

THE EPISTLE

Saint James' Episcopal Church
Livingston, Alabama



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November 2016

This Month's Cover

This month we deviate a bit from our usual medieval and Renaissance religious art, and turn to a bit of traditional Americana with Norman Rockwell's *Freedom From Want*. It is oil on canvas, measuring about 36"x46", and is displayed at the Norman Rockwell Museum in Stockbridge, MA. It was inspired by Franklin D. Roosevelt's 1941 State of the Union address, in which he promised the Four Freedoms: Freedom of Speech, Freedom of Worship, Freedom from Want, and Freedom from Fear. In 1942 Rockwell undertook paintings of the Four Freedoms, each of which was first published as a cover of the weekly magazine *The Saturday Evening Post*. Most of the people in this painting were Rockwell's family and neighbors in Stockbridge, and the man peering at the viewer in the lower right corner is Rockwell himself.

For most of his career Norman Rockwell was scorned by art critics as "a mere illustrator." In fact, that is exactly what artists have been over the ages—they have served as illustrators of stories, legends, myths, people and religious events. While many presented grandiose or imaginative illustrations, a few strove to show the everyday events of life. One of the most notable of these was the Dutch painter Pieter Bruegel the Elder (1525-1569), whose paintings have preserved for us such things as children's games, street markets and the daily lives of peasants. In his lifetime he was criticized for painting things of no real importance, yet the daily lives of the common people were very important to them, and what we have learned of them from his work is important to us. Today he is recognized as one of the great Dutch Masters. Similarly, Rockwell, while his work is loved by the common people, is coming to be recognized for his amazing talent as an artist.

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Norman Rockwell was born in 1894 in New York City, a scion of English settlers in Connecticut in 1635. At age 14 he left high school to go to the Chase Art School, and later studied at the National Academy of Design. Most of his earliest works were for youth magazines, especially *St. Nicholas Magazine* and *Boys' Life*, the magazine of the Boy Scouts of America. For over five decades he produced covers for *Boys' Life* and for the annual Boy Scout calendars. His first paying job as an artist was when he was hired at the age of eighteen as the *Boys' Life* staff artist (the Boy Scouts of America was only 10 years old at the time). Many of his Scouting paintings are in the National Scouting Museum in Irving, TX. In 1916 he submitted his first painting to *The Saturday Evening Post*, and it received nationwide acclaim. From 1939 on most of his paintings reflected various aspects of American culture.

Rockwell was a prolific artist, producing over four thousand paintings in his lifetime. Many have been destroyed in fires or other disasters, but most have survived and are displayed in several museums; very few are in private collections. He died of emphysema in 1978 at his home in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, where he is buried.

Richard R. Losch+

A Word From the Editor

The “Holiday Season” will soon be upon us—that blend of Thanksgiving and Christmas that is our last major fling before we are beset by the doldrums of January and February, when most of us pray heartily for an early Spring. It is also the first time in the year that many merchants start making a serious profit, to which we generously contribute while angrily grumbling about the commercialism of the season.

I must admit that I rankle at the store displays of both Hallowe'en costumes and Christmas decorations put up at the same time, usually in early September. On the other hand I believe in a free market, and they wouldn't do that if their customers didn't buy the stuff. Advent begins on the last Sunday of this month. While I don't believe in celebrating

Christmas during Advent, I also don't believe that I have the right to forbid you to do so. I do, however, have the right and the moral obligation to explain to you why I believe as I do, and to show you the advantages of that.

Therein lies the problem. Today, because of the failure of the Church to teach her people, the vast majority of Christians have no idea whatever of what Advent is all about, and very little idea of what Christmas is about other than its being the celebration of the birth of the baby Jesus a couple thousand years ago (and if some of the TV interviews are correct, many don't even know that!). Similarly, while Thanksgiving is not an actual ecclesiastical feast, it has a serious enough religious overtone that it is celebrated in churches all over the country. Even so, huge numbers of people have no idea of its historical origins or of its religious implications.

We who are believing Christians have been given a magnificent gift. If we believe that, don't we have a moral obligation to share it with others? We don't hesitate to shout from the rooftops when we find a new extraordinarily good restaurant or see an outstanding movie, but we keep our religion close to the chest and are hesitant even to talk about it. Perhaps this is because we are a little bit afraid that we might incur scorn or worse, but Jesus (who incurred plenty of scorn) never promised us that it would be easy; or perhaps it is because we want to be politically correct and not offend anyone, but I notice that Jesus was rarely worried about offending people; or perhaps we feel that we have no right to force our beliefs on others, and that is true—but there is a great difference between forcing our beliefs and sharing them so that those who so choose can learn and accept them.

The upcoming "Holiday Season" is a great time to share our Faith, if in no other way than by conspicuously living it. It is a time when there is enough attention paid to religion that people are more open to a discussion of it, and sometimes to learning more about it. "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, . . . teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19f).

Father Rick Losch

Community Thanksgiving Service

St. Francis' Roman Catholic Church will host the Community Thanksgiving Service on Tuesday, November 22nd, at 5:30 p.m. You are asked to bring canned goods to be given to the Department of Human Resources for distribution to those in need. Please make your plans to attend and invite your friends and neighbors as we give thanks for the multitude of blessings God has bestowed upon us.

Hiram Patrenos

Altar Flower Volunteers

Volunteers are needed to provide altar flowers through the season of Pentecost as well as to provide greenery during the season of Advent. 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

Wilmer Hall Christmas Contribution

Once again, St. James' will make a special gift to Wilmer Hall for its Christmas needs this year. Envelopes are available on the table in the vestibule/narthex and contributions should be made payable to St. James' and designated for "Wilmer Hall Christmas." Envelopes may be placed in the alms aasins or given to Hiram Patrenos. So that we may forward our gift in time for use this Christmas, you are asked to make your contribution no later than Sunday, November 27th.

Hiram Patrenos

Forward Day by Day

The new *Forward Day by Day* daily devotional booklets for November, December, and January are available on the table in the vestibule/narthex and in the tract rack in the Parish House.

Hiram Patrenos

Every Member Canvass

St. James' will conduct its Every Member Canvass during the month of November. The Vestry needs this information so that it can budget appropriately for the upcoming year. If you have any questions regarding our parish finances, please do not hesitate to speak with a member of the Vestry or our Treasurer, T. Raiford Noland. Pledge cards are available on the table in the vestibule/narthex. Please prayerfully consider your commitment to St. James', its mission and work.

Hiram Patrenos

Be Wordly Wise

The Hardest Language

Linguists have long argued about which is the hardest language for a foreigner to learn, and almost all agree that it is either English or any of the various Chinese dialects. Both have an enormous vocabulary, larger than most other languages. In English the meaning of a word is generally fixed, even though its shades of meaning might vary according to the context and inflection. In Chinese, on the other hand, as is true of most Eastern languages, a word's meaning often depends on the context; and to make matters worse, exactly the same word can have a wholly different and sometimes opposite meaning depending on how it is inflected. Also, Chinese is not written with an alphabet, but with combinations of pictographs, some of which represent syllables, and some concepts. One must recognize thousands of pictographs in order to be considered even basically literate.

English might therefore seem easier but for one important factor—it is a combination the words and grammar of at least six major languages and countless minor ones. The languages of the ancient Angles and Britons were a mixture of their earlier native tribal tongues liberally enriched with the language of the immigrating Celts. When the Romans invaded Britain in the first century B.C. they introduced Latin vocabulary and grammar, producing a unique British language. The later

Saxon invaders brought an early form of German, and this mix then became enriched with Danish from over two centuries of Viking incursions. That mixture of languages is today called Anglo-Saxon, and was the language of *Beowulf*. When the Normans conquered Britain in 1066 they spoke two dialects of Old French, while their English subjects spoke Anglo-Saxon. By the mid 14th century these two languages had become more and more intermixed to produce a language that we now call Old English, which King Edward III made the official language of England. This was the language of Geoffrey Chaucer. Throughout the next seven centuries this language continued to evolve. It was very strongly enriched with Latin and Greek, which were considered the only proper languages for scholars until relatively modern times. The result is a stew of languages that we call English, which has a vocabulary, orthography and grammar that is a mixture of languages from all over central and western Europe, and spans at least 23 centuries. This is why we cut a bough off a tree, bow to a king, and shoot arrows with a bow; we have a goose, a mongoose and a moose, but if we have more than one we have geese, mongooses and moose; we have foxes in the woods and oxen on the farm; horses have hooves and houses have roofs; and we have one germ or many germs, but one bacterium or many bacteria. We could come up with pages of such examples, which is why most linguists claim that the hardest language of all for a foreigner to learn is English.

To complicate matters even further, scholars in the 18th and 19th centuries tried to impose Classic Latin grammar on English. This is why many purists (I tend to be one) rankle at a split infinitive (“to boldly go”) when an unsplit one will do just as well (“to go boldly”); or at ending a sentence with a preposition (“the place he came fro,”) when it is just as easy to say “the place whence he came.” On the other hand, it is also easy to get stuffy about grammar. Winston Churchill, when corrected for ending a sentence with a preposition, said, “This is the sort of pedantry up with which I will not put.”

Richard R. Losch+

A Relic from Solomon's Temple

In 1979 a photographer from the Sorbonne University in Paris, while traveling in Israel, spotted a small ivory object in an antiquities shop. He gave it to the Israel Antiquities Authority, who placed it in the Israel Museum. It was a carved ivory pomegranate about the size of a man's thumb, and it bore an inscription in paleo-Hebrew (the early Hebrew script used about 950 B.C., the time of King Solomon). About a third of the base is broken off, so a section of the inscription is missing. In translation it reads, "Belonging to the Tem[ple of Yahwe]h, holy to the priests." At first the IAA thought it might be authentic, but were not sure. After examining it under a microscope several experts decided that it is a forgery. In fact it was referred to as a forgery in the famous James Ossuary forgery trial, although it was not placed in evidence. It remained in the museum, however, identified as a forgery but nonetheless as a good example of an artifact of the time. Such a carved pomegranate would have been the head of a priest's scepter. There is a hole bored in the base to receive the staff of the scepter. In those days in Israel the pomegranate was a symbol of abundance, and is still an important symbol of the Jewish New Year.¹



Last year the experts decided to have another look, using the latest state-of-the-art technology. After careful examination they changed their minds, and determined that the little ivory pomegranate is indeed an authentic relic from Solomon's Temple.

Richard R. Losch+

¹ Ancient Jewish tradition says that the fruit that Eve and Adam ate in the Garden of Eden was a pomegranate. The Bible calls it only a fruit (Gen. 3:3ff)—that it was an apple is a relatively modern tradition.

The Babylonian Exile—How Bad Was It?

Most of us have the image of the Babylonian Exile being a time of great anguish and suffering, and for many it certainly was (2 Kg. 24:1ff). The Psalmist wrote, “By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion” (Ps. 137:1). In 597 B.C. and in two waves after that (586 and 582 B.C.), King Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylonia swept through Judah, destroying Jerusalem and Solomon’s Temple, and carrying off to Babylonia thousands of Judah’s elite, including the royal family, all political and military leaders, teachers, artisans and intellectuals, and leaving behind only a leaderless rabble (2 Kg. 24:14).

By today’s standards Nebuchadnezzar would be considered a ruthless and cruel despot. By the standards of 2500 years ago, however, he was actually a very enlightened leader. It was the norm in those days that when a nation was conquered all its leaders would be slaughtered so that being leaderless it could not rally and rise up again. The first to deviate from this were the Assyrians two centuries earlier, who captured the northern kingdom of Israel and carried its leaders into captivity instead of killing them. The Assyrian idea was to extract from them all the knowledge they could for their own advantage. Nebuchadnezzar improved on this idea in an extraordinarily humane yet advantageous way. He brought them back to Babylon, distributed them throughout his kingdom, and encouraged them to assimilate into the Babylonian culture. In doing so, of course, they infused their own talents, skills and learning into the culture.

The Biblical account of this event was written by a faithful remnant who had remained fiercely loyal to God and to their nation, and thus we can naturally expect it to be somewhat biased. All the non-Biblical evidence indicates that while the exile was unquestionably a difficult time for most, it was not unbearable, and in some cases was not at all hard. By the time Cyrus the Great of Persia conquered Babylonia and freed the Jews, there were very few of the original hostages still alive. The vast majority had been born in Babylonia and saw little

reason to leave the homes they knew and return to a homeland they had heard about but had never seen.¹ Records indicate that King Johoiachin and his family were well-treated. Documents found in Nebuchadrezzar's South Palace in Babylon show that captured kings were well housed, and received monthly rations of grain and oil. Records from the city of Nippur show men with Judaic names as witnesses in land contracts. Their names included variations of the Sacred Name Yahweh, clearly indicating that they were Jews—such names are called Yahwistic names. By Babylonian law witnesses had to have the same social status as those for whom they were testifying, indicating that these men were considered socially equal to Babylonians. In the capital city of Susa (the Bible's Shushan) records show men with Yahwistic names as royal courtiers, and in Sippar there were men with Yahwistic names listed as "royal merchants." At least for many, then, life in Babylonia was not all that bad.

These discoveries make it much easier to understand why, when Cyrus freed the Jews and allowed them to return to Judah, most chose to stay in Babylonia and in time many migrated to Persia.² Many who remained were faithful to Judaism and dedicated to the practice of their faith, although the majority was completely absorbed into the Babylonian and Persian cultures and, like their Israelite predecessors in Assyria two centuries earlier, completely disappeared from history. Isaiah spoke of a remnant (usually called the "Righteous Remnant") who would remain faithful and would return, but they were only a remnant. This was for the best, though. The rebuilding of Judah, Jerusalem and the Temple was a long and arduous task, and it never would have been accomplished if the returnees were made up of people who were anything

¹ Cyrus the Great of Persia was arguably the most enlightened of all the ancient emperors. Even by modern standards, while he would be considered a stern and demanding ruler, he was by no means a tyrant.

² Ancient Persia is modern Iran. There is a large Iranian Jewish population that claims (probably rightly) to be directly descended from the Jews of the Exile.

less than totally dedicated to God, to their faith, and to Judah. The struggles that the Jews would face for the next 500 years could not have been endured were it not for the fact that they were rooted in a strong, dedicated remnant of truly faithful men and women who would not buckle under oppression. They were tried in the crucible of Babylonia, and the few who returned, by the grace of God, were the foundation of the Jewish faith as Jesus knew it.

Richard R. Losch+

Brothers In Conflict

In every culture in the world and throughout history, brotherhood has always been held in high esteem.¹ The bond of brotherhood is what holds families together even when sons and daughters are scattered by marriage and the starting of their own families, and it is what maintains the “extended families” that form clans, tribes and even nations. The paragon of friendship is brotherly love. In the 2nd century B.C. King Eumenes II of Pergamum (in what is now Turkey) founded the city of Philadelphia (whose name means “Brotherly Love”) in honor of his brother Attalus.² At the Battle of Agincourt Henry V called his troops “We happy few, we band of brothers.”³ Ancient rulers saw themselves as members of an exclusive royal club, and addressed each other in letters as “Brother,” as did most members of the middle and upper classes in ancient Mesopotamia. Saint Paul addressed his fellow Christians as brothers, and since the beginning of the monastic movement monks have been called brothers and nuns sisters. For centuries the members of virtually all frater-

¹ Up until the last few decades the term brotherhood was never seen as paternalistic or misogynistic. It was universally understood that when it referred to mixed groups, the term “brothers,” like the masculine pronoun, included both genders and implied “brothers and sisters.” It was not until the era of political correctness that anyone saw it as offensive.

² Some historians maintain that Attalus built it in honor of Eumenes.

³ Shakespeare, *Henry V*, iv.3)

nal organizations have addressed each other as “Brother.”¹

Because of this unique and universally honored bond, stories of brothers who did not get along have from time immemorial gained special attention. We are all familiar with the tales of Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau, Romulus and Remus, Eteocles and Polynices, and the four sons of Henry II,² none of whom could stand each other.

One classic ancient story of brotherly conflict is that of a young man who was his father’s favorite because he was the first-born of his father’s favorite wife and the son of his old age. His jealous older brothers hated him. He was arrogant and boastful, and told his brothers that it was prophesied that he would rule over them. His father showered expensive gifts on him, and openly wished that he could be his primary heir. Finally his brothers out of jealousy drove him to a foreign land, where after a series of extreme hardships he rose to great power and did indeed end up ruling over his brothers, becoming a wise and just ruler despite the arrogance of his youth. Upon hearing this story one would think that we were talking about Jacob’s eleventh son Joseph, and the story does indeed fit him perfectly (Gen. 37:2ff). In fact, however, we were describing King Esarhaddon of Assyria, the youngest son of King Sennacherib.³ The main difference in the stories is that Joseph came to rule over his brothers when they went to Egypt to serve their father, while Esarhaddon became king when his brothers murdered their father.

¹ There is a clandestine order of women Freemasons who address each other as “Brother,” although most sororities and comparable women’s organizations address each other as “Sister.”

² Henry II had eight children, but history most notes the four brothers Henry, Geoffrey, Richard Lionheart, and John Lackland, all of whom hated each other and seem to have hated their father just as much.

³ Joseph probably lived sometime around the 18th century B.C., and Esarhaddon lived in the 7th. As far as anyone knows, however, the story of Joseph was passed down only by oral tradition, and was not written until around the 6th century B.C.

There is no record of Joseph in the ancient Egyptian inscriptions, but this is not surprising. Accepting that the story is based on fact, it was an embarrassment to the fiercely nationalistic Egyptians. For roughly 100 years Egypt was ruled by a Semitic people known as the Hyksos.¹ It would have been perfectly reasonable for a Hyksos pharaoh to invite the Semitic Israelites to move into Egypt and to appoint Joseph, a Semite, as his vizier. The xenophobic Egyptians would never have done that.² The Egyptians were obsessed with record keeping, while the Hyksos paid little attention to it. Also, a pharaoh's entry into heaven depended on his achievements. The written record of those achievements was his ticket to heaven, and the gods did not require him to write down anything negative or embarrassing. He only had to write what was good, as long as that was the truth. Because of this, the Egyptians kept almost no records of the Hyksos era other than their victory over them, and when they regained power under Ahmose I they destroyed what few records there were. Because of this there is no Egyptian record of Joseph and the immigration of the Israelites. For the same reason there is no Egyptian record of the Exodus, which was also a great embarrassment to Pharaoh Rameses II. This absence of records does not at all mean that these events did not happen. In fact, while there is little doubt that the stories of Joseph and Moses were embellished and corrupted during eight centuries of being passed on through oral tradition, it is entirely reasonable that

¹ We don't know their real name. Hyksos is Egyptian for "Foreign Invaders." Whether they gained power by an actual invasion or by an internal coup is unclear, although the evidence favors the latter. Either way, they were unquestionably Semites, not Egyptians.

² The Egyptians mistrusted and even hated anyone who was not Egyptian. King Tut's widow, in order to maintain an existing peace treaty with the Hittites, asked King Suppiluliuma I to send one of his sons to marry her so she would not have to marry a commoner (probably Tut's general Horemheb). He reluctantly agreed, but when Prince Zannanza set foot on Egyptian territory a group of patriots assassinated him. About 150 years later Rameses II (the Pharaoh of the Exodus) did marry a Hittite princess.

they are based on real events and real people.

This brings us back to Esarhaddon. The Mesopotamians were also good record keepers (writing originated in early Mesopotamia). The events of Esarhaddon's conflict with his older brothers and his exile, the murder of his father Sennacherib, and his return to Assyria to assume the throne are well and reliably documented. Not only that, but the story was well known to the Assyrians and Babylonians, and thus would have become well known to their Israelite and Judean hostages during the Exile. The Book of Genesis, which tells the story of Joseph, is the written record of the ancient Jewish oral histories. Notwithstanding, it was not written down until the time of the Exile by men who lived only a century or so after the time of Esarhaddon. The parallels between the stories of Joseph and King Esarhaddon, even in some cases down to small details, have to be more than mere coincidence. Whether it was conscious or subconscious, there can be little doubt that the writers of the Book of Genesis inserted many of the details of the story of Esarhaddon into their account of the story of Joseph.¹

This does not denigrate the Bible nor cast doubt on its validity. There are Literalists who believe that the Bible was dictated word for word by God, and that Moses was the scribe of the first five books of the Old Testament (including the account of his own death and burial). Such people are highly offended by the suggestion that the Bible contains inaccuracies and contradictions. We believe that view to be extremely naïve. The Bible was not written by God's stenographers, but by scribes who were inspired by God. It contains everything necessary for our salvation and nothing that will hinder it, but that does not mean that every word of it is literally true.

Of all the Biblical stories of brotherly conflict, that of Joseph is one of the most stirring on many levels. It bares the ugly side of brothers who so hated one of their own that they

¹ It is also rather simplistic and naïve to pass them off by saying that this was part of God's plan or that Satan put them there to confuse our faith.

contemplated murder and finally sold him into slavery. It also arouses in us a hint of sympathy for the victims of a spoiled, arrogant and rather brattish adolescent tattletale who brought out the worst in his older brothers. Fortunately, he survived to outgrow those juvenile traits. In the same tale we see a man brought as low as possible, yet who by the grace of God rises above his difficulties to become the second most powerful man in Egypt, and therefore in the world of his time. Finally, and probably most importantly, we see an ill-used brother allow brotherly love to overcome vengeance, forgive those who mistreated him, and restore the unity of his family. If that great tale is seasoned with a few details of the story of an Assyrian king, what does it matter?

Richard R. Losch+

Playing the Victim

I recall many years ago hearing a motivational speaker say, “Whatever you have in life is exactly what you want.” My first reaction was not very positive—I was happy with my work and appreciated my blessings, but I was living on the edge of poverty and like Blanche DuBois frequently “relied on the kindness of strangers.” On reflection, however, I came to realize that he was right. If we are dissatisfied with what we have, be it material, spiritual or social, it is usually because we have either not worked hard enough or not been patient enough to achieve our goals. Or, as is often the case, we have not really set any goals—it is rightfully said that if you aim at nothing, that is exactly what you will get.

The most important goals we can set are those that involve our spiritual life. Without these we can never get our worldly life in order. That is when we begin to think that the world is against us, and we see ourselves as victims of a system that we can't control. If you see yourself as a victim then you will become one—this is always a self-fulfilling prophecy. But if you see yourself as a victor, you will become one. “Whatever you have in life is exactly what you want.”

Richard R. Losch+

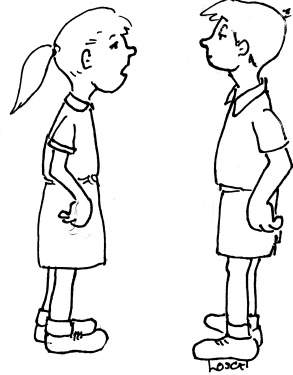
A Touch of Trivia

It is the general impression that Napoleon was very short. There is even a psychological disorder named after him, called the Napoleon Complex, which makes small people tend to be arrogant and pushy. In fact, Napoleon was slightly above average height for a man of his time, at a little over 5'6". At his death he was recorded as 5'2", but that was in early 19th century French inches, which were 6.5% larger than modern inches.

Richard R. Losch+

JAMIE

by Richard R. Losch



"Thanksgiving is great, but the next day Mom goes on a diet—and when Mom diets everyone diets."



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