

# THE EPISTLE

Saint James' Episcopal Church  
Livingston, Alabama



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# October 2016

## *This Month's Cover*

In honor of the Feast of Saint Luke the Evangelist (October 18), our cover this month is *Saint Luke Drawing the Virgin* by the Flemish master Rogier van der Weyden (1400?-1464), who is also known as Roger de le Pasture. Although it is not stated in the Bible, it is a well-established ancient tradition that St. Luke, although he never knew Jesus in person, was a personal friend of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is also a tradition from the earliest times that while he was a physician by profession, he was also an accomplished painter. Painting was not a popular art form among the Jews, but it was among the Romans and Greeks, and St. Luke was a Greek. Tradition says that he made several paintings of the Blessed Virgin, all of which are now lost. The chronology of van der Weyden's painting is off, however. Saint Luke did not meet Saint Mary until after the Crucifixion, so she could not have posed for him with the infant Jesus. Some scholars believe that the face of Saint Luke is van der Weyden's self-portrait.

The painting is oil and tempera on a wood panel, completed sometime between 1435-1440. It measures about 54"x43", and is displayed in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. When this was painted the technique of oil painting was quite new. Van der Weyden learned it from his teacher Robert Campin, and his contemporary Jan van Eyck perfected it.

Most of the records of van der Weyden's life were lost in a war in 1695, and those that survived were lost in the German attacks on Belgium in 1914 and 1940, so little is known about him. He was born in Tournai in Belgium around 1400 as Roger de le Pasture. Nothing is known of his early training other than that his name is recorded in the student lists of

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Robert Campin in 1427. In 1436 he was made the official town painter in Brussels. This was a very important post, as it was the domain of the Dukes of Burgundy, who was a great patron of the arts. He took the Flemish format of his name, becoming Rogier van der Weyden. Many Flemish Renaissance paintings were inaccurately attributed to van der Weyden over the years, but modern scholars are now sorting this out. There is no question that *Saint Luke* is his, however.

Rogier van der Weyden had a profound influence on painting not only in France, Belgium and Germany, but also in Italy and Spain. He introduced many innovative techniques that became popular among artists, including the placing of contemporary patrons in paintings of first century Christian events. It has been said that to some degree traces of van der Weyden's influence can be seen in every 15<sup>th</sup> century painter.

Van der Weyden died in 1464 in Brussels, and was buried in St. Catherine's Chapel in the Cathedral of St Gudulphe.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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

We are now on the final lap of the presidential election race, and as it draws to a close I am reminded of the second stanza of Rudyard Kipling's *Recessional*:

The tumult and the shouting dies;  
The Captains and the Kings depart:  
Still stands Thine ancient sacrifice,  
An humble and a contrite heart.  
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,  
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

In a month some will be happy with the result of the election, some will be miserable, and unfortunately a large number of Americans will not care much what happened one way or the other. We may be a bit more sensitive to some of the things that are being said on both sides because modern technology makes them so instantly accessible to us, and we hear them repeated over and over again on TV and in the social media. An unkind comment sounds much worse when we

hear it live than when we read it in the papers a couple days later. While this election seems particularly important because it is so close to us today, most of the presidential elections in the past 226 years have been just as tempestuous, just as nasty, and just as important to the future of America as this one is. Such is the nature of a democratic republic.

If we look at the third line of the stanza above, we are reminded that what really matters, far above any campaign or the results of any election, is that God is in charge. When the noise is over and the campaigners have faded into the daily routine, Christ will still be in charge—“Still stands thine ancient sacrifice.” Far more important than our loyalty or opposition to our elected leaders are our loyalty and faithfulness to Christ. God must come first, and the government second.

This is not to say that we should support a theocracy. Theocracies are not states that are ruled by God, they are states that are ruled by humans who claim to rule in the name of God. This is a sure road to tyranny, as we can see in places like Iran. However, God’s immutable natural law, which is the foundation of all morality and ethics, must be the standard by which we guide our lives. If we have faith in God and his law, then we can also trust that whatever the outcome may be of human action, including elections, it will not endanger our immortal souls. It may endanger our way of life and even our lives themselves, but that matters little in comparison to the safety of our souls. That is, after all, the bottom line.

*Father Rick Losch+*

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## ***An Apology***

Last month we expressed our thanks to the adults who occasionally serve at the Altar, and we neglected to mention Bill Taylor, who has been a faithful server for many years. Sorry, Bill, and thank you for your service.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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## ***Be Wordly Wise***

### ***Bids and Beads***

Today the word “bid” means “offer,” but this is a complete reversal of its original meaning, which was “request.” If we think about it, however, the two meanings are closely related. If I make a bid at an auction I am offering a price, but I am also requesting the seller to sell me his offering at that price. The word comes from the Old English *bidden*, “request,” which came from the Old German *bitten* (which is the same as the modern German).<sup>1</sup> In ecclesiastical terms, a “bidding prayer” is one that requests something.

The Rosary as we know it today originated with St. Dominic in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, but similar prayers using knotted cords are very ancient. Early Christians prayed a Rosary on a cord with 150 knots representing the 150 Psalms.<sup>2</sup> In time the knotted cord came to be replaced by a string of beads (in Latin, *baeae*). In Old English these were called *biddes*, “requests,” and in time this word came into modern English as *beads*. When you wear a string of beads, then, you are wearing a string of requests.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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## ***“The Epistle” Is Online***

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

*Richard R. Losch+*

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<sup>1</sup> In German the word has also switched meanings. “Please” is *bitte* (literally, “I request”), but the response to “thank you” (*danke*) is also *bitte*—equivalent to “you’re welcome,” but literally “I offer.”

<sup>2</sup> This is still used today, especially in some monastic orders. It has 15 sets of 10 beads, called decades, and is called a 15 Decade Rosary. The more common Rosary today has 5 decades. A Rosary bead is commonly called an *ave* because the prayer “Ave Maria” is said on it.

## ***ECW United Thank Offering***

The Episcopal Church Women's ingathering of the United Thank Offering be on Sunday, October 9th. Envelopes for contributions are available on the table at the rear of the church and may be placed in the alms basins or given to Ethel Scott, UTO Coordinator. Checks should be payable to Episcopal Church Women or ECW

The United Thank Offering (UTO) is a ministry of the Episcopal Church for the mission of the whole church. Through United Thank Offering, men, women and children nurture the habit of giving daily thanks to God. These prayers of thanksgiving start when we recognize and name our many daily blessings. Those who participate in UTO discover that thankfulness leads to generosity. United Thank Offering is entrusted to promote thank offerings, to receive the offerings, and to distribute the UTO monies to support missions and ministries impacting the lives of women and children throughout the Episcopal Church and in invited Provinces of the Anglican Communion in the developing world.

*Hiram Patrenos*

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## ***Blessing of the Animals on October 2***

In honor of the Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi, we will have a service of the Blessing of the Animals on Sunday, October 2, 2016, at 2:00 p.m. in the courtyard. While altercations between animals are extremely rare at these services, we ask that your animals be leashed, tethered or caged. Please invite your friends and neighbors to this happy occasion.

*Hiram Patrenos*

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## ***Altar Flowers***

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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## ***Gideons International***

During the month of October we will be receiving contributions for the work of Gideons International. We will not have a speaker from the Gideons but will hold all contributions and forward them to the local chapter following our service on October 23rd. Envelopes are available for contributions on the table at the rear of the church and may be placed in the alms basins at the Offertory. Checks should be made payable to "Gideons International."

*Hiram Patrenos*

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## ***October Men's Breakfast***

Our Interfaith Men's Breakfast will be held this month on the first Sunday, October 2, at 7:45 a.m. at the Livingston First Presbyterian Church. We remind you that we no longer meet monthly, but on the first Sunday of any month that has a fifth Sunday. Join us for a fine breakfast, good fellowship and a brief devotional. Men of all denominations are invited.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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## ***A Touch of Trivia***

The strongest creature on planet earth is not the ant, as was once thought, but a germ. It has been recently discovered that the gonorrhea bacterium is capable of towing over 100,000 times its own body weight. This would be the equivalent of a 175-pound man towing 8,750 tons. The bacterium has filaments called pili growing from its body that attach themselves to other organisms to tow them or to help it to move itself. These pili are up to ten times as long as the bacterium itself. It is not yet clear why it tows other objects.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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In the 19th century it was common to put humorous verses on gravestones. The inscription on an 1880 stone in Nantucket, MA reads:

*Under the sod and under the trees / Lies the body of Jonathan Pease.  
He is not here, there's only the pod. / Pease shelled out and went to God.*

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## ***Folk School at Camp McDowell***

Join St. James' parishioners Linda Muñoz and Valerie Burnes at the Alabama Folk School at Camp McDowell the weekend of November 3-6. Muñoz will be teaching a class entitled, "Splendor in the Glass: Glass Mosaics and Fused Glass." Burnes will be teaching a class on re-caning chair seats. Former Livingston resident Stephen Liverman will be offering a class on making butcher block cutting boards from locally sourced wood. Another Black Belt resident, Laura Spencer, will do a class on making natural soap and detergent. For more information, contact Valerie Burnes at [vpburnes@gmail.com](mailto:vpburnes@gmail.com), or visit the Alabama Folk School website at <http://www.alfolkschool.com/traditional-arts-crafts>.

*Valerie Burnes*

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## ***The Queen of Sheba***

Unfortunately, more legend than history surrounds this mysterious lady. The Bible tells us that the Queen of Sheba visited Solomon to pay him homage and perhaps tribute (1 Kg. 10, 2 Chr. 9), and that is about all it tells us of her. Ancient Ethiopian tradition identifies her with the beautiful Queen Makeda, and identifies Sheba with ancient Ethiopia (a huge region just south of Egypt, a small part of which is modern Ethiopia). That legend also says that she and Solomon had a love affair, that she bore him a son named Menelik, and that Solomon wanted Menelik to succeed him. Menelik, however, chose to return to Ethiopia. Solomon sent the Ark of the Covenant with him back to Ethiopia, and the Ethiopian Christian Church claims that they still have it in the Chapel of the Tablet in Aksum. Since absolutely no one is allowed to see it, however, most historians do not take the claim seriously.

Archaeology has confirmed an ancient kingdom of Saba in what is now Yemen, and this is more likely the Sheba of the Bible. It was a wealthy kingdom whose main export was rare and expensive resins such as frankincense and myrrh.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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## *Hallowe'en*

Hallowe'en,<sup>1</sup> the Eve of All Hallows, has roots that go back at least 2000 years to ancient Britain. Long before the Christian era the various Celtic tribes in the British Isles observed November 1 as the New Year. Rather than the Winter Solstice (December 22), the ancients considered the end of the last harvest on November 1 to be the beginning of winter. In the British climate this is reasonable. It is a time when they faced a long season of short days, cold, darkness, and often deprivation for those whose crops did not produce enough to sustain them until spring. Death from disease and starvation was all too common in the ancient winters. The question may be asked, does one year end and the next begin in an instant, or does one year blend into the next? There is no sudden jolt in our lives at the stroke of midnight. Things seem simply to flow smoothly from one year into the next—yet the excitement of the New Year is rooted in the feeling that everything is taking on a fresh start. They believed that as one year turns into another, the barrier between the world of the living and the dark realm of the dead becomes temporarily blurred. At that point the spirits of the dead can come into the world, some to do mischief and some simply to return to be with their loved ones for a time. They celebrated a festival called Samhain (pronounced *sow-in*) dedicated to honoring the spirits of dead loved ones and placating the spirits of evil. Many of our modern Hallowe'en customs are rooted in this festival.

Although Hallowe'en derives from paganism, it has so far outgrown its pagan roots that it is not wrong for Christians to celebrate it as long as is done in the spirit of fun, and not from a belief in or fear of ghouls and ghosts. If we were to strip our culture of all its originally pagan traditions we would live in a society so grim and dour that it would make the 17th century Puritans look like raucous merrymakers.

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<sup>1</sup> Today it is more commonly spelled without the apostrophe. I prefer to keep it, though, because it reminds us that in ecclesiastical terms it is the eve of an important Christian feast, not just a secular festival.

One of the hallmarks of Samhain, still popular in Hal-lowe'en celebrations today, was the bonfire. People would extinguish all fire in their homes, and everyone would gather for a huge community bonfire. The Druid priests accepted animals and farm produce from the people to be offered as sacrifices to their Celtic gods to insure prosperity during the coming year. These would be ceremonially sacrificed and then burned in the bonfire. When the celebration was over the people would bring embers from the bonfire back home to rekindle their hearths with new fire for the new year.<sup>1</sup>

Only the rich owned lanterns, so most people had to make makeshift lanterns to light their way and to carry the fire home. They would hollow out a large tuber, usually a turnip, and cut holes in the side to let the light out. At some time in the mists of history someone got the idea (perhaps just to be funny) of cutting the holes in the form of a face, and the jack-o'-lantern was born. That name came from the Middle Ages. Jack was a slang term for an unskilled or knavish person (we still have Jack-of-All-Trades and Jack-in-the-Box), so the face in the turnip became Jack of the Lantern or Jack O'Lantern. Pumpkins were unknown in ancient Britain—they originated in North America and did not come to Europe until the 16th century. They are now grown all over the world, but the British to this day prefer turnips for their jack-o'-lanterns.

Another Hallowe'en custom that came from the Samhain is the wearing of costumes. The Celts would wear costumes

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<sup>1</sup> There is a similar Christian custom. On Good Friday all fire is extinguished in the church after the Mass of the Presanctified. At the start of the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday evening new fire is kindled with flint and steel, and from it the Paschal Candle is lit. From the Paschal Candle flame all the other candles in the church are lit before the First Mass of Easter, and that fire is maintained in vigil candles from which all candles are lit for the remainder of the year. In the Middle Ages people would extinguish all fires in their homes on Good Friday, and bring candles or lamps home from the Easter Vigil to re-light their hearths. Today this practice is all but forgotten, and most churches light their service candles with fire that originated from matches or a Bic lighter.

usually made of animal heads and skins. They believed that this would give them the wisdom of natural creatures, and that they could thus tell fortunes. If one's prophecies came true he achieved great respect and status in the community; if not, there was no disgrace or loss of status, the prophecies were simply forgotten. Sometimes people would wear costumes reminiscent of a beloved ancestor in the hope of communicating with him, or of a great legendary person in the hope of receiving some of his more salutary characteristics.

After the Romans conquered Britain in about a.D. 43, they introduced two feasts. One was the Feralia, which celebrated the passing of the dead. This was usually celebrated around the end of October. Many of its practices merged into the Samhain, and many Celtic practices became infused into the Feralia. The second festival, also celebrated late in October, was the Pomonalia, the feast of the goddess Pomona. She was the goddess of fruits and vegetables, and her symbol was the apple. Historians believe that the Hallowe'en game of bobbing for apples is rooted in the Pomonalia. Drinking fermented apple cider was also part of this celebration.

In Rome, the Pantheon was an ancient temple dedicated originally to worshiping all the Roman gods, and as the Empire expanded, to worshiping all the gods in the world. Marcus Agrippa built the original building in commemoration of the Battle of Actium (31 B.C.).<sup>1</sup> In a.D. 126 the emperor Hadrian I razed most of it and built the magnificent domed building that still stands in Rome today. It served as a pagan temple until sometime after 380, when the emperor Theodosius I declared Nicene Trinitarian Christianity to be the only legal religion in Rome. Thereafter it lay fallow, sometimes being used as a Christian church but not gaining much note. On May 13, 609 Pope Boniface IV dedicated the Pantheon to all Christian martyrs, establishing the Feast of All Martyrs.

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<sup>1</sup> That was the battle in which Agrippa and Octavian defeated Antony and Cleopatra and paved the way for Octavian to become the first Roman Emperor, Augustus, in 27 B.C.

During this time Samhain was still being celebrated in Britain, as was a similar feast, Hexenacht (“Witches’ Night”),<sup>1</sup> in Germany. In about 736 Pope Gregory III expanded the celebration as the Feast of All Saints and Martyrs, and moved it to November 1 in order to replace these pagan festivals with a Christian one. It came to be called simply All Saints’ Day, which in Late Middle English would be All Hallows’ Day. The evening before would be All Hallows’ Even, or Hallowe’en. In 1000 Pope Sylvester II established the next day, November 2, to be All Souls’ Day.

People in the Middle Ages were extremely superstitious, and their thinking was heavily influenced by the Samhain concept that on the eve of All Saints’ Day, evil spirits would come out to try to destroy the sanctity of the next day. In order to propitiate these demons they would leave gifts of food outside their doors to keep them from entering their houses. The superstition was reinforced by the fact that they would often hear motion outside their houses (they must have been terrified), and the next day the food was gone. That evening was a great boon to the starving who would brave the terrors of the night in order to steal the food. That, of course, was the beginning of the Trick-or-Treat tradition.

In the Middle Ages not all witches were considered evil. There were “black witches” who had sold their souls to the devil in exchange for supernatural powers, and “white witches” who had made a study of herbs, and brewed potions and allegedly cast spells to heal people of diseases. They were often the best doctors of the times. Black witches were considered evil and were persecuted, usually being hanged or burned at the stake. Unfortunately this superstition, while it may have occasionally eliminated someone who was actually evil, for the most part destroyed countless innocent people, mostly women, who simply did not fit well into society be-

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<sup>1</sup> Today this is known as Walpurgisnacht in honor of Saint Walpurga, who is said to have driven the witches and werewolves out of Germany. Ironically, today it is celebrated as a Wiccan (Witches’) festival.

cause of a bad personality, different values, or some mental disorder. Because of Hexenacht in Germany, witches became associated with Hallowe'en and today are an integral part of Hallowe'en decoration. It used to be believed that a black witch's power was transmitted to her through a companion animal called a familiar. This was usually a black cat,<sup>1</sup> and today Hallowe'en would not be complete without black cats.

Spiders and their webs are naturally "creepy" things that have no historic association with Hallowe'en, yet seem to fit well into the eeriness of the occasion, and thus are also a common part of the decoration of the festival. Similarly, werewolves and vampires, although they have no direct association with Hallowe'en, were commonly believed in by medieval people, and seem to fit the occasion. The suave blood-drinking vampire as we think of him today is strictly a creation of Bram Stoker's 1897 Gothic novel *Dracula*. Medieval people believed that vampires were "undead" rotting corpses who maintained their lives by eating the flesh of living people. The closest thing today to the medieval vampire is the zombie, which is a creation of Caribbean voodoo. In Stoker's novel the vampire Dracula can turn himself into a bat, and thus bats, which are also appropriately eerie creatures, came to be associated with Hallowe'en.

Today Hallowe'en has no religious or anti-religious significance, but is simply an occasion for fun, merrymaking, and the somewhat inexplicable human love of being safely frightened. In the United States, 25% of all the candy sold throughout the year is sold for Hallowe'en.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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<sup>1</sup> Historians believe that this may have been one of the causes of the rapid spread and frequent return of the Black Plague. Many medieval people believed that witches caused the plague. If they killed the witches' familiars they would remove their power, so they slaughtered cats by the millions all over Europe. This allowed the proliferation of rats, whose fleas carried the plague. The story of the Pied Piper of Hamelin is a medieval tale that demonstrates this infestation of rats.

## *The Name of God*

The Bible uses many names for God, but the most important of them is Yahweh, which is called the Covenantal Name. It is used in almost all the Old Testament references to the Covenants. Unfortunately, the ancient Jews considered it so sacred that it was never to be pronounced except by the High Priest, on then only on the Day of Atonement and out of the hearing of anyone else. Because of this, although the Name appears in writing in numerous places in the Bible, we do not know how it was pronounced. The name is JHVH or YHWH (יהוה), and although no one is sure, most scholars spell it Yahweh and pronounce it *Ya-whay* or *Ya-way*.

The reason that this poses such a problem is that written Hebrew did not have any vowels until centuries after the destruction of the Temple in a.D. 70, and thus long after this Name had ceased ever to be pronounced. Because of the lack of vowels the actual pronunciation of words was passed on by oral transmission. Jewish children, from the first that they were taught to read, were taught never to try to say God's Name aloud, but to replace it with the word *Adonai* (אֲדֹנָי), "Lord." In many English translations of the Bible this Name of God is translated as LORD written in small caps. When we see this we know that the Hebrew was not *Adonai*, but *Yahweh*. If we see "Lord" in regular lowercase letters we know that the Hebrew actually used the word *Adonai*, "Lord."

In the eighth century a.D. the system of using dots and small lines to indicate vowels in written Hebrew first began. It is believed that it began in the city of Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee, so it is often called Tiberian Vowel Pointing. The Hebrew word for it is *Niqqud* (ניקוד). From that time on when Hebrew texts were written, the Sacred Name was written with the traditional consonants YHWH, but with the vowels of *Adonai* (a-o-ai). This produced a word that in Hebrew is essentially meaningless and is difficult to pronounce, thus reminding readers to say "Adonai" instead of "Yahweh."

Christian scholars in the Middle Ages were puzzled by this

word. They recognized it as the Name of God, but they did not know how to transliterate it into the Latin alphabet. The first recorded attempt was in 1278 by a Spanish monk, Ramundo Martini. In his book *Pugio Fidei* (Dagger of Faith) he rendered it as *Yohoua*. The book was lost for four centuries, but was rediscovered in 1688. When they reprinted it they spelled the Name *Johova*. Because in Hebrew the Name ends in *h*, in 1303 Porchetus Salvaticis added an *h* to it, producing *Iohouah*. In 1518 Petrus Galatinus spelled it *Iehouah*, thus changing the first vowel from *o* to *e*. Finally, when William Tyndale translated the Bible into English in 1530 he used the Galatinus spelling, but changed the Latin *I* and *u* to the English *J* and *v*, thus producing *Jehovah*. Since then until modern times this has been the standard transliteration of the Hebrew *Yahweh*, although it is a completely fabricated word.<sup>1</sup>

The origin of the Name Yahweh is particularly significant, because it is a declaration that God is the source of all that exists. When Moses encountered God at the burning bush, he said, “Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them?” God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM. This is what you shall say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you’” (Ex. 3:13f).<sup>2</sup> He then said, “Say to the Israelites, ‘I AM, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you’” (Ex. 3:15). In this passage, I AM is *Yahweh* (יהוה), which was therefore taken as the Covenantal Name. It is a unique word, but clearly derives from the Hebrew for “being.” God, therefore, is He Who Exists, and is thus the source of all existence.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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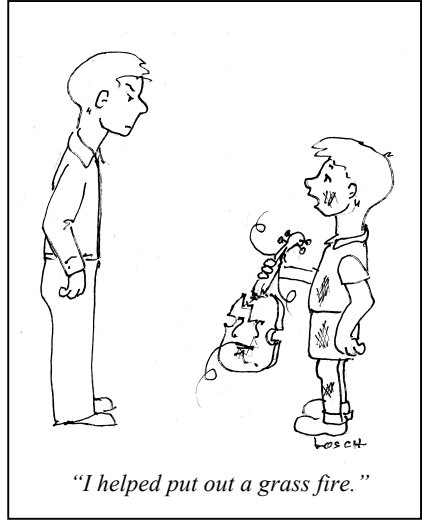
<sup>1</sup> The Jehovah’s Witnesses are not happy with this history and vehemently deny it, claiming that Jehovah is the revealed Name of God. This, of course, is one of the prices of interpreting the Bible from a translation instead of from the original texts.

<sup>2</sup> “I am who I am” in Hebrew is *’ehih ’asher ’ehih* (אהיה אשר אהיה), which can also mean, “I will be who I will be.”

Don't Forget  
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