

THE EPISTLE

Saint James' Episcopal Church

Livingston, Alabama

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April 2014

This Month's Cover

Our cover picture this month is "The Entombment" by Martin Schongauer (1430?-1491). It is a 4½ x 6½" copper-plate engraving executed about 1480. It is the tenth in a series of 12 engravings depicting the Passion of Christ. It is displayed at the Graphische Sammlung Albertina Museum in Vienna. It portrays the Virgin Mary and Saint John the Apostle, who is kneeling beside her, placing Jesus' body into a sarcophagus. The crown of thorns leans against the sarcophagus on the lower right, and the hill of Calvary can be seen in the distance. Directly behind Jesus and holding his body is Joseph of Arimathaea. The woman kissing his hand is probably Mary Magdalene, and the women on the left would be Mary the wife of Clopas, and Salome, the mother of James and John. The man on the right holding Jesus' feet would most likely be Saint Peter. The significance of the book on the lower left is not clear, although it probably represents the Holy Scriptures that foretold his crucifixion. At the bottom center are Schongauer's initials. The plant on the lower right is a typical device in mediaeval engravings.

Martin Schongauer was born in Colmar, Alsace, around 1430. His lineage is not certain, but most art historians believe that he was the fourth son of Caspar Schongauer, a goldsmith from Augsburg. Martin would have studied his father's trade, including the art of engraving. He came to be one of the most famous German artists of his time. Almost all of his

works have a religious theme.

He seems to have studied under Master E.S., a famous engraver, goldsmith and printmaker of the late Gothic period, whose name is unknown other than from the initials he placed on his works. Schongauer also studied painting and produced several paintings, although he was best known for his engravings, and is considered the greatest engraver of his time. Unfortunately, only one of his paintings survives, "The Madonna in the Rose Garden," which now hangs in Saint Martin's Church in Colmar. He was strongly influenced by Dutch art, especially that of Rogier van der Weyden, under whom he may have studied. Notwithstanding, he developed his own vibrant and imaginative style.

About 115 of his plates are known. His rich and mature style had such a "painterly" quality that he moved engraving from the domain only of the gold- and silversmith to an independent art form. He was known and respected throughout Europe, and he earned the epithets "Hübsch (Charming) Martin" and "Schön (Beautiful) Martin." He died in 1491 in Breisach. The young Albrecht Dürer hoped to become his student, but when he arrived in Colmar in 1492 he found that Schongauer had recently died.

Richard R. Losch+

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A Word from the Editor

It's been a long, miserable winter, but like all winters it is now passing, and there is a feeling of hope and renewal in the air. It seemed like spring would never come but the promise is there and we know that the fulfillment will come if we are patient.

Easter, like spring, is a time of the promise of hope and spiritual renewal. It is the fulfillment of the promise that we are not bound to "the winter of our discontent" in sin and hopelessness, but that God will grant us the grace of salvation, hope, and spiritual rebirth.

It would be irrational to suggest that spring comes around each year just for me. No, it would be more than irrational—it would indicate a level of self-centeredness that borders on the psychotic. Why, then, do we tend so often to have a "just you and me, Jesus" attitude about our relationship with God? As much as I love the old hymn "In the Garden," the idea that "he walks with me, and he talks with me, and he tells me I am his own, and the joy we share as we tarry there *none other has ever known*" is not only rubbish, it is pure heresy. Jesus did not come into the world to save just me, but to save me along with all the rest of mankind.

It is significant that in only two cases did the Resurrected Jesus appear to a single person. He appeared to Mary Magdalene and immediately told her go and tell the rest that he had risen (John 20:13), and he appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus and sent him to bring the news to the whole world (Acts 9:3). In every other

case he appeared only to groups of disciples. It is the Church, the Bride of Christ, that is the vehicle through which God relates to mankind, not the individual. In Davis Grubb's novel *The Night of the Hunter*, Preacher Harry Powell preaches "the religion that the Almighty and me worked out betwixt ourselves." That self-centered religion lead to murder and mayhem.

One of the major differences between Protestantism and Catholicism is that most Protestant bodies emphasize a personal relationship with God, while most Catholic bodies are more aligned with the ancient Jewish emphasis on the community's relationship with God and the individual's relationship to the community. It is through the Church, the Body of Christ, that we interact with God. While each of us has an individual responsibility to God, and the Holy Spirit interacts with us personally, it is through the Church, the community of the faithful, that we receive the saving grace of Christ. This is why corporate worship on a regular basis is so critically important. Without it we become increasingly separated from the worshipping community, and thus from the sacramental life of the Church, which is the primary channel of grace.

With the renewal given us by the death and Resurrection of Christ, which we celebrate at Easter, let us also dedicate ourselves to a renewal of our bond with God by worshipping him in communion with all the faithful in his holy Church.

Father Rick Losch

ECW 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 sought during this sale and 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

ECW Candy and Baked Goods Sale

The Episcopal Church Women will once again have a booth selling homemade candy and baked goods at the Sucarnocnee Folklife Festival on Saturday, April 19th. Please make your plans to attend and enjoy a day of great food, entertainment, and interesting art and crafts.

Hiram Patrenos

Easter Flowers

Each year St. James' Church offers the opportunity to remember loved ones through donations to the Altar Guild, which provides the lilies and altar flowers in the Church for Easter services. If you wish to make a donation for this – In Memory of, In Honor of, or In Thanksgiving for – forms are available at the back of the Church or you may print this information clearly and mail it along with your contribu-

tion to Carolyn Patrenos, President, St. James' Altar Guild, Post Office Box 399, Livingston, Alabama 35470. Checks should be made payable to St. James' Altar Guild. Because of the increased costs for these flowers, we ask for a minimum donation of \$25.00 for memorials. Publication deadline for inclusion in the Easter bulletin is Wednesday, April 16th. Your donation is tax deductible.

Hiram Patrenos

Holy Week and Easter Services

Palm Sunday - On Sunday, April 13th, our observance of Passiontide will begin with the celebration of the Liturgy of the Palms and Holy Communion at 11:00 a.m.

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

Maundy Thursday – Holy Communion and the Stripping of the Altar beginning at 6:00 p.m.

Good Friday –Liturgy for Good Friday and Holy Communion from the Reserved Sacrament at 5:00 p.m.

Easter Day – The Community Sunrise Service will be hosted by Livingston United Methodist Church at 6:30 a.m. at the Livingston Civic Center. St. Alban's celebration of The Day of the Resurrection will be at 8:30 a.m. with Holy Communion. St. James will celebrate The Day of the Resurrection with Holy Communion at 11:00 a.m.

Hiram Patrenos

Be Wordly Wise

Fun With Prefixes

One thing verbophiles (word lovers) enjoy doing is taking a word root and seeing how many different words can be created just by applying prefixes and suffixes. Consider, for example, the root *-pose*, which derives from the Latin *ponere*, “to place.”¹ There is a huge number of prefixes we can add to it, including **ab-** (away), **con-** (with, together), **de-** (from), **dis-** (apart, in a different direction), **ex-** (out of), **in-** (in, upon), **re-** (back), **se-** (self), **sub-** (under), **super-** (over), **ob-** (against), **pre-** (before, as preceding), **pro-** (before, in front of). Note that if a prefix precedes a letter like *b* or *p* it sometimes changes.² For example, *con-* + *-pose* become *compose*, and *ob-* + *-pose* becomes *oppose*.

Try taking each prefix, consider its meaning, then place it before **-pose** (put, place), and you can see how the meaning of the resulting word is derived. If you then try adding suffixes such as *-able*, *-al* and *-ition*, the number of possible words from a simple root becomes mind-boggling.

Now try combining these prefixes with some other roots, such as **-pute** (Latin *putare*, “to think”), **-pend** (Latin *pendere*, “to hang”), or **-solve** (Latin *solvere*, “to loosen”).

Richard R. Losch+

Harriet's House

Harriet's House, our local domestic violence shelter, is in need of a number of things. Federal and state funds have been slashed, so every penny has to count. The shelter provides a haven for abused women, who often arrive with their children. When it is determined that they are reasonably safe but cannot return home, Harriet's House finds housing for them and helps them set up housekeeping. This, along with the needs of the shelter itself as it feeds and cares for them, requires a great variety of household and personal hygiene items. Cleaning materials, toothbrushes and toothpaste, soap and shampoo, laundry care items, toilet paper, towels and such things are always in need, both for the residents and to help women get started in new housing. Diapers and simple children's toys are always welcome. They also can use young children's clothing, but because of very limited storage space they cannot accept adult clothing. They also cannot accept gifts of food. Again because of limited storage space and the need to provide a balanced diet to the residents, it is easier and often cheaper for them to buy food as they need it. Financial gifts, of course, are always welcome.

They can also use your old cell phones (please don't forget the charger). They rig them so they can only call 911, and give them to women in danger of abuse.

There is a box in the entryway of the church where gifts can be left. Your help is greatly appreciated.

Richard R. Losch+

¹ Its participle is *positum*, from which we get the root *-pose* and the word *position*.

² These are called labials because they are made with the lips (Latin *labia*). “Conpose” is not easy to pronounce, so the *n* becomes an *m*, which is also a labial.

Solomon's Cheap Wine

In the summer of 2013 an excavation just south of the Temple Mount uncovered a fragment of a 10th century BC clay wine jar, dating from the time of the reign of King Solomon. On it is an inscription in the oldest alphabetic text ever found in Jerusalem. At first the archaeologists thought that it was proto-Canaanite, but further study shows it to be decipherable Hebrew that was probably written by a foreigner. It refers to some kind of cheap wine. It contains the words *yakin* (יָקִין) and *halak* (חָלָק). *Yakin* is a type of wine, and *halak* indicates that it is of very low quality. A portion of a word on the inscription appears to be a date, and another portion is believed to be the start of a word indicating the place of origin. A reasonable conclusion is that it was imported, and a foreigner at the place of origin wrote the inscription before the wine was shipped. This would account for the crudeness of the script. Hebrew was not the writer's native tongue or alphabet, but he wrote the inscription in Hebrew because Israel was the destination of the shipment.

The inscription, if the archaeologists are right, belies the old argument that the Israel of David and Solomon was a simple and relatively uncomplicated society. Rather, it indicates a level of business organization typical of a tightly structured and well-regulated economy. The labeling of the type of wine is not extraordinary, but to identify the date and place of origin indicates that these were a matter of concern to the purchaser. That

would mean that records were being kept, and that there were specific labeling requirements. To have dated engraved labeling would mean that the wine jars were made and fired specifically for that order of wine.

The next question is why Solomon, with all his wealth, would want to import cheap wine. It certainly was not intended for his table. In the building of the Temple and his own magnificent palace, Solomon employed and conscripted tens of thousands of laborers. They would have to be fed, and since wine would be part of the fare he imported the cheapest wine possible for that purpose.

Richard R. Losch+

Hmmm. . .

No one can accuse Bill Maher of being inconsistent, even though a couple of other adjectives might apply. He rants about income inequality at every single one of the public appearances for which he receives his \$100,000 speaking fee.

An Interesting Statistic

The proposed Keystone XL pipeline would run 1,179 miles from Alberta, Canada into the USA and would have the capability to move 830,000 barrels of crude oil a day. This is equal to a train with 1,200 railroad cars moving crude every day (source: State Department).

Arica, Chile, with a population of 162,000, is the driest city in the world. It gets only 0.03" of rain annually.

Late Easter

I have heard a number of people observe that Easter is late this year, and in fact it is. Easter can never be earlier than March 22 or later than April 25, and this year it falls on April 20. Since the foundation of the Episcopal Church in 1786 it has fallen on April 25 only twice, in 1886 and 1943. The next time will be in 2038, and not again until some time after 2123, which is as far ahead as I have seen it calculated. It fell on March 22 in 1818, and will not fall on that date again until sometime after 2123.

The date of Easter is calculated according to the "Nicene Formula," which was set by the Council of Nicaea in AD 325. It determined that Easter would be the Sunday following the paschal¹ full moon, which is the full moon on or immediately following the vernal equinox. The vernal equinox usually falls on March 21, although it can fall on the 20th. Because it is possible for the date to diverge in different time zones around the world, the Roman Catholic Church, for the purpose of setting the date of Easter, established the equinox as March 21 even when it may actually fall on the 20th. All Christian churches in the west follow the same practice. Since the earliest time the paschal full moon could appear would be on the 21st, then the earliest Sunday that could follow would be the 22nd.

The western Church uses the Gregorian calendar, the one with which we are familiar, for all liturgical dates. The Eastern Orthodox Church, on the other hand, uses the older Julian Calendar. By that calendar the vernal equinox falls on April 3, so it is not uncommon for the western and eastern dates of Easter to differ.

Although Jesus was crucified at the time of Passover, that feast and Easter do not always coincide. The reason for this is that Passover begins on the 15th day of the Jewish month of Nisan. The Jewish calendar is a lunar one, very similar to the Julian. For this reason the dates can differ. In 2008, for example, Easter came before Passover.

Richard R. Losch+

God's Revenge?

On August 29, 586 BC, Nebuchadnezzar's army ended their siege of Jerusalem and destroyed Solomon's Temple, carrying its treasures back to Babylon. On August 29, 70 AD, Titus's army finished the sacking of Jerusalem and the destruction of Herod's Temple, literally razing it to the ground and carrying its treasures back to Rome. And on August 25, 79 AD Vesuvius erupted, destroying the Roman elite's most luxurious vacation resorts, Pompeii and Herculaneum. The eruption and destruction ended on August 29th.²

We are not playing Pat Robertson

¹ Paschal is the adjective for Easter. It derives from the Greek *Pascha* (Πασχα), "Easter," which in turn derives from the Hebrew and Aramaic *Pesach* (פסח), "Passover."

² Because of documentary discrepancies and calendar errors these dates may not be precise, but they are almost certainly within a very few days of August 29 in each case.

here, claiming that the destruction of Pompeii and Herculaneum was God's revenge for Rome's destruction of the Temple. The question historians are asking, however, is did the early Christians and Jews believe this? For centuries it was believed that there were few if any Jews in Pompeii. The excavations of the city, however, have provided evidence of a large Jewish community there, including a villa of a very rich man. On one wall is a painting of the Judgment of Solomon, portraying the two women before Solomon, who offers to cut the baby in half and divide it between them.¹ It is the earliest known painting of a story from the Bible.

Pompeii was not only a luxurious resort city, it was also an important fishing town, and had a very prosperous industry in the production of a sauce called *garum*, which was somewhat similar to Worcestershire sauce. It was made from fermented seafood, herbs and spices, and was shipped from Pompeii throughout the whole Roman Empire. Further evidence of a large Jewish population is a recent discovery of the production of *garum castum*, "spotless or innocent garum." This is almost unquestionably kosher garum. The only seafood the Jewish dietary laws allow is fish with scales. Since traditional garum was made from all kinds of seafood, including shellfish and scale-less fish, observant Jews could not eat it. *Garum castum* was apparently made from only scaled fish. Many of the other religious cults

in Rome had dietary laws, but none proscribed scale-less seafood, so the only conclusion we can draw is that *garum castum* was made for Jews who observed *kashrut* (the dietary laws).

To return to our original question, did the 1st century Jews and Christians see the destruction of Pompeii as God's vengeance for the destruction of Jerusalem on the same date 9 years before? The answer is that they probably did. Among several bits of evidence are two that seem to jump out at us. One is a graffito written in the ruins of Pompeii, and the other is a book called the *Sibylline Oracles*.

After the destruction of Pompeii, many people returned to the city either to loot or to try to find their possessions or the remains of their loved ones. Someone came back to an *insula* (apartment building) in what is now called Region 9. Seeing nothing but destruction in all directions, he wrote in large block Roman letters on a wall with a piece of charcoal, SODOM GOMOR[RAH], a reference to the destruction of those cities because of their sins. It is highly unlikely that anyone other than a Jew or Christian would have even known of that story.²

The *Sibylline Oracles* is a book of prophecies allegedly given by a sibyl, a woman (usually old) who would go into a trance and prophesy. It is particularly important, because it provides a wealth of information about Greek and Roman mythology, as well

¹ In the same painting, two of the people are almost certainly Socrates and Aristotle.

² The inscription was found in a 19th century excavation, and now resides in the Naples Archaeological Museum.

as the beliefs and practices of various religious groups, including those of the Jews, Christians and Gnostics. Book 4 of the *Oracles* deals primarily with the Jews. It contains the passage:

An evil storm of war will also come upon Jerusalem from Italy, and it will sack the great Temple of God ... A leader of Rome [Titus] will come ... who will burn the Temple of Jerusalem with fire [and] at the same time slaughter many men and destroy the great land of the Jews ... When a fire-brand, turned away from a cleft in the earth [Vesuvius] in the land of Italy, reaches to broad heaven it will burn many cities and destroy men. Much smoking ashes will fill the great sky and showers will fall from heaven like red earth. Know then the wrath of the heavenly God.

Although the book was written after the fall of Jerusalem, the passage is written as if it were a prophecy. Notwithstanding, the association of the destruction of Pompeii and Herculaneum with the God's vengeance for the destruction of Jerusalem is clear.

Richard R. Losch+

Who Are the Gentiles?

The Bible frequently refers to the Gentiles, the term being found 30 times in the Old Testament, and 94 in the New. The common understanding of Gentiles is that it means non-Jews, but his is not entirely accurate.

When God called Abram (later called Abraham) to leave his home in Mesopotamia and go to a new land, he promised that he would make his descendants into a great nation. In He-

brew this is *goy gadol* (גוי גדול). God went on to say that in Abram would "all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:3). The phrase translated "families of the earth" is *mishpachot ha-adamah* (משפחת האדמה), which literally means "families of the soil." The traditional name of the first man, Adam, is the Hebrew word for "man,"¹ and it comes from the same root as *adamah* "soil." When God refers to the "families of the earth," he uses the word that clearly connects them all to Adam, who was made from the soil.

The "nations of the world," *goyim ha-adamah* and the "families of the earth," *mishpachot ha-adamah*, then, are clearly the same—thus all the nations of the world will be blessed through Abraham. The Jews, therefore, were not the "Chosen People" because they are specially favored by God, they were chosen to bring the knowledge of God to the rest of the world. They were chosen for a mission, not for special privilege. The prophets and rabbis clearly understood this from ancient times.

When the Old Testament was translated into Greek (the Septuagint), *goyim* was rendered *ethnoi* (ἔθνοι), "peoples, nations or tribes." This is the source of our word "ethnic." When Saint Jerome translated the Bible into Latin he used the Latin *gentiles* (pronounced gen-till-ays), which means "those of the same race, nation or clan." Eventually this came to be

¹ The Bible only refers to him as *adam* (אדם), "the man." Adam was not used as a proper name until New Testament times.

Anglicized as Gentiles.

After Alexander the Great conquered most of the Middle East, the Greek language and culture spread like wildfire throughout his empire. It came to be common for the Jews to refer to anyone who was not a Jew as a Greek.¹ In the New Testament, Paul frequently refers to “Jews and Greeks.” What he is actually saying is “Jews and non-Jews.” In time it became common to use Gentiles in the same way, even though the original Hebrew word, *goyim*, referred to the nations of the world, to whom the Jews were to bring the word of God.

Richard R. Losch+

Mud Bricks

If you have an insatiable desire to erect a 19th Dynasty Egyptian building or replicate a Babylonian wall, all you need is a few thousand mud bricks that you can make quite easily. You will need mud, straw, a wooden brick mold, and enough sunshine to dry the bricks. Mud bricks are amazingly strong and durable, especially in a moderately dry climate, even in the rain. They are similar to adobe, although adobe bricks are made from adobe clay, which recrystallizes and becomes very hard under the pressure of the weight of the bricks on top of it.² Mud bricks become harder under

pressure, but not as much as adobe. To make a mud brick, the mud is first kneaded for 4 days. This is usually done in a mud pit, with barefoot workers walking back and forth through it. It is then mixed with dry chopped straw or some other organic material, then kneaded again. The best straw is grain chaff, but any straw-like organic material will do, even grass cuttings. After kneading, it is left a few days to ferment, and then is kneaded again just before being shaped.³ This mixture is pressed into a wooden mold and carried to the drying field, where the brick is carefully dropped out of the mold. The drying field is layered with sand or straw to keep the bricks from sticking to it as they dry. They are then left to dry in the sun for two or three days.

The straw makes a huge difference in the strength of the brick. Bricks made without straw break or crumble easily, and are not nearly as durable in the rain. When the Hebrew slaves in Egypt asked to be given time to go into the desert to worship God, the pharaoh (most likely Rameses II) punished them by making them chop their own straw instead of providing it for them (Ex. 5:7).

The mortar used was generally the same mixture as the brick, except that it was used wet and placed between

¹ There was much tension in Judea between traditional Jews and those (usually the young) who espoused the Greek culture. They are known as “Hellenized Jews.”

² Even the weight of a footprint will do. If people walk on damp adobe and it then dries,

the footprints become as tough as rocks, while the surrounding clay remains supple.

³ Archaeologists, who use mud bricks to replace missing portions of ancient walls, add a red dye at this time. This is to distinguish their bricks from the original ones, which are usually gray or light brown.

the bricks as they were laid. This essentially glued the bricks together. The weight of the structure itself adds strength to the bricks. Some ancient mud brick structures have lasted for thousands of years.

The earliest mud bricks were found in the upper Tigris valley, and are dated at about 7500 BC. Ceramic or fired clay brick was a much later discovery. The oldest of these were found in the Indus Valley in India, and are dated at about 2900 BC.

In next month's *Epistle* we will take a closer look at the slavery of the Israelites in Egypt

Richard R. Losch+

The Hands of War

It has long been believed that in ancient Egypt it was the custom to cut off the right hands of defeated soldiers. Not only were they trophies of war, but it also kept those who lived from ever being able to bear weapons again. An inscription on the tomb of Ahmose I, the pharaoh who defeated the Hyksos rulers¹ in the 16th century

BC and then enslaved the Israelites, tell how after each battle against the Hyksos, the soldiers would bring back the hands of their enemies and be rewarded with the "gold of valor." The only problem was that while there are references to this practice in inscriptions and reliefs, there has never been any hard evidence of it until now. An excavation at Tell el-Daba in Egypt has revealed a series of pits dated at about 1600 BC. In them are the remains of severed right hands. So far 16 hands have been found. There is no firm evidence that this practice was used anywhere else but Egypt, although there are hints that the Hyksos might have adopted it when they were expelled from Egypt.

A similar practice that was common throughout the ancient Middle East was to cut off the thumbs and middle fingers of captive soldiers. This prevented them from ever again holding a sword or drawing a bow, yet left them able to labor as slaves.

Julius Caesar, in the Gallic wars, punished the Gauls for rebellion by cutting off both hands of hundreds of men and boys, both soldiers and civilians. This was done simply as a warning to others of the severity of Roman retribution for disobedience. For all of their high civilization, the Romans' cruelty knew few limits.

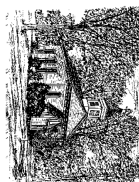
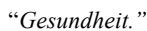
Richard R. Losch+

¹ The Hyksos were a Semitic tribe from northern Canaan who became rulers of Egypt in the 17th century BC. It is not clear whether they gained power militarily, or simply migrated into Egypt and eventually by sheer force of numbers became able to usurp power by a coup. Historians are more and more leaning toward the latter theory. Ahmose I defeated them and drove them out in the mid-16th century. Soon thereafter the Israelites, who, being Semites, were probably allies of the Hyksos, were enslaved. The Bible says that Pharaoh feared their numbers. This is consistent with the theory that the Hyksos gained power because of their numbers.

The tax reform plan proposed in Congress on February 26 has 979 pages of proposed changes that would repeal over 220 sections of the tax code, cutting the size of the tax code by 25% (source: House of Representatives)

**SAINT JAMES'
EPISCOPAL CHURCH**

by Richard R. Losch



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