

THE EPISTLE

Saint James' Episcopal Church
Livingston, Alabama



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March 2013

This Month's Cover

Our cover this month is *Communion of the Apostles* by Fra Angelico (1400-1455). It was painted on a wood panel in egg tempera, and was executed in 1451-1452. The painting itself (not including the inscriptions) is roughly fifteen inches square. It is displayed in the Museo di San Marco in Florence, Italy. Tempera was the medium of choice for centuries until oils became preferred in the sixteenth century. The colors were mixed with an egg yolk binder, and usually applied to wood panels or dried plaster. Tempera is a very durable medium.

This is an unusual approach to a painting of the Last Supper, because instead of showing it as the Passover meal, the traditional Last Supper format, it portrays Christ as a priest administering Holy Communion to kneeling recipients. The inscriptions at the top read, "Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is he who comes in the Name of the Lord. Matthew 21[:9]. I make sacrifice for you . . . upon the mountains [*of Israel*] that you may eat flesh and drink blood. Ezekiel [39:17]." At the bottom they read, "Who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life. John 6[:54]. They shall smite the jaw of the Judge of Israel. Micah 5[:1]."

Fra Angelico was born Guido di Pietro about 1395 in Tuscany, probably in the village of Rupecanina near Fiesole. Nothing is known of his parents or of his early life, although many legends about him arose after his death. Even the name Fra Angelico ("Angelic Brother"), by which he

is best known today, was given posthumously. The first record of him is a 1417 document that refers to him as a lay painter. Sometime between 1420 and 1422 he became a Dominican friar, residing in the Dominican friary of San Domenico in Fiesole. He took the name Fra (Brother) Giovanni di Fiesole. He was there influenced by the writings of Fra Giovanni Dominici, who was a militant advocate of traditional spirituality against the onslaught of humanism that was sweeping over Europe. He was also strongly influenced by his fellow friar Saint Antoninus Pierozzi, who was unquestionably instrumental in restoring Fra Angelico's strong faith. He was also the inspiration for many of his finest paintings. Fra Angelico was trained in his art by Lorenzo Monaco, the greatest of the Gothic painters and miniaturists. While the Dominicans are primarily a teaching order, they recognized his enormous talent, and encouraged his painting as a valuable means of graphic teaching.

A proper discussion of Fra Angelico's prolific works could fill volumes. Suffice it to say that he was one of the most influential of all the painters of the early Italian Renaissance, and is generally considered to belong in the ranks of the world's greatest artists.

Richard R. Losch+

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A Word from the Editor

No one could reasonably argue that human relationships are not in trouble these days. People text instead of talking, lifetime-lasting marriages are pathetically rare, and common courtesy is almost a dying art. This is probably part of the price we pay for our rapid-fire technological age, when we are flooded with millions of times more information than we could ever process. Eight hundred years ago it was possible for Saint Thomas Aquinas to have read every book known. Today it would be impossible to read just the Library of Congress card catalogue in a lifetime. This informational overload, along with the ease of digital communication without personal contact, has produced a generation that seems to be losing the ability to communicate on a personal level. I fear that this also inures them to a sense of the personhood of others, thus enabling them to be thoughtless, solipsistic, and sometimes openly violent. Albert Einstein reportedly said, "I fear the day that technology will surpass our human interaction. The world will have a generation of idiots."

Don't get me wrong—I love technology, and I want to try every new iToy that comes out. I do most of my reading on an iPad, and I do huge amounts of research on the Internet. It's great that if I forget the dates of Caracalla's reign I can find out in seconds with a few strokes on the keyboard. I must admit, though, that I sometimes miss the hours I used to spend in a library study carrel with stacks of books on the desk. On the

other hand, those hours were just as impersonal as sitting by myself at the computer in my office. In those days, to interrupt anyone in a carrel was a cardinal sin, so there was no interpersonal relationship even then (today few students know what a carrel is).

I submit that the problem today is that all of our thinking tends to be only horizontal. We think in terms of today, ourselves, the moment at hand, and what effect what we do may have on us right now. We need to develop the ability to think vertically. What I mean by that is that we need to look down to the past and nourish our awareness of our heritage and our roots; and we must look up to the future, recognizing that as what happened in the past has formed us, so what we do today sets the course of what is yet to come. Sad to say, our modern educational system places very little emphasis on sequential cause-and-effect thinking. We are not preparing our young people for vertical thinking, and without that they can lose the ability to relate to one another. As Tevye observed, without tradition we are as shaky as a fiddler on the roof. And without a sense of responsibility for the future, we become irresponsible. To develop an appreciation for tradition and to take responsibility for our effect on the future, we must have personal interaction. A great gift of the Church is our interpersonal relationships in the Church, the Body of Christ, and the bond of the Church with God. We must nurture it constantly!

Father Rick Losch

Special Services for Holy Week and Easter

The Sunday of the Passion: Palm Sunday: On Sunday, March 24th, our observance of Holy Week will begin with the celebration of the Liturgy of the Palms and Holy Communion at St. James' at 11:00 a.m.

Monday-Friday of Holy Week: Livingston United Methodist Church will host its traditional noonday services featuring homilies by area ministers with lunch following.

Maundy Thursday: St. James' will observe this day with the traditional Holy Communion and the Stripping of the Altar beginning at 6:00 p.m.

Good Friday: Good Friday Liturgy and Mass of the Presanctified at St. James' at 5:00 p.m.

Easter Day: The First Presbyterian Church will host the Community Sunrise Service 7:00 a.m. at the Bell Conference Center on the UWA campus. St. James' will celebrate The Day of the Resurrection with Holy Communion at 11:00 a.m.

Hiram Patrenos

Easter Flowers

Each year St. James' Church offers the opportunity to remember loved ones through donations to the Altar Guild, which provides lilies in the Church for Easter. If you wish to make a donation in memory of, in honor of, or in thanksgiving for someone, forms are available at the back of the Church, or you may print this information clearly and mail it along with your contribution to Car-

olyn Patrenos, President, St. James' Altar Guild, Post Office Box 399, Livingston, Alabama 35470. Checks should be made payable to St. James' Altar Guild. Publication deadline for inclusion in the Easter bulletin is Wednesday, March 27. Your donation is tax deductible.

Hiram Patrenos

Fifth Sunday in March

Because Easter falls on the fifth Sunday in March, there will not be a fifth Sunday Community Service this month. This Livingston tradition will continue on the next fifth Sunday, June 30, and will be hosted by First Presbyterian Church.

Hiram Patrenos

Antique Alley Yard Sale

The ECW will have a yard sale in May during the Highway 11 Antique Alley Yard Sale. Everyone is encouraged to keep this in mind as they clean attics, storage buildings, and closets. Furniture is especially wanted during this sale. We will be happy to help you move any items you wish to contribute. If you have items to be contributed, please speak with Hiram Patrenos to make arrangements to get the items to our storage space.

Hiram Patrenos

Sometimes I want to ask God why he allows poverty, famine, loneliness and injustice in the world when he could do something about it. But I'm afraid if I do, he'll ask me the same question.

Anonymous

Be Wordly Wise

Some Seasonal Words

Lent: This word has a simple origin. Lent always starts between the Winter Solstice and the Vernal Equinox, during the period that the days are lengthening. The word derives from the Middle English *lenten*, which is from the Old English *lengten*, which in turn came from the Old High German *lengizin*, “to lengthen.” The German *Lenz*, “Spring,” comes from the same source.

Fast: This word has three meanings: as an adjective or adverb, it means either swiftly (“to run fast”) or firmly (“to hold fast,” from which we get “fasten”); as a noun it means to refrain from eating, and as a noun it means the act of fasting. It is also used nautically: a fast is a mooring rope. Surprisingly, all these meanings derive from the same source. According to Noah Webster, “the sense of swift comes from keeping close (fast) to what is being pursued.” The Middle English *fast* derives from the Old English *faesta*, “firm,” which originally derived from the Sanskrit *pastya*, “home.” Many other European words, all meaning “firm,” derive from the same source. The sense of abstinence comes from being firm in one’s self-discipline.

Abstain: This derives from the Latin *ab*, “from,” and *tenere*, “to hold,” which is also the source of literally dozens of other words, including attain, maintain, sustain, retain and contain. It also became “tenet,” an article of belief (we use the same concept in such phrases as “We hold

these truths to be self-evident”). The English word “abstain” comes most directly from the Old French *abstenir*, “to abstain.”

Confess: This came into English from the French *confesser*, which derives from the Latin *confiteri*, “to confess.” That derives from the Latin *con*, “together,” and *fateri*, “to acknowledge.” This emphasizes the ancient teaching of Christianity, that confession has its full spiritual value only when it is done “together,” either within a whole congregation or between a priest and penitent.

Penitence: The origin of this word is the Latin *poenire*, “to punish,” which led to *paenitere*, “to cause to repent” and by Late Latin simply “to repent.” This became the Middle French *pénitent*, which came into English with the same meaning and spelling (without the accent mark). The Latin also produced *paenitentius*, “penitence,” as well as *paenitentiarius*, “tribunal to examine cases of conscience,” whence we get our term for prison, “penitentiary.”

Absolution: This comes from the Latin *ab*, “from” and *solvere*, “to set free” or “to loosen.” In trials before the Roman Senate, the senators would pronounce their verdict by voice vote, crying either “*Absolvo* (I set free)” or “*Condemno* (I condemn).” When a priest pronounces absolution, he is calling upon the mercy of God to set the penitent free from the penalty incurred by his sins.

Good Friday: This is simply the modern form of the Old English *God-des Frigedaeg*, “God’s Friday.”

Richard R. Losch+

The Feminine Dove

The Church has long taught that although we refer to God grammatically as “He,” he embodies all of the virtues and traits that are generally associated with the feminine as well as the masculine. One of the most ancient Hebrew concepts of marriage is based on the idea that at creation God separated the masculine from the feminine and created separate creatures, male and female. Marriage is the reunification of the masculine and feminine (“a man . . . shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh,” Gen. 2:24). This reunification represents the unity of the masculine and feminine in God, reaffirming mankind as created “in the image of God.”¹

This has been recognized as far back as the earliest days of Judaism. In Genesis 1:2 we read, “The spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.” The Hebrew word for “spirit” is *ruach* (רוח), a feminine word.² The word we translate “moved,” *merachepheth* (מרחפת), actually means “hovered” in the sense that a dove hovers over her young.

What many do not know is that the

dove is a very ancient symbol of deity, long preceding Judaism. In almost every language that has gender, “dove” is a feminine word. In the ancient Mediterranean and Middle East, the dove was the symbol of the Mother Goddess, who was often represented as the Earth.³ The dove was a symbol of the Canaanite fertility goddess Asherah and her Phoenician counterpart Astarte, and many temples and shrines to her had carved doves or even live dovecotes at their entrances. Ancient inscriptions indicate that some of the earliest Israelites believed that Astarte was the consort of Elohim (God), although the Jewish religious leaders thoroughly rejected and condemned this belief. It is not surprising, therefore, that the dove was the symbol of salvation (the finding of land) in the story of Noah, that its cooing symbolized Judah’s suffering (Is. 38:14 *et al.*), that it is an almost universal symbol of peace, and that it is recognized in Christianity as the symbol of the Holy Spirit. Mary and Joseph sacrificed two doves in the Temple after Jesus’ birth in accordance with the Law (Lk. 2:24), and a dove appeared at his baptism (Mt. 3:16).

The dove’s gentleness and nurturing nature make it the perfect symbol of the traditionally feminine traits of God, which include gentleness, nurturing, and the promotion of peace.

Richard R. Losch+

¹ This is why Judaism and most of Christianity reject same-sex unions and extra-marital sexual relationships. These contradict the reunification of the masculine and feminine as one flesh in a potentially procreative marriage.

² *Ruach* can also mean “breath” or “wind.” In almost every language the word for “spirit” either means the same as or derives from the word for “breath” or “wind.” Jesus breathed on the Apostles to symbolize to them the giving of the Holy Spirit (John 20:22). At Pentecost there was a sound of wind (Acts 2:2).

³ Gaia, the Greek Mother Earth goddess, was the daughter of Chaos and the wife of Ouranos (Uranus). Her name is the root of our words geology and geometry, which study and measure the earth. Her symbol was a dove.

The Fall of Judea and Roman Monuments

Rome was the greatest superpower in the world in the first century A.D., so its conquest of tiny Judea (Israel) might seem like “chump change” in the greater scheme of things. David and Solomon’s United Monarchy of Israel had been a world superpower in its day, when Rome, if it even existed at the time, was no more than a tiny fishing village on the edge of the Tiber swamps. A thousand years later, however, Rome ruled the known world and Judea, all that was left of Solomon’s vast kingdom, was considered a God-forsaken dry and dusty outpost of the empire. To be assigned a military or political post there was almost considered a sentence.

Judea had been under foreign rule since 587 B.C. when it fell to Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylonian Empire. It had thereafter been ruled by Persians, Egyptian Greeks and Syrian Greeks, and finally regained a superficial independence for a few decades under the Hasmoneans (Maccabees). Then its own royal family couldn’t agree on who was to be king, so they appealed to Pompey the Great to decide which claimant should sit on the throne. Not surprisingly, he decided that it should be Rome. And from Rome’s point of view, that was that. Discussion over.

Although first century Judea was insignificant on the world political scene, that was not at all true of the world population of Jews. Today the population of only a few major cities around the world contains a large percentage of Jews. In the first century, however, almost every important city

in the Mediterranean world had a very large Jewish population that played a significant role in the life of the city. Most of the Jews outside Judea were Hellenized—that is, they had adopted Greek culture at least to some extent, and most spoke Greek at least as a second language. In every Jewish community there were some who remained loyal to the ancient Judaic ways, but they usually kept to themselves and tended to their own business. They bothered no one and no one bothered them, even though most Gentiles thought them to be a bit strange. The Hellenized Jews generally blended in reasonably well with Gentile society.

The Jews in Judea, both traditional and Hellenized, were not at all happy about Rome’s heavy-handed rule. While some countries benefited greatly by Roman rule, Judea did not feel like one of them. The Romans built roads and public works that helped Judean commerce, but unlike some of the backward countries that Rome had conquered, Judea did not need Rome to keep the peace and teach them civilized ways that would raise their standard of living. To the contrary, they considered Rome’s paganism and lack of reverence for life to be inferior to the Jewish culture. Also Rome appointed an allegedly Jewish king, Herod, whom they hated for a great number of reasons. Rome also made the most of the corruption of high officials such as the High Priest Caiaphas, using them against their own people to support the position of

Rome. On top of that, most of the Romans who had been assigned to Judea hated the place, and took out their venom on the Jews. The plum assignments were Spain, North Africa and Syria, and Judea was considered the dregs. To make matters worse, Judea was not a particularly wealthy region, and did not offer much to enrich the Roman coffers. Fabulous wealth poured into Rome from such places as Spain and Syria, but not from Judea. Some of their governors took their Judean assignments gracefully, but Pontius Pilate was one who did not. According to the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus (who had high regard for the Romans), Pilate went out of his way to irritate the Jews, and on some occasions his brutality was considered harsh even by the brutal Roman standards.

Because of all this the Judean Jews were often rebellious and disobedient, and uprisings were frequent. By the middle of the first century A.D. the unrest was palpable, and a major revolt began under the instigation of a band of rebels known as the Zealots. They had been around for decades, and were dedicated to raising an army and driving out the Romans, just as Judas Maccabeus had driven out the Seleucids over two centuries earlier. In 68 A.D. a fanatic sect of the Zealots known as the *Sicarii* (“Daggers”) rose up and slaughtered Roman soldiers and civilians. The Romans were far too strong for them, so they fled with their families to an isolated almost impregnable fortress called Masada. Masada was so close to impregnable that the Roman guards were not

alert, and the *Sicarii* captured it in the night. They held it for years until the Roman general Vespasian, who would later become emperor, finally recaptured it. The story of Masada is a classic in the annals of military conflict and the courage of the oppressed.

In 70 A.D. the Romans had had enough. Vespasian had become emperor, and he authorized his son Titus, now the commander of the Roman army in Judea, to do whatever was necessary to put down the Jewish rebellion once and for all. Rather than laying siege to Jerusalem, Titus surrounded it and waited. After hundreds of Jews had starved to death he took the city with little resistance. He then leveled the city—the Romans were experts at that—and according to Flavius Josephus he crucified Jews until there was no wood left in the region to make crosses.

For the first time since Pompey had taken control of Judea a century before, huge wealth poured into Rome from Judea. Before leveling the Temple (upon which Herod had lavished huge treasure), Titus took everything of value from it, including several six-foot solid gold candlesticks, many enormous gold vessels, and tons of gold plating and gold leaf. He also confiscated the goods of every wealthy Jew in Judea except that of the sycophants who had supported him all along, and he sold hundreds of thousands of Jews into slavery. Not only did this make Titus very rich, enabling him to give generous bonuses to his soldiers (a necessary practice to retain their loyalty), but it enabled him to send a fortune back to Rome.

A very serious problem in Rome was the enormous population of common people who were completely “on the dole.” In order to control the population of the city and maintain civil tranquility, its leaders for generations had provided free or extremely cheap food and housing to the people, as well as offering free entertainment in the arenas almost every day. Historians have called this “bread and circuses.” Through most of Rome’s period of expansion this had been no problem. The upper classes were vastly wealthy (five percent of the people held ninety-five percent of the wealth), and the continuing expansion into new lands insured a continuing flow of riches into Rome. By Vespasian’s time (r. 69-79 A.D.), however, the expansion was slowing, and thus so was the inflow of wealth. The Roman people had just endured fourteen years of the mad Nero’s reign, and they were restive and ready to explode. Rome was broke and facing an enormous deficit. Three emperors had reigned after Nero: Galba, Otho and Vitellius. Their reigns lasted six, four and eight months respectively. If Vespasian hoped to hold his throne he would have to placate the people. To do so he promised them an arena greater than anything Rome had ever before seen, with games more lavish than ever before. He began the project immediately upon taking the throne. Nero, rather than rebuilding Rome after the fire, took some of the best land in the middle of the city and built a gargantuan palace that would make Versailles look like a country hut. He called it the *Domus Aurea* (“Golden

House”), and it enraged the people. Vespasian, who like Augustus lived relatively simply, set about tearing down the *Domus Aurea*. He used the land for the arena, and the valuables from the palace to reduce Rome’s deficit. It took eight years to build the arena (72-80 A.D.). Vespasian died shortly before it was completed, but his son Titus succeeded him as emperor, and completed and dedicated it.



He died shortly thereafter (as one of the most loved of all Rome’s emperors), and his brother Domitian, who succeeded him, made some modifications to the arena. It seated over fifty thousand spectators, and was able to be flooded so that it could display full reenactments of famous sea battles.

Vespasian’s arena was known as the *Amphitheatrum Flavium*¹ (his family name was Flavius). It was not until the eight century A.D. that it was known as the Colosseum,² after the Colossus of Nero, a hundred-foot statue of Nero that originally stood in the atrium of the *Domus Aurea*. Domitian moved it into the arena.³

¹ Vespasian and Titus constructed a similar but smaller arena of the same name in Puteoli (the modern Pozzuoli).

² It is often misspelled Coliseum, and that word has come to be used to mean any very large amphitheater. The proper spelling for the Roman coliseum, however is Colosseum.

³ The last documented mention of it was in the fourth century, but it may have still existed in the eighth. It was probably melted down for its bronze in the early Middle Ages.

The obvious question at this point is what has all this to do with the Jews? In a restoration project at the Colosseum, hidden inscriptions were discovered indicating that most of the cost of building it was paid from the riches brought back from Judea by Titus. After Titus' death in 80 A.D., his brother Domitian erected a triumphal arch commemorating his victory



in Judea. It still stands today, and is known as the Arch of Titus.¹ This was also paid for from the loot from Judea. One of the panels on the arch is a relief

showing Roman soldiers carrying vessels from the Temple, including one of the great gold menorahs, the showbread table and the trumpets, which were then ironically placed in Rome's Temple of Peace. Modern technology has enabled researchers to make very high-resolution three-dimensional scans of the panel. They have produced an amazingly crisp, high-quality image that is accurate to within less than a millimeter, and is free of the distracting visual distortions caused by the marble's age and discoloration. The menorah was tested for traces of paint, and yellow ochre was discovered on its base and arms.

¹ Traditionally, Jews never walk underneath this arch. It is an unwritten law that whenever military troops of any free country march under the arch, Jewish soldiers are allowed to drop out of rank and walk around it. This was observed during the liberation of Italy in World War II.

This confirms the ancient descriptions of its being gold. Tests are currently being done to detect paint on other parts of the arch. It was normal in ancient times



that statues and carvings were painted to make them look as realistic as possible. The modern image of plain marble statues is inaccurate. Rome was full of completely painted statues that from a distance would have looked like living human beings.

There is a major project under way in Rome to clean and restore the Colosseum and the Arch of Titus. According to the project director Steven Fine of New York's Yeshiva University, a full-sized colored reproduction of the menorah panel, just as it looked in 81 A.D., will be on display at the university museum in 2014.

Richard R. Losch+

Religion at the Dawn of Society

From the time that scholars first began to consider such things, it has been an accepted theory that formalized religion began with the advent of agriculture and the formation of villages and community living. The theory posits that religion became formalized and rituals were developed because man saw the need to placate his deities in order to insure good crops and to enforce peaceful coexistence in his communities.

Recent discoveries in Turkey may change all that. Since 1995 German

archaeologist Klaus Schmidt has directed an excavation in a fifty-foot high hill at Göbekli Tepe, about seven miles east of Urfa (the ancient Edessa). The site consists of several henges (monolithic stone circles) that had become buried over the centuries. So far four henges and three smaller, later circular enclosures have been uncovered. Each circle is thirty-three to sixty-six feet in diameter and consists of ten to twelve eighteen-foot pillars with two larger pillars in the center. Radiometric tests indicate at least a dozen more such circles are still buried in the hill.

Stone henges are found all over Europe, the most famous being England's Stonehenge on Salisbury Plain. The Göbekli Tepe henges, however, were built about 10,000-8,000 B.C., some seven thousand years earlier than Stonehenge (c. 3000-2000 B.C.) or any other of the European ones. This places them at the beginning of the pre-pottery Neolithic age, when man was still a Stone Age hunter-gatherer. This was well before he developed agriculture or started living in villages. It was at the very dawn of civilization, almost seven millennia before the invention of writing.

The other thing that makes the Göbekli Tepe henges unique is that they are beautifully carved, unlike the European henges, which are built with rough-hewn stones that are not adorned with any artwork. The Göbekli Tepe carvings are not the crude work that one might expect from the early Stone Age, but are well executed and show a sophisticated

artistic sense.¹ They depict a great variety of animals that are obviously sacrificial offerings, as well as human and anthropomorphic forms dressed in what are almost certainly sacerdotal vestments. There are thousands of animal bones that are probably the remains of sacrifices. There is also a large number of human bones, but the way they are laid out indicates that they were not victims of human sacrifice. Rather, the site may have been what is known as an excarnation site, of which there are several in Turkey and the Middle East. The bodies of the dead would be ritually laid out for vultures to pick clean, after which the bones would be ceremonially buried in ossuaries (stone bone-boxes).

The Göbekli Tepe henges will require scholars to re-evaluate their theories as to the origins of religion. These people did not farm or live in communities, yet they obviously went to great lengths to offer sacrifices to their gods in a very organized and communal manner. It took centuries to build these henges, so the driving force was clearly strong and durable. We know that even Neanderthal burials had religious aspects, but this is by far the earliest evidence of an organized communal religion, preceding all others by thousands of years.

Richard R. Losch+

"It is frequently difficult to authenticate quotations that are cited on the Internet."

Abraham Lincoln

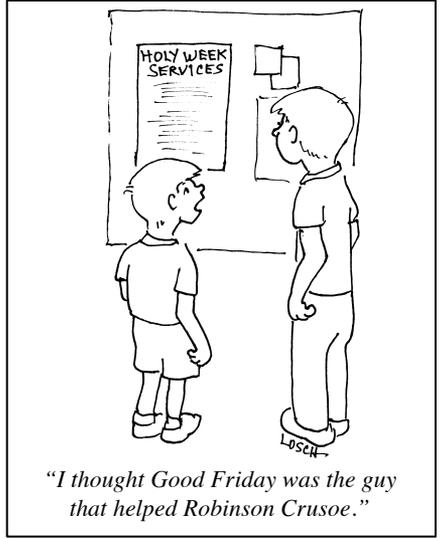
¹ Similarly, the Lascaux cave paintings in France are a high art form that one would not normally associate with crude "cave men."

Don't Forget
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by Richard R. Losch



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