

# THE EPISTLE

Saint James' Episcopal Church  
Livingston, Alabama



Volume XXVII, Number 7

July/August 2020



**July/August 2020**

## ***This Month's Cover***

Our cover painting this month is *The Transfiguration* by the Italian artist Ludovico Carracci, completed about 1590. It is oil on canvas, measuring about 3'4"x2'8", and is on display in the Scottish National Gallery in Edinburgh.

The Transfiguration (August 6) is recounted in the three synoptic gospels (Mt. 17:1ff, Mk. 9:2ff, Lk. 9:28ff). It tells of Jesus taking Peter, James and John onto a high mountain. There he briefly revealed to them his divine glory as he spoke with Moses and Elijah, who represent the foundation of Judaism, the Law and the Prophets. At the time the three disciples had no understanding of what had happened or what it meant, and Jesus told them not to reveal it to anyone until they did. That understanding would be given to them on Pentecost.

Ludovico Carracci (1555-1619) was a Bolognese painter, etcher and printmaker who worked primarily in the Baroque style. After his early training under Prospero Fontana, he and his cousins Annibale and Agostino Carracci worked on a series of frescoes in the palace of the Magnani family in Bologna. The frescos depicted scenes of classic Greco-Roman mythology. Annibale was the best of the three, leading to his commission to paint the magnificent *Loves of the Gods* in the Farnese palace in Rome. Agosto joined him there briefly, while Ludovico remained in Bologna. Although he did not go to Rome, he was every bit as influential as his cousins in the development of the Bolognese Baroque style. The three had established the Eclectic Academy of Painting (also called the *Accademia degli Incamminati*) in Bologna. The academy had no regular curriculum, but was primarily a place for Ludovico and sometimes his cousins to tutor young painters. From that

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academy came a large number of northern Italian painters who would go on to great fame throughout Italy, and develop what would be known as the 16<sup>th</sup> century Bolognese School. Ludovico Carracci died in 1619 in Bologna, where he is buried.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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## ***A Word from the Editor***

Yogi Berra said, “It ain’t over till it’s over.” So it is with this coronavirus event. It isn’t over yet, and from all we can tell it will never be really over, because things will never return to the way they were before it began. It is the same with any major event in human history. Be it good or bad, any event important enough to grab the world’s attention will leave a permanent mark on society and civilization. This raises an important question: do we really want to go back to what we were, or do we want to learn from our experiences and move forward with new knowledge and new skills? In the TV series *I, Claudius* a retired actor complains, “The theater is not what it was,” to which a Greek orator replies, “No, and I will tell you something else. It never was what it was.” When we look back on the “good old days” we tend to remember only the good things, many of which may have been lost and are now exaggerated. We forget about or minimize the bad things, many of which may still be with us. As we move out of the corona virus crisis, we naturally want to see the economy rebound, jobs be restored, and businesses be re-opened. This crisis has brought out the worst in some people who have exploited it for power or personal gain, yet it has brought out in far more people the best that was in them. We have seen countless examples of generosity, compassion and self-sacrifice that are an inspiration to many.

One thing I do not want to return to is the increasing religious apathy and moral indifference of the recent past. Before this all began there were some stirrings of a religious revival in America—not a Bible-thumping hymn-singing revival, but a true renewal of faith that comes from a thirst for the dignity of tradition, and a recognition of the need for God’s help in this

chaotic and divided world. This crisis has hastened and strengthened that awakening, and if it continues to grow then things will indeed not be the same when the crisis has passed. They will be much, much better. Sociologists, even non-believing ones, affirm that one of the most important foundations of a moral and stable society is religious belief. Pray for a renewal of faith in our country and in the world. It is not just a dream, it is a clear and reasonable hope if only we will work for it.

*Father Rick Losch*

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## ***Suspension of Services***

The Bishop has continued the suspension of all indoor public worship and gatherings until July 1<sup>st</sup> in response to the COVID-19 crisis. As the number of cases continues to increase, there is a possibility that this suspension may be extended. Please continue to pray for our country and leaders and those who are sick and those who care for them. At this time of crisis prayers are especially needed. On Sunday mornings we will e-mail the Propers along with the Forms of Prayer to be used in Families from the Book of Common Prayer, 1928. These offer a simple traditional form of worship for individuals and families in the home. Additionally, there will be a link to a devotional by Fr. Losch on YouTube. You are encouraged to maintain your spiritual life and your Sunday observance by the reading of these propers and gathering your family together for prayers and watching/listening to Fr. Losch's devotional. Booklets with these Forms of Prayer are available on the table in the back of the Church.

*Hiram Patrenos*

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## ***Independence Day***

We will not have our usual Evening Prayer and barbeque supper celebration of Independence Day due to the COVID-19 situation.

*Hiram Patrenos*

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## *All Things Come of Thee*

"All things come of thee, O Lord, and of thine own have we given thee. Amen" We appreciate all who have sent their offerings during this time of no formal church services. Checks may be mailed to:

St. James' Episcopal Church  
P.O. Box 446  
Livingston, AL 35470  
ATT: Treasurer

or St. Alban's Episcopal Church  
c/o Hiram Patrenos  
P.O. Box 1422  
Livingston, AL 35470

*Hiram Patrenos*

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## *Be Wordly Wise*

### *-press*

One of the things that has always fascinated me about the English language is how many different words can be formed by changing the prefixes attached to a root. For example, consider compress, depress, express, impress, oppress, repress and suppress. The root of all of these is the Latin *premere*, to press, of which the past participle is *pressus*.<sup>1</sup> The prefixes that make up these words are all Latin: *com-* (*con-*), together;<sup>2</sup> *de-*, down; *im-* (*in-*), in; *ex-*, out; *op-* (*ob-*), against; *re-*, back; *sup-* (*sub-*), under. It is this ability to change prefixes and thus produce a variety of similar words with delicate nuances of meaning that makes English the most versatile language on earth. It allows for the clear expression of subtle shades of differences of ideas. It is because of this that English is the modern universal language. Some scholars believe that this ability to express subtle ideas may have contributed to Great Britain's having become, for a while, one of the most powerful empires in history.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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<sup>1</sup> All Latin verbs have four principal parts. The fourth, called the past participle, is the most common source of the roots that make up not only many English, French and Italian words, but also many other Latin words.

<sup>2</sup> When words are combined, some letters often change. An *n* before a *p* usually becomes an *m* (compress rather than *con*press), and a *b* becomes a *p* (suppress rather than *sub*pres).

## ***The Pharisee and the Publican***

In the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican (Lk. 18:9ff), Jesus compares a seemingly righteous man with an obvious sinner. The Pharisees, despite the bad implications of that name today, were basically good people. Their sect was formed about 160 B.C. for the purpose of helping the poor to obey the Torah. Because of the culture and economy of the time, it was very expensive to obey the Law to the letter, and most of the poor simply could not afford to do so without depriving their families and themselves of the essentials of life. The Pharisees, who were lawyers, dedicated themselves to intense scrutiny of the Law in order to find what amounts to loopholes by which the poor could avoid some of the more expensive requirements and yet satisfy obedience to the Law. Their sect was formed for a good and charitable purpose. Over time, however, they lost sight of their original purpose, and became sophistic in their interpretation of the Law, applying many of the loopholes to themselves. This led not only to power and wealth for them, but also to an arrogance and elitism that made them despised by the same poor whom they had originally tried to help.

Today the term publican means tavern (“public house”) keeper, but in Jesus’ time the word we translate publican meant tax-collector. This was not just a bureaucrat who collected taxes, however. The Romans would use local people to collect their taxes for them. They were paid a small percentage, but it was understood that as long as they collected the required taxes and turned them over to the Romans, they could with impunity extort or cheat as much more as they could get away with, and keep it. They were clearly traitors to their people, and were despised as such. Only the worst lowlifes would agree to do such a thing. They were, of course, social outcasts whose only social contact was with other similar lowlifes such as bandits, thieves and prostitutes. This is why people were shocked when Jesus ate dinner with the publican Levi bar-Alphaeus, who thereafter repented and became Saint Matthew (Mark 2:13ff).

In the parable, the Pharisee stood in the “Court of the Men,”

near the Altar of Sacrifice. This was a place of honor, reserved for only faithful adult males. The publican stood “in the back of the Temple” and would not even lift up his eyes to look at the Altar. Noted sinners such as publicans were not welcome in the “Court of the Men,” so he stood in the “Court of the Women” where he could see the altar, but would not have been allowed to present a sacrifice. Even though he was an Israelite, he was not welcome in the Temple as a faithful Jew.

The Pharisee, standing in the place of honor, said, “Thank you, God, that I am not as other men.” He then proceeded to point out how much better a man he was than the publican, and bragged about his obedience to the Law and all his good works. In the eyes of the world he was right—he was a better man, and he was obedient and righteous. Unfortunately for him, he was also arrogant and self-righteous, and in the eyes of God that undid any benefit of his obedience and good works. The publican, on the other hand, simply asked for God’s mercy, and by that very request acknowledged his sinfulness and displayed his humility. Jesus said that he went home justified (made righteous in the sight of God), and the Pharisee did not.

There is nothing wrong with thanking God that we are not as others, as long as we do so in a sense of gratitude for what God has given us, and not in judgment of others or in thinking that we are any better than they. I thank God that I was born in 20<sup>th</sup> century America and not as a serf in medieval Russia or in a hutch in Vietnam in the 1970s. I thank God that I am not afflicted with some terrible disease as many others are, that I have plenty to eat when most of the world is hungry, and that I was raised in an environment where I did not have to steal, lie and cheat just to survive, as many in this world have to do. The lesson of this parable is not that we should not thank God for the manifold blessings that we receive and have done nothing to deserve. It is rather that we should never allow ourselves to slip into thinking that because we have these blessings we deserve what we have and are thus any better than anyone else.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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<b>SAINT JAMES' EPISCOPAL CHURCH LECTOR AND USHER SCHEDULE</b>
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<b>July 2020</b>
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	Old Testament	New Testament	Ushers
<b>5</b>	Charles Muñoz	Linda Muñoz	Charles Muñoz
<b>12</b>	Mary Helen Jones	Roy Underwood	Roy Underwood
<b>19</b>	Ethel Scott	Rosalie Dew	Joe Moore
<b>26</b>	Jimmy Collins	Madelyn Mack	Jimmy Collins
<b>ALTAR GUILD:</b> Carolyn Patrenos			*Hand out bulletins and ring bell

<b>August 2020</b>
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	Old Testament	New Testament	Ushers
<b>2</b>	Charles Muñoz	Linda Muñoz	Charles Muñoz
<b>9</b>	Roy Underwood	Mary Helen Jones	Roy Underwood
<b>16</b>	Rosalie Dew	Ethel Scott	Joe Moore
<b>23</b>	Madelyn Mack	Jimmy Collins	Jimmy Collins
<b>30</b>	Charles Muñoz	Linda Muñoz	Charles Muñoz
<b>ALTAR GUILD:</b> Ethel Scott			*Hand out bulletins and ring bell

<p>If you cannot serve on the day assigned, please exchange with another server and call Hiram Patrenos at 205-499-0506 as soon as possible.</p>
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## July Birthdays . . .

- 6 Madelyn Mack
- 7 Meredith Underwood Shah
- 8 Cameron Baldwin
- 13 Chris Thompson
- 14 Lindsey Moore Thompson
- 16 Carl Sudduth
- 27 Ethel Garth Scott
- 29 Mira Muñoz



## . . . and Anniversaries

- 8 Charles & Linda Muñoz



## August Birthdays . . .

- 8 Garland Scott
- 12 Harris Marks
- 25 Joe Moore



## . . . and Anniversaries

- 27 Mitesh & Meredith Shah



### 2019 Parochial Report Statistics for St. James'

	2017	2018	2019
Total Active Baptized Members	24	24	24
Total Communicants in Good Standing	23	22	22
Average Sunday Attendance	20	16	16
Easter Sunday Attendance	35	23	20
Total Sunday Holy Communions	48	49	53
Total Weekday Holy Communions	4	3	4
Private Holy Communions	0	0	0
Daily Offices held on Sunday	0	0	1
Daily Offices & other services held on Weekdays	4	3	2
Burials conducted	1	0	0
Marriages conducted	0	0	0
Baptisms under 16 years of age	0	1	0
Confirmations 16 years & older	1	0	0
Confirmations under 16 years of age	0	0	0

### 2019 Parochial Report Statistics for St. Alban's

	2017	2018	2019
Total Active Baptized Members	4	4	4
Total Communicants in Good Standing	4	4	4
Others who are active whose baptisms are not recorded in the Parish Register	7	8	10
Average Sunday Attendance	12	9	12
Easter Sunday Attendance	49	n/a	54

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## ***The Chosen***

I am very tired of hyper-sentimental scripturally inaccurate “sandal operas” from Hollywood and TV, so when I heard about *The Chosen* my initial reaction was, “Here we go again.” However, I decided to watch at least a part of it so that I could criticize it fairly. What a surprise I had when I found it to be excellent! The first season is eight episodes depicting the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, with a short prequel made at Christmastime about a shepherd at the Nativity. The series intends to depict the characters of the gospels as real, living people, with all their faults and virtues. While it creatively fleshes out stories to which the Bible often gives only a few details, what it depicts is completely consistent with what the Bible tells us of these people and events. For example, Simon Peter is portrayed as a basically god man, rough around the edges, who could easily slip off in the wrong direction, and who with two-fisted gusto tackles anything he undertakes. Matthew is depicted as a highly intelligent but very nerdy detail man who has gone badly wrong, yet inwardly thirsts for what is right. One of my favorite but rather sad characters is the Pharisee Nicodemus, who comes right to the edge of following Jesus but cannot quite bring himself to take the final step. I particularly like the portrayal of Jesus. He is depicted as clearly the Son of God, who in his humanity is a strong, firm yet gentle leader with a sense of humor, and who is personally very likeable. You can watch it free at <http://the.chosen.tv/>, and it is also available on YouTube. I give *The Chosen* a definite two thumbs up.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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## ***Parish Directory Update***

We will update the Parish Directory in June and will publish the it on July 1. Copies are available in the vestibule. Please review it and give any corrections in writing to Hiram Patrenos or e-mail them to him at [patrenoj@bellsouth.net](mailto:patrenoj@bellsouth.net).

*Hiram Patrenos*

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## *Herod the Great*

Many readers of the Bible are not aware of how important and powerful a king Herod the Great was in the ancient world, relegating him to simply being a cruel puppet king under the Romans (although his descendants were no more than that). He reigned as King of Judea from 37 BC to sometime between 4 BC and AD 4,<sup>1</sup> and he established the Herodian dynasty that lasted to the death of Herod Agrippa III in AD 100.

Although Herod was the king of the Jews, he was a Jew in name only. He had some Jewish ancestry, but he was primarily an Idumean (Edomite),<sup>2</sup> a descendant of Esau and the daughter of Ishmael. He was thus in effect an Arab. His pagan great grandfather had been forced to convert to Judaism when the Judean king Hyrcanus I conquered Idumea in 125 BC. The Herods claimed to be Jews, but the only two who ever took their religion seriously were Herod's son Philip (who never became a king) and his grandson Herod Agrippa I, who was the best friend from childhood of the Roman emperor Claudius I.

In 47 BC Julius Caesar appointed Herod's father, Antipater, as governor of Judea (he later became the Roman procurator). In 37 BC Marc Antony appointed Herod as King of Judea. Herod and Antony were lifelong friends from childhood. As the tension between Antony and Octavian (Caesar's grand-nephew and adopted son) came to a head, civil war ensued, and Herod supported Antony against Octavian. When Antony was defeated in 31 BC it looked like all was lost for Herod. He immediately went to Rome to see Octavian (who would event-

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<sup>1</sup> For many years the date of his death has been accepted as 4 BC, but that date is primarily based on some questionable and contradictory writings of the Jewish historian Josephus. There is considerable evidence to support other dates, although today the most widely accepted span is sometime between 4 BC and AD 4, most likely in the earlier part of that range.

<sup>2</sup> Jacob's older twin Esau married the daughter of Ishmael and founded the kingdom of Edom. For centuries the Edomites and the Israelites were enemies. In the Apocrypha and the New Testament Edom is known by its Greek name, Idumea. Today it is part of the Kingdom of Jordan.

ually become the emperor Augustus), and said that he was willing to accept his punishment. He said that his loyalty to Antony was due to his loyalty to Rome, and he swore that he would now be equally loyal to Octavian. He was a master politician. Octavian believed him and pardoned him, and even expanded his realm. To his death Herod was as good as his word, remaining loyal to Octavian. He loved everything Roman, and the Romans loved him. For that reason, as well as that he was basically an Arab and a Jew in name only, the Jews hated him as much as they hated the Romans. He did everything he could to curry their favor, including building them a magnificent new Temple, but they continued to hate him. They despised the new Temple, because not only did it replace the First Temple that they loved so much, but also much of its architecture had a distinctly Greco-Roman flavor. They knew that he did not want their favor because he cared for them, but because with it, it would be easier for him to get them to submit to Roman rule.

The Bible tells of the visit of the Magi to Herod after Jesus' birth. Magi were Persian astrologers, and were primary advisors to the Persian emperor. When they saw the "star" (undoubtedly a series of astrological signs), they interpreted it as meaning that a prince had been born in Herod's court. A new prince in most royal courts of the time would not have been particularly exciting news. Herod, however, was one of the most important kings in the Middle East, so a son born to him and prophesied to become king would have been major news. They would have immediately reported this to the Persian Emperor, who would have ordered them to assemble a royal entourage and bring greetings and gifts to Herod.<sup>1</sup> Of course, when they found that the new "King of the Jews" was not Herod's son but the prophesied Messiah, that to them was even

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<sup>1</sup> In those days, gold, frankincense and myrrh were normal baby gifts among the rich and powerful. We still give gold or silver today, in such gifts as a baby spoon or porringer. Frankincense was expensive, but it was used by the rich to cover the unpleasant odors of the nursery. Myrrh was mixed with wine and used as a balm for rash and as a tonic for colic.

bigger news. Herod's response was to want to eliminate any threat of a rival, so when he learned that the prophesied King of the Jews had been born in Bethlehem, he ordered the slaughter of all the male infants there. There is no record of this outside the Bible, but that is not surprising. Such massacres were very common in the Middle East in those days, and the Romans would have paid no attention to it as long as it did not interfere with their rule or threaten their tax income. While medieval tradition tells of thousands of babies being slaughtered, in fact it would have been very few. Bethlehem was a small town, and the total number of male infants two and under would have been probably less than thirty. Such an incident would have gained little notice in the cruel culture of those times.

Herod was paranoid, constantly seeing threats to his throne. He even killed several members of his own family whom he feared might be trying to depose him.<sup>1</sup> He built fortresses all over his kingdom, but the most famous of all was at Masada by the Dead Sea. It was virtually impregnable and easily defensible, and was so well supplied that he and a small army could hold out there for several years with no supplies coming from outside. When a handful of Jewish rebels captured it in AD 69,<sup>2</sup> it took three years for the Romans to take it back, and they did that only by building a huge ramp from the desert floor to the mountaintop citadel, at the cost of many Roman lives.

In his last years Herod was sick and physically weak, but he remained mentally alert and was fully capable of ruling. In 4 BC (although that date is uncertain) he put down a revolt in

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<sup>1</sup> His first wife, Mariamne (Mary), was a Hasmonean princess and his only real link to the Jewish royal line. She was also the only one of his ten wives whom he really loved. After murdering her two brothers, who had legitimate claims to the throne, he executed her on a trumped-up charge of adultery. Josephus reports that for the rest of his life he would often be heard at night walking the halls of the palace weeping and calling her name.

<sup>2</sup> Its impregnability was its downfall. The Roman soldiers stationed there were so overconfident of its security that they failed to post a proper guard. The rebels scaled the walls at night and slaughtered the sleeping soldiers.

Jerusalem, and presided over a trial in which the rebels were condemned to death. On the same day of the trial he ordered the immediate execution of his oldest son, Herod Antipater, for treason. He died a few days later. It should be noted that the King Herod at Jesus' trial was not Herod the Great, but his son Herod Antipas, Tetrarch of Galilee.

We have no idea what Herod looked like. He expediently obeyed the Jewish commandment against graven images, so his coins and seals did not bear his image. We know that there were dozens of statues of him all over the Roman Empire, except in his own realm of Judea (because of the proscription against graven images). Unfortunately, he was so highly regarded that his statues were made of bronze instead of marble. This was a high honor in those days, but in subsequent years most bronze statues were melted down for other uses, so few have survived. The plinths of a great many of Herod's statues did survive, however, particularly in Greece, so we not only know that they were there, but we still have their inscriptions. These all show that Herod was held in the highest esteem.

Herod's epithet "the Great" is deserved, at least by worldly standards. He was one of the greatest rulers of his era, and by the standards of his time he was an effective and internationally influential king. He was described as handsome, charismatic, highly intelligent, clever, and a shrewd politician. He was masterful at manipulating the Romans, thus building a strong and prosperous economy in Judea. His building projects spanned his entire realm, and they were marvels of the time, using the very latest and best of Rome's impressive technology. He built fortresses, administrative complexes, palaces, the Temple, and at least two complete cities that he dedicated to the Romans. Although he was a harsh and cruel ruler, he was also known for being objective in his judicial decisions, at least as much as any ruler was in that brutal world. For all his brutality, his cruelty was no worse than any other Eastern potentate of his time. It must be said to his shame, however, that it was also no better.

*Richard R. Losch+*

## ***Ice Cream and Politics Do Mix***

The next time you enjoy a soft-serve ice cream, think of Margaret Thatcher, the longest serving British Prime Minister in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Before going into politics, she was a chemist specializing in food science. In the 1940s she worked on a project to whip air into ice cream, making it possible to produce it with fewer ingredients. She helped develop a soft ice cream with the consistency of whipped topping. It was first marketed in the United Kingdom under the name Mr. Whippy. Unlike American soft ice cream, which is usually sold at fairs, cafeterias and specialty stands like Dairy Queen, Mr. Whippy was sold from mobile vans. Mrs. Thatcher's political opponents accused her of having cheated the public by selling them air.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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

During the last few centuries of western civilization, very few men wore earrings until quite recently. There were two notable exceptions. In some cultures (such as 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century France) they were sported by foppish courtiers, and for centuries most sailors wore a single gold ring in one ear. The courtiers wore them to be stylish and ostentatious, but the sailors wore them for a more practical reason. When they died, so they would not be thrown into a common paupers' grave, the gold earring could be easily cut off to pay for a proper burial.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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## ***The Epistle Is Online***

The last seven years of *The Epistle* are now online. Go to <http://rlosch.com> and click on the "Epistle" tab at the top. On a mobile device, click on the blue menu at the top right and select the "Epistle" page. You can read it online or download it as a .pdf file. This is an easy way to share articles with others.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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## ***Killing Versus Murder***

For centuries ethicists and moralists have debated whether there is ever any justification for the intentional killing of a human being. The argument is most often based on the Sixth Commandment,<sup>1</sup> which the King James Version translates, “Thou shalt not kill.” The first question that arises is whether this is an accurate translation. Most modern English translations render it, “You shall not murder.” This is an important distinction. While murder is killing, killing is not necessarily murder. Killing is the taking of the life of any living thing, plant or animal. Homicide is the killing of a human being. Murder is a specific type of homicide, being the unjustifiable killing of a human being. It is generally recognized in law (with local variations) by five types: premeditated intentional homicide (planned in advance); unpremeditated intentional homicide (an unplanned spur-of-the-moment intent to kill); negligent homicide (unintentional killing as a result of negligence or recklessness); accidental homicide (such as killing someone as a result of an automobile brake failure); and justifiable homicide, such as in war or capital punishment. It is this last one that causes so much disagreement. I am not so arrogant as to think I have the answer to it, but the issue merits being explored.

In order to understand the intent of the commandment, we must look at the original Hebrew. There are four major Hebrew verbs for killing: *l'harag* (להרוג), to kill or to slay; *l'ratsach* (לרצח), to murder unjustifiably; *l'shacheth* (לשחית), to destroy utterly; and *l'hamith* (להמית), to put to death or to execute. The word that is used in the Sixth Commandment is *l'ratsach*, to murder unjustifiably. This removes any question about the killing of plants or animals, and leaves only the question of whether the killing of another human can ever be justified.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This is the Fifth Commandment under the listing used by Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, Lutherans and Hellenistic Jews.

<sup>2</sup> PETA and other animal rights groups use the Sixth Commandment as justification for their positions, but this is sophistry. The Mosaic Law does demand, however, that killing animals must be as humane as possible.

The two homicides that are hot moral and ethical issues are whether capital punishment is wrong, and whether there can be such a thing as a justifiable war. With regard to capital punishment, there are two strong arguments against it. One is that the purpose of punishment is to effect a reformation and rehabilitation. Since death precludes these, capital punishment can be at best only a deterrent. Studies have shown that it has minimal if any deterrent effect, even in the swift justice “try ’em and hang ’em” days of yore.

The second argument against capital punishment is a statistical one. There have been countless cases where a convict has been proven innocent after his execution, and an ancient principal of justice is that it is better for ten guilty men to go free than for one innocent one to be punished. I will not try to resolve that issue here. The Mosaic Law provides many situations in which it requires that an offender be put to death, so it cannot be argued that the Bible forbids capital punishment. On the other hand, we do not want to take that Law too literally. If we did, we would be executing all kinds of offenders from murderers to adulterers and blasphemers. In today’s amoral society that would result in quite a sizeable massacre.

The question of justifiable war is a separate issue, and can be a very murky one. Some wars, such as wars of aggression, can never be argued as justifiable. When this question comes up, however, one of the first wars to be mentioned is World War II. The issue is which would be a greater sin—to allow the Nazi and Imperial Japanese atrocities to continue unchallenged, or to go to war and kill in order to stop them? The argument that the end never justifies the means is a sound one, and it is difficult at best to say how far this principle should be taken. Pacifists take it all the way, and are often willing to put their own lives on the line to defend it. Others argue that one must balance the good against the evil and decide based on that. Again, it is a matter of individual conscience to determine what is the right course. The Bible does not forbid war. In fact, one of the Names of God is *Yahweh Sabaoth*, (יהוה צבאות), Lord God of Hosts, meaning Lord God of Armies. The Old Testa-

ment is full of wars on which God clearly takes a side, so he obviously does not forbid war. What wars are justified and what are not is not at all clearly defined, however, so that decision must be left up to human consciences guided by the Holy Spirit. Nonetheless we too often pay no attention to the Holy Spirit, or even to clear moral and ethical evidence, and march off happily to wars for which there is no justification.

Even in assumedly justified wars inexcusable atrocities take place. Those responsible for them will be held to account, sometimes here, but always hereafter. In the question of killing, it all comes back to the conscience of the individual combatant. The Nürnberg excuse that “I was just following orders” is not sufficient. This lays a tremendous burden of responsibility not only on the shoulders of the individual soldier, but also on those of the commanders who sent him.

I realize that I have raised far more questions than I have answered, but this was my intent. There are no easy answers to most important questions, and certainly not to this one. What we can learn from it, however, is that trying to interpret theology or morality from a single sentence from the Bible such as “Thou shalt not kill,” and especially from only its translation, can stir up far more questions than we bargained for.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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

In light of the recent toilet paper shortage, it might be noted that Green Bay, Wisconsin has been known for over a century as “The Toilet Paper Capital of the World.” In 1901 the Northern Paper Company produced the first “sanitary tissue.” They discovered a way to filter out wood particles, and adopted the advertising slogan “Splinter-Free.” By 1920 they were producing it on a roll, and Northern Paper Company has been on a roll ever since. Today Wisconsin is the largest toilet paper manufacturer in the world, employing over 30,000 people in the industry, and with annual sales of \$13.8 billion.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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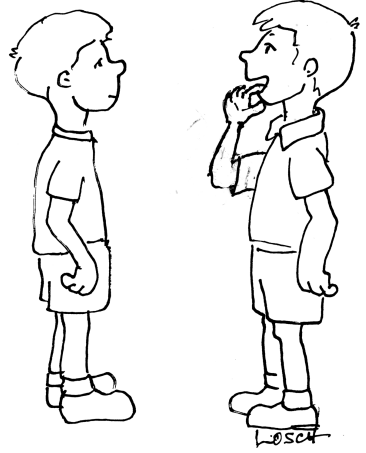
# A Touch of Trivia

On April Fools' Day in 1996, Taco Bell ran a huge ad in major newspapers across the country announcing that they had purchased the Liberty Bell from the National Park Service, and that it would be renamed the Liberty Taco Bell and displayed at their headquarters in Irvine, CA. The NPS and several Senators were so inundated with furious calls and letters that they had to run a counter ad stating that this was a hoax. Taco Bell also ran an ad that it was an April Fools' prank, and donated \$50,000 to the NPS for the maintenance of the Liberty Bell.

*Richard R. Losch+*

JAMIE

by Richard R. Losch



*"I need to save this loose tooth. My parents think I still believe in the tooth fairy, and that's my primary source of income."*

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