

# THE EPISTLE

Saint James' Episcopal Church  
Livingston, Alabama

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January 2019

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

This month's cover painting, in honor of the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul (January 25) is Caravaggio's *The Conversion on the Way to Damascus*. Completed in 1601, it is oil on a cypress panel, measuring 7'9"x6'2". It is housed in the Odescalchi Balbi Collection in Rome. In 1600 Msgr. (later Cdl.) Tiberio Cerasi, Treasurer to Pope Clement VIII, commissioned this and *The Crucifixion of Saint Peter* in honor of the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul (June 29). Cerasi rejected both paintings, which were later replaced by second versions which still hang in the Vatican today. This painting depicts the time when Saul of Tarsus, on his way to Damascus to persecute Christians, had a vision of Christ, who asked him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" He was struck blind and fell from his horse, and later came to be known as Saint Paul, the greatest of all Christian missionaries (Acts 22:6ff). Helen Langdon, Caravaggio's biographer, describes the painting as "an odd blend of Raphael and clumsy rustic realism." Its harsh lighting and intensity certainly convey the sense of crisis in Paul's life, when everything he believed in was turned upside down.

Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1571-1610) was an Italian painter active in Rome, Naples, Malta and Sicily at the end of the Italian Renaissance. His unique use of lighting and the vibrant emotion in his paintings had a strong influence on the development of the Baroque style. He was born in Caravaggio, near Bergamo, where his father was the resident decorator for the Marchese da Caravaggio. His mother died when he was 13, at which time he was apprenticed to the Milanese painter Simone Peterzano. He remained in the Milan-Caravaggio region until 1592, when he moved to Rome. By 1600 he was considered the most famous painter in Rome. He was also,

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however, a brawler and petty criminal, with a police “rap sheet” several pages long. In 1606 he killed a man—whether it was in a brawl or a duel is unclear—but the patrons who had previously protected him abandoned him. Declared an outlaw, he fled to the city-state of Naples. Protected by the Colonna family, he soon became the most famous painter in Naples. Fearing he could be taken back to Rome for trial, however, he soon fled to Malta with the help of Fabrizio Colonna, who was a Knight of Malta. In 1608, after brawl with the knights, he was arrested and imprisoned in Malta. He managed to escape (possibly with help from Fabrizio) and made his way to Sicily, where he again received lucrative commissions. Letters from friends indicate that his behavior was becoming increasingly erratic, one describing him as “extremely crazy.” In 1609 he was viciously attacked, possibly as a *vendetta* from the family of someone he had injured in one of his many brawls. Rumors of his death abounded, but each time he was found to be still alive. In 1610 he developed a severe fever of an unknown nature, and soon thereafter there is no further record of him. It was believed that he was murdered by one of the many people he had offended. His friend Marzio Milesi wrote that he had died in Porto Ecolle in Tuscany. Human remains found in a church in Porto Ecolle in 2010, after a year-long forensic investigation including DNA tests, are believed almost certainly to be those of Caravaggio.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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

If, drunk with sight of power, we loose  
 Wild tongues that have not Thee in awe,  
 Such boastings as the Gentiles use,  
 Or lesser breeds without the Law—  
 Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,  
 Lest we forget—lest we forget!

That is the fourth stanza of Rudyard Kipling’s “Recessional.” Last fall during the campaigns many wild tongues were loosed all along the political spectrum, and on the

morning after the election both sides were claiming victory. In my humble opinion no one really won who is not dedicated to the betterment of our country and mankind rather than to power and personal glory. This month the recently elected candidates will be sworn in, and when that happens more vitriol can be expected. Politics by its very nature is rich with “wild tongues that have not Thee in awe,” but that does not mean that we as Christians, even if we are interested or involved in politics, have to be the same way. In fact, if we dare call ourselves Christians we had better not be the same way.

A Facebook meme recently asked, “If Jesus were alive on earth today, would he be at a political rally or marching with the caravan?” My answer is that he *is* alive on earth today, and he is doing neither. He is warning us to get our act together, renounce the rage, hatred, tribalism and obstructionism that divide us, and start praying that we learn to stop thinking with our emotions and start using the brains he gave us. Jesus is not a Republican or a Democrat, a Capitalist or a Socialist—he is involved in reunifying mankind with God and with one another, not with politics or economics. He came into the world, died for us, and gave us the Church to save souls. Period.

The best way to start the healing is to pick out the people or events that anger you the most, and then pray daily for them. It is not necessary to agree with someone in order to comprehend his point of view or to understand what motivates him to think or act that way. It is also not necessary to agree with someone in order to love him and pray for him. It is far more important (and healthy) to pray for those we dislike and disagree with than for those who we believe are “on our side.” The power of prayer to help you reach a position of tolerance and understanding is amazing. People will always differ, and this is good. Think what an excruciatingly boring world it would be if everyone saw everything in exactly the same way. But just because we differ, that does not mean we cannot still love and appreciate one another in spite of, and sometimes even because of, our differences. Try prayer. You might just like it!

*Father Rick Losch*

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## ***Annual Parish Meeting***

At the Annual Parish Meeting held on Sunday, December 2, Hiram Patrenos and Ethel Scott were elected to the Vestry for terms expiring on December 31, 2020, replacing Rosalie Dew, Jim Rankin, Mary Helen Jones, and Joe Moore whose terms expired December 31, 2018. Other members of the Vestry are Roy Underwood and Ethel Scott, whose terms expire on December 31, 2019. The Treasurer, Mr. Patrenos, gave a financial report, and reports were made for the Episcopal Church Women, the Daughters of the King, and the Altar Guild. The Vestry met following the Annual Meeting and elected the following officers for 2019: Hiram Patrenos, Senior Warden; Roy Underwood, Junior Warden; Hiram Patrenos, Treasurer; and Fr. Losch, Clerk. Thank you to Mrs. Dew, Mr. Rankin, Mrs. Jones and Mr. Moore for their dedicated service to the Vestry and St. James.

*Hiram Patrenos*

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## ***Every Member Canvass***

Thank you to all who have returned their pledge cards. If you have not yet completed your pledge card, it is not too late. Pledge cards are available on the table at the rear of the church. Please prayerfully consider your commitment to St. James'. Cards may be placed in the Alms Basins or mailed to St. James' Church, Post Office Box 446, Livingston, Alabama 35470.

*Hiram Patrenos*

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## ***Wilmer Hall Christmas Contribution***

Thank you to everyone who contributed towards our special gift to Wilmer Hall for its Christmas needs this year. Through your generosity St. James' contributed \$1,250.00 for the Christmas needs of the children.

*Hiram Patrenos*

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*"You may not believe in Hell now, but you will when you get there."*  
—Ven. Abp. Fulton J. Sheen

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## ***Parish Directory Update***

We will be updating the Parish Directory during January. Please review it for an errors and/or omissions and give any additions or corrections in writing to Hiram Patrenos or e-mail them to him at [patrenoj@bellsouth.net](mailto:patrenoj@bellsouth.net). The updated directory will be available on the first Sunday of February.

*Hiram Patrenos*

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## ***DHR Food Pantry***

St. James is responsible for supplying the Department of Human Resources Food Pantry with canned goods during the month of January. Please plan to bring canned goods (no perishables) each Sunday and leave them in the box in the vestibule or the basket in the back of the church.

*Hiram Patrenos*

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## ***Merry Christmas***

Yes, it's still Christmas. All the Christmas festivities began at sundown on December 24, and end at sundown on their appropriate dates. The Feast of the Nativity (Christmas) ends December 25 (Christmas Day); the Octave of the Nativity ends January 1 (the Feast of the Circumcision); the Christmas Festival ends January 5 (the Eve of the Epiphany); and the Christmas Season ends February 2 (the Feast of the Purification), making Christmas forty days long. What a shame that people start celebrating it right after Hallowe'en, fifty-five days early, and then are bored with it by the time it actually comes.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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## ***The Epistle is Online***

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

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## ***Be Wordly Wise***

### ***Bureaus and Bureaucrats***

In modern usage a bureau is a chest of drawers, but less than a century ago it meant a writing desk with drawers specially designed for paper and writing materials. The writing surface of such desks was traditionally covered with cloth, usually green or brown wool felt.<sup>1</sup> The word comes to us from the French *bureau* (pl. *bureaux*), which in turn comes from *burel*, course woolen cloth. That is a diminutive of the Old French *bure*, dark brown cloth, which derives either from the Latin *burrus*, red, or *burra*, a course brown wool garment.

In old times these bureaus were standard equipment in offices, so by 1720 the word in both English and French had become a synonym for office or place of business. The modern French for office is *bureau*. By 1796 bureau also had come to mean a specific division of government (as in the Federal Bureau of Investigation or the Bureau of Land Management).

The Greek verb for to rule or to exercise power is *kratein* (κρατειν), from which we get the suffixes -crat and -cracy (as in democracy, rule of the people, plutocracy, rule of the rich, and aristocracy, rule of the elite). A bureaucracy, then, is the rule from offices or governmental divisions, and a bureaucrat is an official who rules from such an office. It is interesting to follow the transition of language from a wool desk covering to the often wooly rule of government bureaucrats.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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## ***Why Worry About Words?***

Some may wonder why we pay so much attention to words in “Wordly Wise” and other articles. Words have great power (“the pen is mightier than the sword”), and often carry subtle implications that lurk beneath their surface meanings. For example, love, cherish, and adore all mean essentially the same

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<sup>1</sup> Some of us are old enough to remember the large green or brown absorbent paper desktop blotters that simulated the felt cloth coverings.

thing, and yet they are quite different in their overtones.

Words do not just happen. Except for intentionally created ones,<sup>1</sup> every word in every language derives from an earlier word, which derived from an even earlier one, and so on back to the grunt of some caveman. If we pay attention to how a word developed (its etymology) and to how its meaning has changed over the ages, we can gain powerful insights into the subtle implications of words and phrases. Meanings often change quickly. For example, in the King James Version St. Paul refers to “silly women” (2 Tim. 3:6), leading modern readers to accuse him of misogyny. In 1611, when the KJV was produced, silly did not mean inane, but innocent and blessed. There are devotional writings of the time referring to the Silly Virgin Mary. Knowing how words change meaning over time enhances our ability to interpret the real intent of the writer.<sup>2</sup>

Another factor in the consideration of words is translation. It is rare that a word in one language has exactly the same meaning and implications as its corresponding word in another. There are over thirty words for ice in the Inuit (Eskimo) language, and only a few in English. What word do you choose to translate “I sensed the ice in her tone” into Inuit? If we know how a word has developed and is used in one language, it enables us to choose the most accurate word in the other when we are translating. No translation can carry the exact meaning of the original, but understanding how the words evolved helps us to understand their intended meaning.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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<sup>1</sup> The mathematician Larry Page invented the word *googol* for the expression  $10^{100}$ . Google is an intentional commercial misspelling of googol. Shakespeare used at least twenty now common words that scholars believe he invented, although their roots already existed. Among these are addiction (Othello II.ii), eyeball (Tempest I.ii), inaudible (All’s Well V.iii), new-fangled (Love’s Labour’s Lost I.i) and uncomfortable (Romeo IV.v).

<sup>2</sup> When Justice Antonin Scalia had to make a decision based on an article of the Constitution, he would read dozens of late 18<sup>th</sup> century documents to try to discern just what the key words in the article meant to the delegates of the Constitutional Congress who wrote it.



## *Masculinity and Femininity*

In recent years the concepts of both masculinity and femininity have been challenged in many ways. Some claim that there is absolutely no significant difference between males and females other than in their physical biology, and that any other differences are purely cultural. Others decry one or the other with such ugly expressions as “toxic masculinity” and “militant feminism,” each of which expressions implies at best a contempt for the other sex. A great deal of this comes from ignorance of the real meaning of the concepts of masculinity and femininity, while much comes from the modernist idea that “gender” is a matter of choice, not biology.<sup>1</sup>

Both Christianity and Judaism clearly affirm that men and women are created equal, and that they should be absolutely equal with regard to all human and civil rights. True, it took a while to reach that point, but even when women had less rights than men Christianity and Judaism granted vastly more than any other religion or culture in history. There are those in both faiths who deny this equality, usually based on a misreading of Scripture, but they are very much in the minority. Both religions, however, also affirm that while men and women are equal, they are also different. That does not imply the superiority of either. Five dimes and two quarters are of absolutely equal value, yet they are both quite different.

It is the common impression that most ancient cultures were

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<sup>1</sup> Gender is actually a linguistic term, not a biological one. In language there are three genders—masculine, feminine and neuter—and the assignment of gender to a word rarely has anything to do with whether it is associated with males or females. Anyone who has ever tried to learn an ancient or modern European language is painfully aware of that. In biology there are two sexes, male and female, and these depend on which set of sexual-assignment chromosomes an individual has. One's sex may not necessarily determine behavior, as that depends on psychology and training. There are some males who act more like women and some females who act more like men, but nonetheless biologically male is male and female is female, and neither chemicals, surgery nor even genetic engineering can change the chromosomes that determine that.

patriarchal and oppressive of women, and to some extent this is true. There is more myth than fact to most people's understanding of this, however. Periclean Athens is credited with being the cradle of Democracy and one of the most enlightened of the ancient cultures, yet there were few cultures in history more oppressive of women. Women were granted only the most basic human rights, and no civil rights. A woman was not allowed to leave the confines of her house unless accompanied by her husband, father or brother, and even those occasions were extremely rare. The only time she could be alone outside the house was once a year at the annual festival of the goddess Athena, which no male was allowed to witness. She was accompanied to the gate of the Acropolis and left there in the care of a priestess, and then picked up and taken home after the ceremony. Ancient Persia, on the other hand, is commonly thought of as being a typical barbarian Middle Eastern empire, yet it was far more enlightened than almost any other ancient culture, and more so than most medieval European kingdoms. As in ancient Rome, Persian women could own property and conduct business, and were granted most of the same civil rights as men except the right to vote<sup>1</sup> or to rule a family.<sup>2</sup>

The Church's view of masculinity and femininity could not possibly be further from the chest-beating "me mighty hunter" male and the subservient Lucy Ricardo or June Cleaver female. If we study the Hebrew account of the creation of humans it is abundantly clear, whether we take the stories literally or metaphorically, that when God created the first human "in the image of God" he imbued him with his own attributes.<sup>3</sup> These attributes include all that we generally associate with both mascu-

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<sup>1</sup> The right to vote was not granted to women in almost any society in history until well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century (in 1918 Britain became the first).

<sup>2</sup> In Rome the ruler of a family was the eldest male. He was known as the *Paterfamilias*, and in many cases literally had the right of life and death over any family member in his household.

<sup>3</sup> Since God is pure spirit and has no body, the expression "image of God" could refer only to spiritual attributes, not to physical ones.

linity and femininity—protectiveness, providence, strength, gentleness, nurturing, compassion, etc. When God divided the human to form the male and female, the traditionally masculine attributes were predominant in the male, while the traditionally feminine ones were predominant in the female.<sup>1</sup>

What, then, do we mean when we speak of masculinity and femininity? First of all, masculinity does not mean aggressive machismo, and femininity does not mean submissiveness. The bullying tyrant and the cowering defenseless damsel are the exact antitheses of true masculinity and femininity. In nature, at least in its higher forms, the primary role of the male is to protect the family unit against outside danger and to provide for its material needs. The primary role of the female is to hold the family unit together and to nurture and protect the young. The former requires physical strength, persistence, and the courage to face danger, while the latter requires stamina, wisdom, gentleness, and often patience. All of these attributes are necessary for the survival of a family unit, and none can be said to be superior or more valuable than any other. There is never total separation of these attributes between the sexes, but some are assigned to a greater degree to the male and others to a greater degree to the female. When they are united in the family unit, (“the twain shall become one flesh”), they make up the complete whole that is sociologically known as the “nuclear family.” Since this is the cornerstone of every society and civilization, the Church reveres it.

The One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church is God’s family. Jesus Christ, the paragon of Christian masculinity, is its protector and provider, and his Blessed Mother, the paragon of Christian femininity, is its nurturer. Both provide for the spiritual strength and growth of the Church, just as both parents provide for the spiritual strength and growth of the family. By patterning our lives after these models of masculinity and femininity, no man or woman could significantly err.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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<sup>1</sup> See “Adam’s Rib” in the October 2018 *Epistle*.

## *When Are We Judged?*

I was recently asked a very good question: The Creed says that Christ will come again to judge both the living and the dead—but haven't the dead already been judged when they died? The answer is not simple, because it involves a concept that is almost impossible for the human mind to grasp. That concept is timelessness, or the total absence of time. Time is a part of creation, and as humans we are completely bound by it. We think in terms of beginnings and endings in time, time spans, sequences of events through time, and so on. Every experience in our lives is so bound to the passage of time that we cannot think outside of its limitations. After death, however, we are no longer bound by time, so it becomes meaningless.

Contemplating the absence of time is similar to contemplating zero and infinity. Zero means nothingness—the absence of absolutely everything, even our own consciousness. We cannot contemplate zero, because to do so we need to insert our consciousness, and then we no longer have nothing. Similarly, we cannot contemplate infinity. We can understand vastness, even cosmic vastness, but something that goes on forever with no beginning and no end is so far from our experience that grasping the concept is completely out of our reach. Even measurable vastness is out of the reach of most of us. Most people can grasp the value of \$100,000, but it takes a very special type of mind to grasp the concept of \$1 trillion. A trillion seconds ago humans had just recently emerged from living in caves. This is why so few legislators can handle such things as the national debt—it is beyond their ability to conceive of its real meaning. So it is also with grasping such concepts as the absence of time or of eternity, of which there is no beginning and no end.

Fortunately, part of the gift of reason that God gave us is the ability to intellectualize these concepts even though they are in reality beyond our grasp. We can deal with zero and infinity mathematically, even though we cannot actually get our minds around them. Likewise we can deal with the concept of timelessness theologically even though it is totally beyond our empirical experience. Thus even though we generally tend to

think of birth, life, death, judgment and eternal reward or punishment as if they were events along a continuum of time, we are capable through the gift of reason to stand back and consider them outside the confines of time. While we cannot relate to timelessness or eternity in terms of our own human experience, we can still do so with our intellect, just as we can intellectualize zero and infinity.

It is in these terms that we can talk about the Sacrifice of the Mass—that as the Holy Eucharist is being consecrated we are actually participating in the Sacrifice that Christ offered on the Cross two thousand years ago. Christ intersected with history (and thus with time) when he took upon himself humanity and lived on earth in history. But being God he is also outside of time. That sacrifice that we experienced in history twenty centuries ago is taking place this very moment, has been eternally, and will be forever—“as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.” It is unbound by time. In the same way, our judgment after death is an event outside of time, so we cannot relate it to our death along a timeline.

This concept is one of the arguments that Calvin used in formulating his doctrine of predestination. Since we are bound by time only during our earthly existence, he said, everything that we do in our overall existence is fixed and predetermined. The argument against this is that while God knows what we will do with our whole lives, he does not predetermine or cause it. If I see a full glass of water fall over I know what is going to happen, but that does not mean that I caused it to happen. In the same way God knows what choices we will make, and does all in his power, other than forcing us, to lead us to make the right choices. Because he gave us freedom of will he will allow us to make wrong choices if we have also chosen to ignore or reject his help. We are, however, responsible for those choices, and we will be judged for them. That will happen “at the end of all things,” but since one of the things that ends is time, we cannot know when or where that judgment will take place.

*Richard R. Losch+*

## *Christian Books*

When we think of a book today, the first image that comes to mind is the form of book known as a codex (plural codices). This is a set of usually rectangular pages bound on one side between two protective covers. This form was known in the Roman Empire in classic times, but its use was fairly rare. The common form of a book then was the bookroll or scroll. This is a series of pages glued end to end horizontally (the bookroll) or vertically (the scroll), and rolled up on one or two spindles.<sup>1</sup> Because books could be quite long, there was an unofficial relatively standard size of an individual bookroll, and most books consisted of several such bookrolls which were usually stored together in a cylindrical leather case.<sup>2</sup> All the Hebrew Scriptures were written on bookrolls, and the bookroll of the Torah is still the preferred form in traditional Jewish liturgical practice. The word volume comes from the Latin *volvere*, to roll.

The word *codex* comes from the Latin, and it originally meant a block of wood. Blocks of wood were split into two or up to five slices and bound on one edge with leather straps. Each block was hollowed out slightly on the front and back and the hollow filled with wax. One could then write in the wax with a pencil-shaped *stylus*. When the document was no longer needed the wax was rubbed over or the surface re-melted so it could be re-used.<sup>3</sup> This was also called a codex, and when the idea came about to bind sheets of papyrus or parchment in the

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<sup>1</sup> In the title head of *The Epistle* there are a couple of vertical scrolls on which are written passages from the Epistle of Saint James in Greek.

<sup>2</sup> The Latin for book is *liber*. Individual bookrolls were typically about the same size, and came to be used as a standard of weight. Thus *liber* also came to mean pound, whence we get the symbol *lb* for pound. The monetary symbol for the British pound Sterling is £, also from *liber*.

<sup>3</sup> When something was written and intended to be saved, it was written in ink on papyrus or parchment. Something written on a wax codex was not to be considered secure until it was permanently transcribed in ink. The Latin for wax is *cera*, and without is *sine*. This developed into the Latin *sincerus*, without wax or pure, whence we get the word sincere.

same way, the book as we know it was born.

The Roman world retained the use of bookrolls as the preferred form at least three centuries into the Christian era. Christians, on the other hand, much preferred the codex for their books. Although we do not know exactly why, there are several reasons proposed for this. For one thing, in the Roman custom it was not at all common to flip from one part of a book to another. Books were expected to be read from the beginning to the end. A history book, such as a history of Carthage, would normally consist of several bookrolls, and each might cover a specific period. If a historian wanted to study the First Punic War he might go to that particular bookroll, but it would be rare that he would skip around among different pages within it. Most of the early Christian writings, however, including what are now the books of the New Testament, contained a wide variety of subjects (e.g. Paul's letters) or were devotional guides in which the reader would be more likely to want to thumb back and forth among different passages. It is far easier to do this in a codex than in a bookroll. Books of collections of psalms, Scriptural passages and hymns were common, and there again one would like to be able to flip from one to another without having to roll through long sections of a bookroll. For this reason the codex quickly became popular with Christian readers.

Another reason for the popularity of the codex among Christians was security. During some periods of Christian persecution it was dangerous to be found with a seditious book such as a copy of Paul's letters. Because of the very shape of a codex it can be smaller than a bookroll, and thus easier to hide in your home or in the folds of your tunic.

There was an unintended result of the popularity of the codex. It was easier to include a number of short books, such as the gospels or Paul's letters, into a single volume. Because of that that there came to be a fixed order for arranging these, and this resulted in the books of the Bible, when it was officially canonized, being in the order in which we find them today.

*Richard R. Losch+*

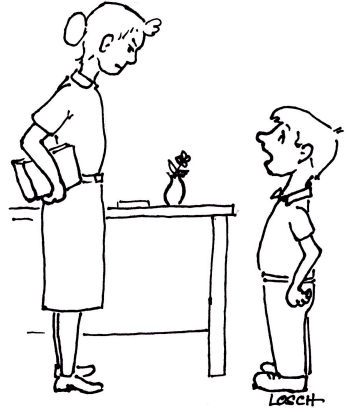
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# *A Touch of Trivia*

For you football fans, the shape of an American football is a prolate spheroid, which is a geometric solid whose length (c. 11") exceeds its diameter (c. 7"). Its shape enhances its ability to spin along its axis. This so-called gyroscopic effect enables much longer distance throws than can be achieved with a spherical ball such as a basketball. The original reason for this shape is that it is the shape of an inflated pig's bladder, which was what the first American footballs were made of.

*Richard R. Losch+*

**JAMIE** by Richard R. Losch



*"If we learn from our mistakes, shouldn't I try to make as many as possible?"*



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