Presto, "Luca Work Quickly," because he was noted for his huge output and the amazing speed with which he could complete a painting. He was also known as Proteus, because he had picked up his father's talent in being able to produce a painting in the style of any other artist (Proteus was a Greek god—technically a Titan—who could change his appearance at will).

Giordano was without question the

most important Neapolitan decorative artist of the latter half of the 17th century. He first studied under Ribera, but developed his style under the influence of Veronese, whose works he studied carefully during his travels. He painted a large variety of subject, but by far the largest portion of his work was devoted to religion and Greco-Roman mythology.

Giordano worked mainly in Naples, although he also spent a good deal of time in Florence and Venice. Notwithstanding, his work had a strong influence throughout Italy and even into the rest of Europe. In 1682 he went to Florence to paint one of his most important works, the frescoes in the Palazzo Medici-Riccardi. These frescoes had a significant influence on the artistic styles of the 18th century.

At the call of Charles II in 1692 he went to Spain, where he spent 10 years painting in Madrid, Toledo and the Escorial. In 1702 he returned to Naples, where he painted the ceiling of the Cappella de Tesoro de San Martino, completing it in 1704. He died in Naples on January 3, 1705.

Sad to say, many of Giordano's Neapolitan frescoes were damaged or destroyed in World War II, as was his great Benedict Cycle in the Benedictine abbey at Monte Casino, which was totally demolished.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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## *A Word from the Editor*

### *Truth, Lies and Propaganda*

Although the term propaganda is usually used with the implication of promoting false information, in fact it simply means the propagation of ideas and values. This is not necessarily bad. Josef Goebbels, Hitler's Minister of Propaganda, often repeated the axiom that if you say anything frequently enough and forcefully enough, people will come to believe it even when it is patently false. If this is correct, as most experts say it is, then couldn't we say the same thing about propagating the truth? We're all familiar with the old gospel hymn "I Love to Tell the Story." This is essentially what preaching the gospel is all about—telling the story over and over again. The abysmal ignorance that is so common in young people today is the result of our failure to tell the story—and not only the story of Jesus, but also the stories of our history, our politics, our roots and our values.

Today there is a plethora of special-interest lobbies—women's lib, abortion/pro-life, gay rights, pro-gun/anti-gun, ethno-racial interests, and so on and on. These all shout out their messages "loud and clear," and they have gained support that far outweighs the actual number of people directly involved in these interests. While many on the other sides whine about the strength of these movements, their voices are often not heard. We hear both sides of the pro-life/pro-abortion debate because both sides are equally vocal. On the other hand, in Canada and several European

countries a preacher can be imprisoned for a hate crime if he preaches that sodomy is sinful (a similar bill failed in Congress by only a narrow margin a couple of years ago), yet practicing sodomites represent only a tiny portion of the population.

We are failing to tell the story. That story is not always popular, and when we tell it we are often accused of being exclusionary, judgmental, demanding and "not nice." Well, the Faith once and for all time deposited with the Apostles is often exclusionary, judgmental, demanding and not nice. It is Good News, but to obtain the benefit of that good news we must conform to it, and that is often uncomfortable and even painful. Remember when you ask, "What would Jesus do?" that turning over tables and whipping moneychangers out of the temple is not outside the realm of possibilities. That is why the gospel is so often hated. The truth is hateful to those who hate the truth.

Tell the story over and over again, not just with your voice, but more importantly, in the way you live. When people don't like the truth, just keep saying it anyway. When people don't seem to be listening, just keep saying it anyway. It may make you unpopular and may even hurt you, but just keep saying it anyway. Most of the saints were not particularly popular, either—but they are in heaven, and because of them lot of other people are also saints. Tell the story.

*Father Rick Losch*

## *Be Wordly Wise* *A Napple a Day*

For centuries the indefinite article *a* has preceded words that begin with a consonant, and *an* for those beginning with a vowel (and in British usage an *h*). A common linguistic error known as wrong division has caused a number of changes in English words. Wrong division is when word separation takes place in the wrong position, such as saying “a whole nother thing” when “an other thing” is meant, not “a nother thing.” It is often claimed that an apple was originally a napple, and because of wrong division it became an apple. There is no evidence to support this, although a number of words really have changed in just that way. In the middle ages a workman would tie a *naperon* (“napkin”) around his waist to prevent soiling his clothes. That derived from a diminutive of the Old French *nappe*, “tablecloth” (from which we get “napery”). In time wrong division caused this to become an *aperon*, and then the *e* disappeared, giving us an apron. Another example from the Old English is a *nounpere*, “arbitrator.” That came from the Old French *nonpar*, “not equal” (implying superior). When *n* comes before *p* or *b* it usually changes to *m*, producing *noumpere*. Wrong division again came into play, and a *noumpere* became an *oumpere*. In time this gave us “umpire.” Again, the Old English *naedre*, “serpent,” became a *naddre*, then a *nadder*. Over the years a *nadder* became an adder.

*Richard R. Losch+*

## *Funds, Felicity and Faith*

One of the poorest states in the country is Louisiana, ranking 44th in median family income. New York City is the richest city in the country, sporting 70 billionaires and 389,100 millionaires—one in every 25 in greater New York is a millionaire!<sup>1</sup> Notwithstanding, in a recent survey Louisiana ranked as the happiest state in America, and New York as the unhappiest city. It seems apparent that money indeed cannot buy happiness.

It also seems noteworthy that according to a recent Pew poll Louisiana has the highest percentage of people who claim to be practicing Christians (mostly Roman Catholics), and New York City has the highest percentage of those who claim to be atheists. It makes one think.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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## *‘The Epistle’ Online*

Copies of *The Epistle* are online. Go to <http://rlosch.com> and click on the “Epistle” tab at the top. There are copies from the last two years that can be downloaded in .pdf form. If you want to send a copy to a friend, you can download the .pdf and send it as an email attachment.

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*“Politicians are the same all over.  
They promise to build bridges even  
where there is no river.”*

*Nikita Khrushchev*

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<sup>1</sup> There are so many that in the Upper East Side a millionaire is considered middle class. To be fair, however, it must be pointed out that on the West Side there is extensive poverty.

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## ***Evening Prayer and Parish Supper***

Our September service of Evening Prayer will be on Wednesday, September 17th, at 6:00 p.m. with a "Tail Gate Dinner" following in the parish house. Signup sheets for attendance and volunteers to assist with set up and clean up are posted in the parish house kitchen along with sheets for various food types and items. Make your plans to attend, bring your friends, and wear your favorite school's colors.

*Hiram Patrenos*

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## ***Sunday School***

Sunday School for our children will begin on September 7th at 10:00 a.m. The adult class will not begin until Fr. Losch is able to be there. If you would like to volunteer to help with this important ministry for our children, please contact Hiram Patrenos at (205) 499-0506 or [patrenoj@bellsouth.net](mailto:patrenoj@bellsouth.net) as soon as possible.

*Hiram Patrenos*

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## ***Altar Flower Volunteers***

Volunteers are needed to provide Altar flowers through the season of Pentecost. A sign-up chart is located in the Sacristy. You may use flowers from your yard or, if you wish, make arrangements with a florist to provide them. For more information, please speak with Carolyn Patrenos.

*Hiram Patrenos*

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## ***Interfaith Men's Breakfast***

Our monthly Interfaith Men's Breakfasts will resume on Sunday, September 7 at 7:45 a.m. at Saint James' Episcopal Church. We will thereafter meet each month on the first Sunday, rotating between Saint James', the Livingston First Presbyterian Church, and Hardee's.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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## ***Sorry To Be Late***

Some of our readers may not know that I broke my hip recently and am in rehab. So far all is progressing well, but it's going to be a while before I'm back in circulation and can go at the old pace. Therefore *The Epistle* is late this month and may be next. Sorry, but *que sera sera*. The online version should be posted on time, though.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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## ***Morbid But Funny***

Old time epitaphs often tend to remind us that even at hard times we need to keep out sense of humor.

- In Albany, NY: "Harry Edsel Smith, 1903-1942. Looked up the elevator shaft to see of the car was coming. It was."
  - In Ruidoso NM: "Here lies Johnny Yeast. Pardon him for not rising."
  - In an English cemetery: "Sir John Strange. Here lies an honest lawyer, and that is Strange."
  - And in Thurmont, MD: "Here lies an atheist, all dressed and with no place to go."
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## Gematria

No, Gematria is not an ancient Roman province. Rather, it is a quasi-mystical Jewish interpretation device that goes back to ancient times and is still practiced today. It is closely related to Numerology. Numerology is the belief in a mystical, magical or divine connection between numbers and the relationship of events. Since ancient times it has been believed that letters of the alphabet have a numerical value. In fact, many cultures wrote numbers using letters (such as in Roman numerals).<sup>1</sup> For example, the first letters of the Greek alphabet are A, B, Γ, Δ (alpha, beta,<sup>2</sup> gamma, delta) and so forth, where A=1, B=2, Γ=3 and Δ=4. It is unclear whether the number values were given because of the order of the letters, or the letters were ordered according to their value. Most ancient alphabets, including Hebrew, had numerological values. It's interesting to note that there was no symbol for zero, which was a concept that ancient mathematicians had no idea how to handle.<sup>3</sup>

In Gematria, the numerological value of a word is simply the sum of the values of its individual letters. If two words or phrases have the same numerological value, then practitioners of Gematria believe that they have a relationship. This relationship

is then sought as a key to the interpretation of the passage.

An example of Gematria can be found in the stories of Jacob's ladder (Gen. 28:12) and the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai (Ex. 20). In Hebrew the word used for Jacob's ladder is *sulam* (סֹלָם).<sup>4</sup> Its numerological value is 130.<sup>5</sup> The Hebrew for Sinai (סִינַי) also has a value of 130, so Gematria would claim that they are related. The usual interpretation is that Jacob's vision of the ladder extending into heaven, with an angel descending it, was a symbol of God's descending to earth to present Moses and the Israelites with the Law, and to establish his covenant with them.

Early Christians also used Gematria. Saint John said that the number of the beast (Satan or the Anti-Christ) is 666 (Rev. 13:18). There are many attempts in Greek and Latin, some rather contrived, to associate this with the Roman emperor Nero. Although John wrote Revelation in Greek, he was a Jew whose native tongue was Aramaic, a language that was written in Hebrew letters and was closely related to Hebrew. In Aramaic, Nero Caesar is *Neron Kesar* (נְרוֹן קֶסַר). The numerological value of that name is 666, identifying Nero, the great enemy of Christians, as the Anti-Christ, the enemy of God.

*Richard R. Losch+*

<sup>1</sup> The numbers we use today, called Arabic numerals, were invented by the ancient Arabs, and were brought to Europe in the Crusades.

<sup>2</sup> That's where we get the word alphabet.

<sup>3</sup> The Arabs also discovered zero and how to work with it.

<sup>4</sup> In English this sounds like it might be related to *shalom*, "peace," but in Hebrew they are spelled quite differently.

<sup>5</sup> Sanekh (ס)=60, lamedh (ל)=30 and mem (מ)=40. Remember that there are no vowels in the ancient Hebrew alphabet.

## *The Maccabee's Home*

In the second century B.C. Judea was struggling under the extremely oppressive rule of the Seleucid Empire. The Seleucids were the descendants of Alexander the Great's general Seleucus who, after Alexander's death, gained control of much of the Eastern portion of his empire. This included most of what today is known as the Middle East. At first the general Ptolemy, who gained control of Egypt, also ruled the region that included Judea. The Ptolemaic rule was reasonable, but after years of conflict the Ptolemies lost Judea to the Seleucids. The Seleucids hated the Jews for their refusal to accept the Greek culture and religion, and thus became increasingly tyrannical. The last straw was in the middle of the second century B.C., when the mad Antiochus IV Epiphanes became emperor. He had a psychotic hatred for the Jews. In about 162 he perpetrated an atrocity that has since been referred to by the prophet Daniel's phrase, "the abomination that causes desolation." He tore down the high altar in the temple in Jerusalem and erected an altar to Zeus, on which he sacrificed a pig. He then issued an edict forbidding circumcision and Sabbath observance, and requiring that every town in Judea make a sacrifice to Zeus. Soldiers were sent to every town to see that the order was carried out.

In the little village of Modi'in<sup>1</sup> in the Shephelah district of Judea, the

old leader of the village, Mattathias bar-Hasmon, refused to allow the sacrifice. When he saw another man doing so, in a fit of rage he struck down the man and the Seleucid soldier, killing them both. He and his five sons and a large number of villagers then fled into the hills and launched a guerilla rebellion against the Seleucids. Mattathias died two years later, and his son Judas assumed the leadership. He was noted for his military prowess, having earned the cognomen Maccabeus, "Hammer." The rebellion, which came to be known as the Maccabean Revolt, was successful. In 165 B.C. the Seleucids were defeated and withdrew from Judea, giving it its first independence in over four centuries<sup>2</sup> (it would fall into Roman hands a century later). Judas ritually cleansed and rededicated the temple. The Jewish feast of Hanukkah still celebrates that event today.

After the death of Judas his brother Jonathan took over as military and political leader, naming himself also as High Priest, even though they were not of a priestly family.<sup>3</sup> He was soon captured and murdered, and his brother Simon assumed the leadership and the title of High Priest. After Simon's death the high priesthood reverted to the Levites. The Maccabees became the ruling dynasty, called the Has-

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<sup>2</sup> It had fallen to the Babylonians in 587 B.C., to the Persians in 539, and then to the Macedonians (Alexander the Great) in 325.

<sup>3</sup> According to Jewish law, the priesthood was a hereditary office, and priests could come only from the tribe of Levi (thus it was known as the Levitical priesthood).

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<sup>1</sup> מודיעין, also transliterated Modein.

monean Dynasty after Mattathias' father Hasmon.<sup>1</sup>

The Hasmoneans built an imposing monument in Modi'in as a tomb for the original Maccabees. It consisted of seven pyramids—one each for Mattathias, his wife, and their five sons. The Jewish historian Flavius Josephus described it as “a very large monument of polished white stone” that “soared to a great height” and could be seen “for a long way off.”

The modern Israeli town of Modi'in is about 20 miles northwest of Jerusalem, and was given its name to honor the ancient Maccabees. There was an oral tradition that it was on the location of the ancient town, but there was no hard evidence to support the tradition. Historians have long disputed whether it is the same Modi'in where Judas Maccabeus lived. One reason for the dispute is that there is not the slightest trace of the Maccabean monument there. Today many archaeologists believe that the Maccabean Modi'in is a ruin inside the modern Modi'in at a site called in Arabic Umm el-'Umdan, “Mother of the Columns.” It is so called because of a large number of huge columns once reported to have been there. It was discovered and excavated in 1873 by the French archaeologist Charles Clairmont-Ganneau, revealing what is

believed to have been an ashlar synagogue with many columns, apparently built during the reign of Herod the Great. It would have been in use until the end of the Bar-Kokhba Revolt in a.D. 135, when the Romans expelled all the Jews from Palestine. When British archaeologists re-opened the site in 1883 no trace of the columns could be found. They had probably been looted by the locals to be used in other buildings.

Israeli law requires that before any building project may begin, an archaeological survey must be done to insure that there are no antiquities there that need to be preserved. In planning a modern road near Umm el-'Umdan, they made extensive excavations to determine a safe route for the road in order to avoid compromising any important sites. In the process they made a number of major discoveries. One of the most important is that directly under the Herodian synagogue lie the ruins of a smaller synagogue built by the Hasmoneans. Beneath this lie the remains of an even earlier building that has been securely dated to the end of the third or beginning of the second century B.C. One of the main arguments against Umm el-'Umdan being the ancient Modi'in was that there was no evidence that it existed as a village in Maccabean times. The discovery of this building proves that it was. There is no direct evidence that it was a synagogue, but since the two buildings erected over it were, it is likely that was also a synagogue. It would be contemporary with Mattathias, and it may well have been

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<sup>1</sup> The Romans appointed Herod. He was an Edomite of Arab origin, not a Hasmonean. He claimed the right to the throne, however, because his first wife, Mariamne, was a Hasmonean. He had nine other wives, but she was the only one he truly loved, despite the fact that he murdered her in a fit of rage.



the place where he and his family worshiped.

Another question is whether the Umm el-'Umdan of that lowest building was a Jewish village. It could have been a Gentile one. In the latest excavations, however, much evidence has been unearthed to prove that it was indeed a Jewish village. Among it are two winemakers' seals with Aramaic inscriptions on them written in the square Hebrew characters of the time.<sup>1</sup> Also, the presence of fragments of a large number of stone vessels indicate that it was Jewish. Most peoples of the time preferred pottery vessels, but the Jews used stone ones because according to the Jewish law stone was immune from ritual impurity. Also, the stone vessels were very plain. Jews used plain vessels, while most others decorated theirs.

According to linguistic experts, the very name 'Umdan, which goes back at least to the early Middle Ages, may be a corruption of Modi'in. The Arabic 'Umdan and the Aramaic Modi'in contain the same consonants (neither Arabic nor Hebrew writing used vowels in ancient times).

In summary, even though we cannot be positive, the evidence is very strong that Umm el-'Umdan in modern Modi'in is indeed the ancient Modi'in of the Maccabees.

*Richard R. Losch+*

## *The Real Josephus*

One of the major sources of our knowledge of late Judean history is the writings of the Jewish general and historian Yosef bar Mattathياهو, commonly known as Flavius Josephus (a.D. 37-100). His primary writings are *the Jewish War*, his history of the first century Jewish revolt against the Romans, and *Antiquities*, his history of the Jewish people. None of his original manuscripts have survived, but there is no shortage of early copies and translations in Aramaic, Greek and Latin (and nowadays in almost every language).

Josephus was in many respects a very enigmatic character. He was of the priestly class, and served occasionally in the temple. He was a leader of the first major Jewish revolt against Rome, yet gained the favor of the emperor Vespasian to the extent that he was given Roman citizenship and lived as an honored permanent guest in Vespasian's private home in Rome. He was recognized by the Jews as a great hero who fought against Roman oppression, and by the Romans as a loyal friend of Rome. He took command of the rebellion in Galilee, where he proved himself a capable general despite being defeated by the vastly superior Roman army. When he and a large number of his soldiers were hiding in a pit, he said that God revealed to him that he should bring the word of God to the Romans. The soldiers believed that mass suicide was preferable to being captured and enslaved by the Romans. He convinced them that instead, a se-

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<sup>1</sup> Aramaic was the language of Palestine at the time (it was the language that Jesus spoke). It is a blend of Syriac and Hebrew, and is written in the Hebrew alphabet. After the time of the Babylonian Exile Aramaic replaced many Middle Eastern languages, including Hebrew.

ries of “mercy killings” would be better, and that they should draw lots to see who should kill whom. He said that he would wait to the end and kill the last man and then himself, thus reserving suicide, which was considered a sin, for only himself. Yet when he and one other were the only ones still alive he convinced his comrade that the two of them should surrender. He then requested an audience with Vespasian (who at that time was a general), was brought to his headquarters in chains, and walked out a free man. The military commander in Judea, Titus Flavius Vespasianus, was of common birth, yet he and his son of the same name had risen through the ranks to one of the highest positions in the Roman army. All the emperors through Nero had been of the noble Julio-Claudian family, and thus had the right to bear the name Caesar. Nero was the last Julio-Claudian, and he was followed by three very short-lived emperors.<sup>1</sup> Josephus, claiming to be a prophet, told Vespasian that he would become emperor, that the Roman Senate would confer the name Caesar on him, and that his son Titus would succeed him, also as Caesar.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Galba (7 months), Otho (3 months) and Vitellius (6 months). All three took the name Caesar, even though the Senate never officially granted it. Galba was murdered by Otho’s troops, Otho committed suicide after losing a battle with Vitellius, and Vitellius was murdered by Vespasian’s troops.

<sup>2</sup> After his father had become emperor, Titus was the military commander in Judea. It was he, with his father’s approval, who destroyed Jerusalem and leveled the temple. While the Jews to this day despise him, the Romans

When Vespasian did indeed gain the throne a few months later and the Senate named him Caesar, he conferred Roman citizenship on Josephus and invited him to live in his home, where he lived for the rest of his life. From then on he took the family name of his patron, Flavius, and Latinized his Jewish name Yosef, thereafter going by the name Flavius Josephus. It was while living in Rome that he wrote *The Jewish War* and *Antiquities*. It must have been a difficult time for him, because during that period thousands of captive Jews were being brought into Rome as slaves. There is little doubt that many of the slaves in Vespasian’s home were Jews.

Because of all of this (which he himself tells about in his writings) he was scorned for centuries as a liar, traitor, and general weasel. Historians did not trust his histories, although in many cases they were the only known source of information. *The Jewish War* was treated as a piece of pro-Roman propaganda. In the past two decades, however, much of that has changed. Modern techniques of scholarship along with new technologies and archaeological discoveries have cast a new light on Josephus’ works. New discoveries have validated many of his claims, and computer analysis of his writings has shown no shift in his language, vocabulary or style from the time that he was truly a rebel lead-

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adored him. His reign was short (he succumbed to a fever after only two years on the throne), but he died as the most beloved of all the Roman emperors. His brother Domitian, who was far from loved, succeeded him.

er to the time that he lived in Rome as a Roman citizen. This indicates a much more objective view than was previously ascribed to him. While there is little question that he was a glib and charismatic opportunist, the accusations of turncoat and propagandist do not appear to be fair or valid.

One of the accusations against Josephus was that he was a self-aggrandizing braggart. Modern study of ancient writings, however, has shown without doubt that humility was not an admired virtue in ancient times. In fact, it was held in contempt, being seen as a sign of weakness and lack of self-respect. Christianity was the first major religion to espouse humility as a virtue, and this was one of the reasons that Christians were scorned. What we see as arrogance or braggadocio in so many of the ancient writers was in fact nothing more than a cultural standard of the time. The literary and rhetorical devices that Josephus used to describe his own actions make him repugnant to modern readers, but were unquestionably used in his own time to instill admiration in his readers. Thus, as in any historical analysis, we must not judge him by the standards of our time, but by those of his. In his time, in a tradition made popular in the writings of Homer, tricksters, deceivers and survivors were viewed with admiration. Rather than flaws, these were seen as resourcefulness in times of duress.

Modern analysis has made it clear that *The Jewish War* was not written as a propaganda piece for the Romans. To the contrary, it was written

to praise the Jews for their courage in their fight against oppression. All other accounts of the time praised the Romans as great victors, and disparaged their victims. If his book were propaganda, then, it was propaganda for the Jews, and not for the Romans.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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## ***Late Responses?***

When the congregation participates in a portion of the service (such as the Creed, a psalm or the Lord's Prayer), some people, rather than starting at the beginning, seem to be joining in late. In fact, they are correct. From ancient times it has been the practice for the priest or leader to say the first phrase, then the congregation to join him at the next. For example, he says, "I believe in One God" and the people pick it up at "the Father Almighty"; or he says, "Our Father," and the people come in at "Who art in heaven." In a psalm said in unison, the leader says the first phrase and the people pick it up at the first break (such as a semicolon or the star that breaks a verse).

The reason is that for centuries the service was almost entirely sung, and the leader set the pace and tone for the rest of the participants. In the Prayer Book, just about the only prayer that is not set up for this is the Prayer of Humble Access ("We do not presume to come to this thy table . . ."). However, it was not originally a congregational prayer. Even though many services are now commonly said instead of being sung, the practice has endured to this day.

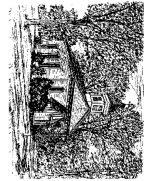
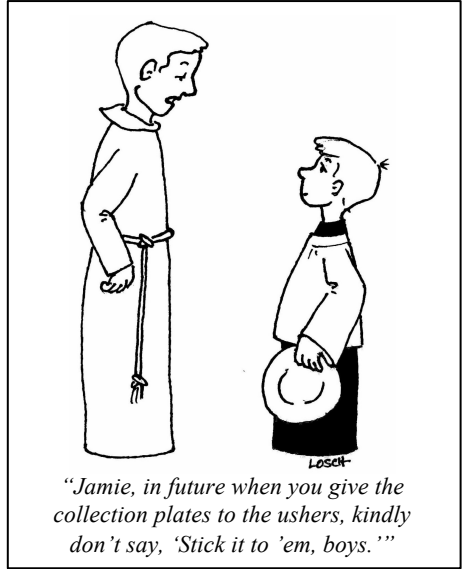
*Richard R. Losch+*

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