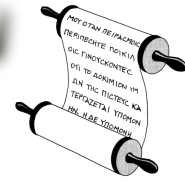


# THE EPISTLE

Saint James' Episcopal Church  
Livingston, Alabama



Volume XXI, Number 7

July/August 2014



*“Christ In the House of His Parents”*

*Sir John Everett Millais (1829-1896)*

July/August 2014

## *This Month's Cover*

This month's cover picture is "Christ In the House of His Parents" by Sir John Everett Millais. It is oil on canvas, and was painted in 1850. It hangs in the Tate Gallery in London. It is one of the most important British paintings of the mid 19th century.

The painting shows Joseph in his carpentry shop, where he has been building a door. Jesus has injured his hand on a nail, portending the wounds of the nails that he would suffer at his death. The older woman behind the table is either Saint Anne (Mary's mother) or Saint Elizabeth (John the Baptist's mother), who has removed the nail with the pincers on the table. The boy on the right carrying a vessel of water is John the Baptist, who "was clothed with camel's hair and with a girdle of skin about his loins" (Mk. 1:6). Joseph is tending Jesus' wounded hand while the concerned James the Brother of the Lord (the first Bishop of Jerusalem) looks on. Mary is kneeling beside Jesus consoling him, and offering her cheek for a kiss.

In the background the ladder represents Jacob's ladder to heaven, and on it rests a dove (the Holy Spirit). The triangle and three-staged saw represent the Holy Trinity, and the sheep in the background represent Christ's flock, the Church.

The painting was highly controversial when it was first displayed. One of its fiercest critics was Charles Dickens, who said that Mary looked like an ugly alcoholic, and that Jesus looked like a "wry-necked boy in a nightgown who seems to have re-

ceived a poke playing in an adjacent gutter." Another critic objected to portraying Jesus as "a red-headed Jew boy" (anti-Semitism was rampant in England at the time). Others objected to the portrayal of a working-class Holy Family; others objected to the litter of shavings on the floor, saying that any portrayal of Jesus should be in a pure and clean environment.

Millais was the founder of the "Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood," a society of painters who espoused what was up to then a relatively unknown painting style. Despite the critics, this painting thrust the pre-Raphaelite style into the forefront, and it became very popular in the latter half of the 19th century and into the 20th.

Millais was born in 1829 in Southampton, England. He was a child prodigy, who at age 11 was the youngest student ever to enter the Royal Academy of Arts. At the age of 19 he founded the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, dedicated to emulating the simplicity of Italian painting before the time of Raphael (1483-1520). As we mentioned, this painting thrust the movement into the forefront of English art for over half a century. In his later years he moved away from that style, even though it continued to remain popular. He became noted for his wild and bleak landscapes. He also was in great demand as an illustrator, doing work for Trollope and Tennyson, designing stained glass windows, and frequently publishing in magazines and newspapers. He died in Kensington, London in 1896.

*Richard R. Losch+*

## *A Word from the Editor*

George Santayana said, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” This usually misquoted adage was never truer than it is today. When the Nazi death camps were liberated, despite the rumors that had been going around, no one had realized the extent of the horror and brutality that had been unleashed on the world by the Nazi regime. General Eisenhower ordered that every photographer that could be found anywhere in Europe be brought there to take as many photographs as possible, because “some day some \*\*\* will claim this never happened.”

A survey about the Holocaust was done recently at a prestigious American college. Over 80% of the students knew almost nothing about it, and one said that all she knew was that 100 years ago or so some people in Europe were “mean to the Jews.” They have not been taught about the past, and they may well see it repeated. We are now seeing a very similar thing happen in the Middle East, with a brutality that makes Hitler and Pol Pot look like amateurs.

Santayana’s adage applies not only to world affairs, but also to our own lives. I believe it was Einstein who defined insanity as doing the same thing over and over, expecting a different result each time. That is not necessarily insanity, however—it can be nothing more than a failure to remember our own personal history. While that can result from a failure to be in contact with reality, most often it is simply the result of a failure to

make the effort to examine our lives and take steps to emend them. That is the root of most of our sins. There are some people who are so corrupt, self-centered or just plain evil that they relish their sinful ways, but I do not believe that this is true of most of us.

Most of us are basically decent people—but as soon as we become aware of that, we are in grave danger! “I’m basically a nice guy, and God understands my little slips,” we say. It is true that he understands, but that does not mean that he accepts. It is not enough to be a “nice guy.” The danger of being basically decent is that we can tend to rest on that, ignoring the flaws that can lead us to damnation. Most of the guards at Auschwitz started out as basically nice guys. But little by little, day by day, they allowed themselves to be swallowed up by their own human flaws and the evil that surrounded them until they ended up becoming monsters. The ability to resist that decay comes from self-examination, repentance, atonement, and then asking for forgiveness—and self-examination requires remembering our personal past in order that we not repeat it.

Remember your past, and every day pray for the wisdom and strength to improve your present.

*Father Rick Losch*

The Epistle is published monthly except August by Saint James' Episcopal Church, P.O. Box 446, Livingston, AL 35470-0446, the Rev. Richard R. Losch, Editor. Phone 205-499-0968, email loschr@bellsouth.net. Copyright © 2014 R. R. Losch. Permission is granted to reproduce text items in parish newsletters or bulletins (but not on the Internet or digitized) as long as they are reproduced completely and in print, and credit is given.

## ***Be Wordly Wise***

### ***Funny Words***

When we say that something is hilarious, we usually mean that it is extremely funny. This derives from the Greek *hilaros* (ἠλαρός), “cheerful.” It came into the Latin as *Hilarus*, and was the cognomen of several patrician families.<sup>1</sup> By the 5th century a.D. it had become a fairly common man’s name that is usually translated Hilary (as in Pope Saint Hilary in a.D. 461). It faded from popularity and in the 20th century came to be used as a woman’s name. In the Greek and Latin it simply meant cheerful, but in modern usage it has come to mean uproariously funny or ridiculous.

“Ridiculous” comes from the Latin *ridiculosus*, “laughable,” which in turn comes from *ridere*, “to laugh.” In Latin the implication is simply that something is humorous, while in modern usage it is more derisive, implying that something is absurd or ludicrous.

“Ludicrous,” which is also usually a derisive adjective, comes from the Latin *ludicrum*, “stage play” (usually a farce). That derives from the adjective *ludicer*, “done for sport,” which in turn comes from *ludere*, “to play.”

*Richard R. Losch+*

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<sup>1</sup> A cognomen was a formal family “nickname” in ancient Rome. It was usually first given as a description of someone, and was often teasingly insulting. Nonetheless a family’s cognomen often carried on for several generations. Some examples are Brutus (“animal-like”), Strabo (“cross-eyed”), Caesar (“head of fine hair”) and Barbatus (“bearded”).

## ***What Are the Odds?***

The late British cosmologist Fred Hoyle was an atheist until he did his research on the amount of carbon in the universe. According to all known scientific principles of the formation of elements, it is impossible for there to be so much carbon, which is the basic element of all life. As a result of his work he came to believe in God, saying that there could be no doubt that “a super-intellect has monkeyed with physics.” In his book *Evolution from Space*<sup>2</sup> he estimates that the statistical probability of life arising on earth by random chance is approximately 1 in 10<sup>40,000</sup> (that is 1 followed by 40,000 zeros). That is about the same odds as winning the Powerball lottery 5,500 times in a row.<sup>3</sup> It is not likely that God zapped the universe into existence in six days, but rather that he guided its development over billions of years, bringing human life into it only in the last 100,000 or so years. But statistically, for human life to have been the result of random chance without an Intelligent Designer, the earth would have to be trillions of billions of years old. It isn’t—the most hardcore atheist scientists acknowledge that the universe is no more than about 14 billion years old, and the earth only 4 billion.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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<sup>2</sup> Co-authored with Chandra Wickramasinghe, London, Granada, 1981.

<sup>3</sup> Rice Brooks in *God Is Not Dead* says that he can picture Jim Carrey in *Dumb and Dumber* saying, “Then there is a chance!”

## ***Independence Day Evening Prayer and Barbeque Supper***

Our July service of Evening Prayer will be on Friday, July 4th, Independence Day, at 6:00 p.m. with a barbeque supper following in the parish house. Pulled barbeque will be furnished. Signup sheets for other dishes (salads, baked beans, bread/buns, desserts and tea) are posted in the parish house kitchen, as well as a sheet for those planning to attend (so that we may know how many to plan for). A nominal contribution will be asked of each person to defray the expenses for this event. You are asked also to bring canned goods for the Department of Human Resources Food Pantry. As always, there will be plenty of good food and fellowship. Please make your plans to attend.

Our August service of Evening Prayer will be on Wednesday, August 20th, at 6:00 p.m. Details will be announced in the Sunday bulletins and weekly e-mails as we approach the date.

*Hiram Patrenos*

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## ***Parish Directory***

Copies of the updated Parish Directory are available on the table in the parish house. If, as you are using your directory, you discover an error, please give the corrected information to Hiram Patrenos at (205) 652-4210 or [patrenoj@bellsouth.net](mailto:patrenoj@bellsouth.net). The Parish Directory will be updated again in November.

*Hiram Patrenos*

## ***Altar Flower Volunteers***

Volunteers are needed to provide altar flowers through the season following 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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## ***Thank you Deep South Landscaping!***

Thank you to Jason Gordy and his crew from Deep South Landscaping for their gift of pruning and cleaning out all the shrubbery, beds and hedges at the rectory and the church. They also donated and planted all the flowers in the prayer garden. We appreciate their hard work and generosity!

*Hiram Patrenos*

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## ***DHR Food Pantry***

St. James' is responsible for donations to the Department of Human Resources Food Pantry during the month of July. Please remember to bring canned goods and non-perishable food items each week. Donated items may be placed in the basket in the vestibule.

*Hiram Patrenos*

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*"Atheism turns out to be too simple. If the whole universe has no meaning, we would never have found out that it has no meaning."*

*C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity*

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## ***That They May Be One***

In his prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane (John 17:1-26), often called his High Priestly Prayer, Jesus prayed to the Father that his disciples “may be one as we are one.”

When Martin Luther demanded that the Bible be translated into the vernacular and put into the hands of the people, Erasmus warned that this would splinter the Church by opening a floodgate of personal interpretations without any informed or authoritative oversight. Luther agreed that this was a danger, but said that the Bible was so clear that this was not likely to happen. He then proceeded to translate only the books of the Bible that he felt justified his personal beliefs, and even inserted words here and there that he felt the original writers should have used.<sup>1</sup> This produced the so-called Protestant Bible (exemplified in the King James Version).

Erasmus’ warning has proven true—today there are over 1000 Protestant denominations, most of which have no clear definition of their theological beliefs. Even attempts at reunification usually fail. When two denominations decide to merge into one, there are always dissidents who

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Saint Paul said that we are saved by faith. Luther added the word “alone” (*sola*), and at first refused to translate and include the Epistle of St. James, which teaches that we are also justified by good works that are done as a result of our faith (under pressure from his followers he finally translated and included James’ epistle). This resulted in a basic Protestant doctrine, *Sola Fides* (“faith alone”), which is in conflict with the ancient teaching of the Church.

are opposed to the merger and refuse to cooperate with it. This often means that the two denominations end up becoming three. Several denominations, including the Baptists and the United Church of Christ, are congregational. This means that each congregation is free to determine its own theology. As a result, two Baptist churches can diverge greatly on even the most basic points of theology.

One of the dreams of most Christians is that Jesus’ prayer might be fulfilled, and this is expressed in what is called the Ecumenical Movement.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, most dream that everyone else will “see the light,” abandon their current beliefs, and agree with them. That dream is neither realistic nor productive.

Although heresies have caused splits in the Church from the earliest times, a major division took place in 1054 with the Great Schism between the Eastern Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches. They had been diverging in theology and customs for centuries, and things finally came to a head when they held a conference to try to heal their differences, but instead ended up hurling anathemas (curses) and finally excommunication at each other. Only now, almost a thousand years later, is healing between the two beginning to take place. In the meantime, Eastern Orthodoxy has broken up into a number of groups that call themselves Orthodox (Greek, Russian, Armenian, Antioch-

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<sup>2</sup> From the Greek *oikumene* (οἰκουμένη), “inhabited earth,” implying that all the people of the earth will be united in the same faith.

ene, etc.), although their differences are far less than those between the disparate Protestant groups. In the West, the Protestant and Anglican Reformations broke away from the Roman Catholic Church in the 16th century. Since then Protestantism has fragmented into over 1000 denominations, some very large and some tiny. Some have diverged so far as to be no longer considered Christian, such as the Mormons, who are polytheistic,<sup>1</sup> and the Unitarians, who do not require a belief in a deity in order to be a member. Anglicans have also broken into many groups. The main body is what is called the Anglican Communion, which is made up of all the Anglican churches that are in communion with the Church of England (the See of Canterbury), but there are many splinter Anglican bodies that are not in communion with Canterbury, and sometimes not even with other Anglican bodies.

While the idea of a reunited Christian Church is a lovely one, it is unrealistic. If all the wealth in the world were to be redistributed equally among the whole human population, within a few minutes the process of separation into rich and poor would begin. Likewise, if the Church were to unite into one worldwide Superchurch

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<sup>1</sup> The Mormons believe in Jesus Christ. However, according to the teachings of Joseph Smith, Christ and God the Father were once humans who were made God by the action of the Holy Spirit, who is the only uncreated God. They believe that any human who is truly righteous can become a god.

with a common creed, it would be only a matter of minutes before disagreements would arise and the same process of fragmentation would begin all over again.

Is there any hope, then, that we may be one? I believe there is, but it is not in the nature of “why can’t we all just get along?” What that question really means is “why can’t we just learn to be ‘tolerant’ and not take our own beliefs too seriously?” This is manifested in the thinking behind the popular bumper sticker that has “Co-exist” spelled out in the symbols of seven world religions. This concept is



unacceptable to a Christian<sup>2</sup>. Jesus said that no one comes to the Father except through him. “I am *the* way, *the* truth and *the* life,” not *a* way. If that is the case, then none of the other religions is an alternative route to salvation. They may have worthy teachings and contain many truths, but they are nonetheless in error. We can (and must) coexist with them in that there is no justification for oppressing or persecuting them, but we cannot accept them as equal ways to God. This is not to say that non-Christians are therefore automatically damned. That is an issue that is beyond the scope of this essay, but most Christians believe that there is a means of salvation, through Christ, for those who in this life have not accepted him.

If there is a God then there is an

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<sup>2</sup> Defining a Christian as one who believes that Jesus Christ is the incarnate Son of the Trinitarian God.

absolute truth, and anything that deviates from that truth is in error. The problem is in discerning that absolute truth. The traditional Church believes that it is the recipient of divine revelation, and that the Holy Spirit will lead us to all truth through the councils of the Church. Most Protestant denominations believe that truth can be found through human reason.

How then can we be one? First, we must make the effort to find what we believe to be the truth. This cannot be done by sitting back and waiting for it to come to us. We must “read, mark, learn and inwardly digest” the Holy Scriptures and the writings of the saints and great thinkers of the Church throughout the ages. If we are unwilling or unable to do that, then we must not presume to decide for ourselves what is true and what is error. This is why Christ gave us the Church and sent the Holy Spirit to guide her. Individuals and individual religious bodies can be very, very wrong in their interpretations of the Faith and in the way they live their lives—but the Church, the whole body of the faithful, cannot be in error in any matters that affect salvation.

It is too simplistic to say that we are right and all others are wrong. The One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, however, was established by Christ to give us the sure and certain route to God. It is now incumbent on us to learn as much about it as we can, because we cannot love or follow that which we do not know.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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## ***The Earliest Historic References to Israel***

Since the beginning of modern biblical critical analysis there have been scholars who argued that the biblical accounts of the origins of Israel were only myths and legends, with no historical evidence to back them up. This included stories of the Egyptian captivity, the Exodus, Joshua’s conquest of Canaan, and even David’s kingdom. Some went so far as to say that David never existed, but was an imaginary King Arthur type of character loosely based on the exploits of some ancient Middle Eastern warlord. Modern archaeology, however, has proven time and time again that biblical history is surprisingly accurate. Recent discoveries have added to that rapidly growing body of evidence. For example, we reported last year on a discovery of an inscription referring to the “House of David.” That was the first extra-biblical reference to the Davidic dynasty to be found.

The earliest references to Canaan (later called Palestine) ever found date back to the 19th century B.C. in what are known as the Execration Texts. It was a common custom in ancient times to write curses and hexes (execrations) on pieces of pottery or on ceramic figurines, and then with formal prayers and ceremonies to smash them. This would insure that the gods would carry out the curses. The curses were usually against towns or peoples that were enemies, and the curses were to insure that they pose no threat, or if they did that they be de-



stroyed. Many of these execration shards have been found in archaeological digs. The Execration Texts are a collection of Egyptian potsherds bearing such curses. Many of them bear the names of cities and towns in Canaan, many of which are named in the Old Testament, particularly with regard to Joshua's conquest of Canaan.

One of the places mentioned in the Execration Texts is a city called Rushalim. We cannot be sure, but since the Hebrew name of Jerusalem is Yerushalaim it is very likely a reference to that city. It was not a Jewish city at the time, but belonged to a Canaanite people known as the Jebusites.<sup>1</sup> Several other cities are also cursed, and the context of each of the curses is military defeat and (as was the custom of the time) the annihilation of its total population.

A second very important reference to ancient Israel is a collection of about 350 14th century B.C. letters known as the Amarna Letters. The great Egyptologist and archaeologist Sir Flinders Petrie found these in 1887 in the town of el-Amarna in southern Egypt. They are a collection of letters written between the Pharaoh and the Egyptian officials in such places as what are now Syria, Iran, Iraq and Turkey. They also contain corre-

spondence with the mayors of several cities in Canaan shortly before its conquest by the Israelites. These were officially under control of Egypt, although Egypt's main interest was in keeping them as a buffer between African Egypt and her enemies north and east of the Mediterranean. The ancient borders of Egypt are unclear, but they extended far beyond those of the nation we know today by that name. Many times in ancient history they extended into Mesopotamia. When we read that Mary and Joseph took the infant Jesus into Egypt to escape Herod, this may have been no further than a little south of the Negev Desert in modern Israel. The cities include such biblical places as Shechem, Hebron, Megiddo, Gezer and Rushalim (Jerusalem?). They were constantly quarreling with one another, and the Amarna Letters are full of complaints of one mayor about another. The important thing to us is that they not only mention a large number of cities that would eventually be part of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, but they also tell us a great deal about their stability, economy and culture. For the most part the Amarna Letters are consistent with what the Bible tells us about these cities later.

It should also be noted that in the Egyptian religion, when the Pharaoh died his status with the gods depended on his accomplishments. They would examine all the written records of his achievements (including inscriptions on temples and monuments) and make their judgment. If something was not written, it was not brought into con-

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<sup>1</sup> The Jews as a people did not exist until Abraham's time, which was around the 16th century B.C. at the very earliest. Judaism as a religion began with the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai in about the 13th century B.C. David conquered Jerusalem for the Jews sometime shortly after 1000 B.C., some 800 years after the Execration Texts were written.

sideration. For this reason, if we look at the ancient Egyptian records it would appear that no Pharaoh ever did anything bad or ever lost a battle—as long as it wasn't written, it didn't count. Bragging and exaggeration were allowed, but if the written record contained any lies the gods would know it and bar the Pharaoh from the afterlife. This is probably why there is no written record of the Exodus outside the Bible. The whole incident would have been extremely embarrassing to the Pharaoh Rameses II, so he would have forbidden (under penalty of death) any record of it to be written. What happens in Pi-Ramesses (his capital) stays in Pi-Ramesses.

One of the most important of all ancient references to Israel was discovered by Petrie in 1896 in the ancient Egyptian city of Thebes. It is called the Merneptah Stele. A stele (or stela) is an upright stone monument that usually bears an inscription to commemorate some great event or person (a gravestone qualifies as a simple stele). The Merneptah Stele was erected by the pharaoh Mer-Neptah (r. 1213-1203 B.C.) to commemorate his victories in Libya. He succeeded his father, Rameses II, the pharaoh of the Exodus.<sup>1</sup>

While most of the Merneptah inscription deals with the campaign in Libya, the last three lines are critical

to Palestinian history. They deal with a campaign to the north, into Canaan. It says, "The princes are prostrate saying 'Shalom [peace]!' Not one of the Nine Bows lifts his head: Tjehenu is vanished, Khatti at peace, Canaan is captive with all woe. Ashkelon is conquered, Gezer seized, *Israel is wasted, bare of seed*, Khor is become a widow for Egypt. All who roamed about have been subdued by the King of Upper and Lower Egypt."

Tjehenu was a city in Libya, and Khor was a city in ancient Syria, in what is now Lebanon. Ashkelon and Gezer were cities that are well known to biblical scholars, as they were important cities in the history of Israel. When the Egyptians mentioned places or peoples, their hieroglyphics bore what is known as a determinant, that identified whether the reference was to a city, a nation or a people. The determinants for Tjehenu, Ashkelon, Gezer and Khor indicates cities, while that for Israel indicates a nomadic foreign people or tribe. Israel cannot be considered a nation until after the tribes had settled in their territories with at least roughly defined boundaries, and this was after the time of Merneptah (the Book of Joshua describes the establishment of these territories and boundaries). It was at just about his time that Joshua was leading the Israelite tribes in the conquest of Canaan, so the Merneptah Stele confirms the presence of the Israelites in Canaan at the time that the biblical chronology would indicate. Until the discovery of the stele, many scholars rejected the story of Joshua and the

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<sup>1</sup> He was actually Rameses' 13th son, but all his older brothers died before Rameses, who lived to be 93—an amazing age for his time. Rameses' firstborn son, according to the Bible, died in the Tenth Plague.

conquest of Israel (indeed, the whole story of the Exodus) as pure legend.

It is not precisely clear what is meant by "Israel is wasted, bare of seed." This expression is used in other Egyptian inscriptions, and can mean either that all their provisions were destroyed and they were left with no grain and thus would starve, or that all the men were killed and thus there would be no future generations. Since the hieroglyphic determinant indicates that they were nomads and thus had no agriculture, the latter is more likely. Either way, it means that they have no means of survival. As we mentioned above, however, the Egyptians were wont to exaggerate when reporting their accomplishments. It is likely, though, that they dealt a serious blow to the Israelites. It was obviously not a fatal one, however. The Kingdom of Israel would go on to become a major Middle Eastern power during the reigns of David and Solomon.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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## ***The Cost of Education***

According to the Federal Reserve, as of March 31 outstanding student loans were \$1.11 trillion and outstanding credit card debt was \$857 billion. In the last year, student loans have increased \$124 billion (12.6%) while credit card debt has increased just \$7 billion (0.8%).

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*I'm always terrified when I exit Word and it asks me if I want to save the changes to my ten-page document that I swear I did not make any changes to.*

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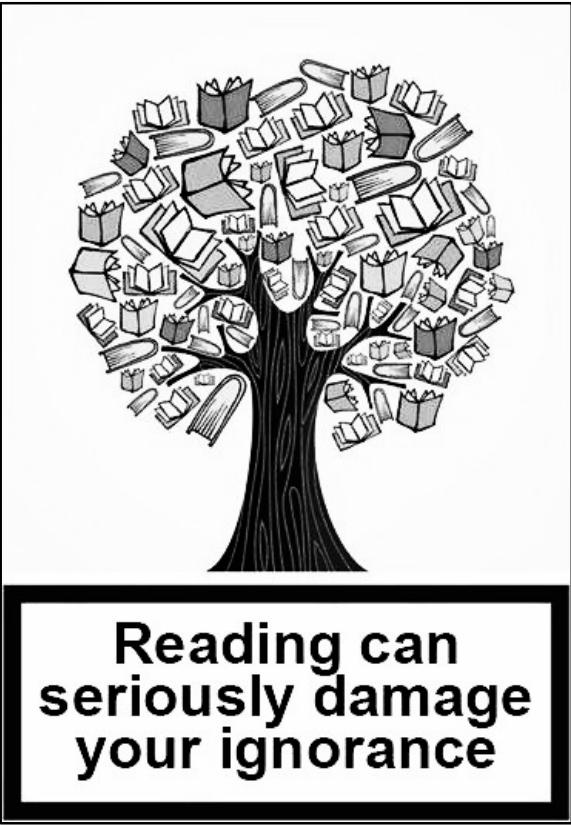
## ***What? No Pork?***

It is interesting to note that both Judaism and Islam forbid the eating of pork, yet it has always been popular in Europe, Africa and eastern Asia. It is often said that this was for health reasons, since pork is one of the few meats that are safe to eat only if they are fully cooked. The reason is that pork can carry the parasite trichinella, which causes the disease trichinellosis (or trichinosis). The symptoms of the disease do not appear for several days up to several weeks after eating the infected meat, so it is unlikely that the ancients would have associated pork with the disease. Also, why would the people in other places not also have banned or shunned it?

The pig is one of the few mammals that has no natural cooling system. It does not sweat, and it cannot cool itself by panting as many other animals do. The only way a pig can cool itself is by wallowing in water or mud. Pigs are actually very clean animals, and since there is no shortage of water in most places in the world where they live, cooling is not a problem. In the arid Middle East, though, pigs are often forced to wallow in their own urine and feces to keep cool. They dislike this, but they have no choice. The ancient pre-Jewish Semites, observing this, concluded that any animal that would do that must be despised by the gods, and thus was cursed and should not be eaten. As Judaism and later Islam developed, this proscription survived into their law.

*Richard R. Losch+*

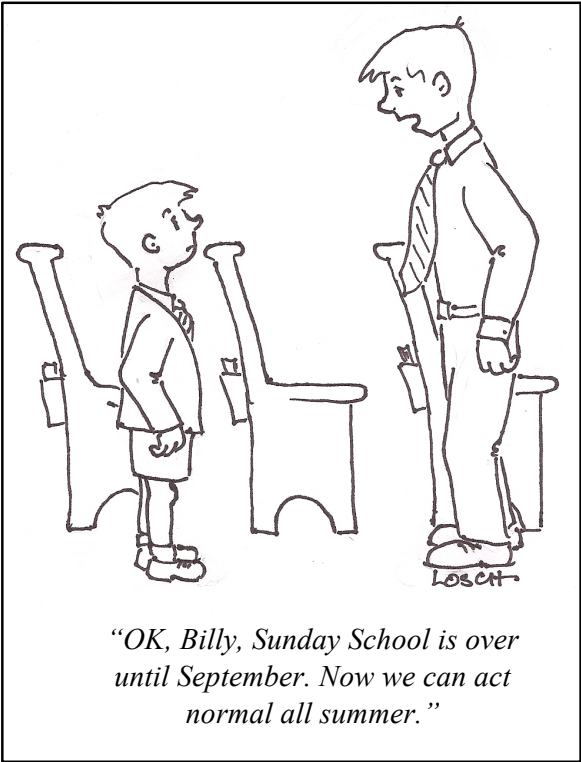
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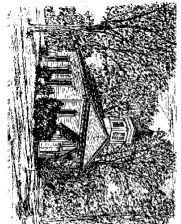
**Reading can seriously damage your ignorance**

**JAMIE**

**by Richard R. Losch**



*“OK, Billy, Sunday School is over until September. Now we can act normal all summer.”*



Saint James' Episcopal Church  
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