

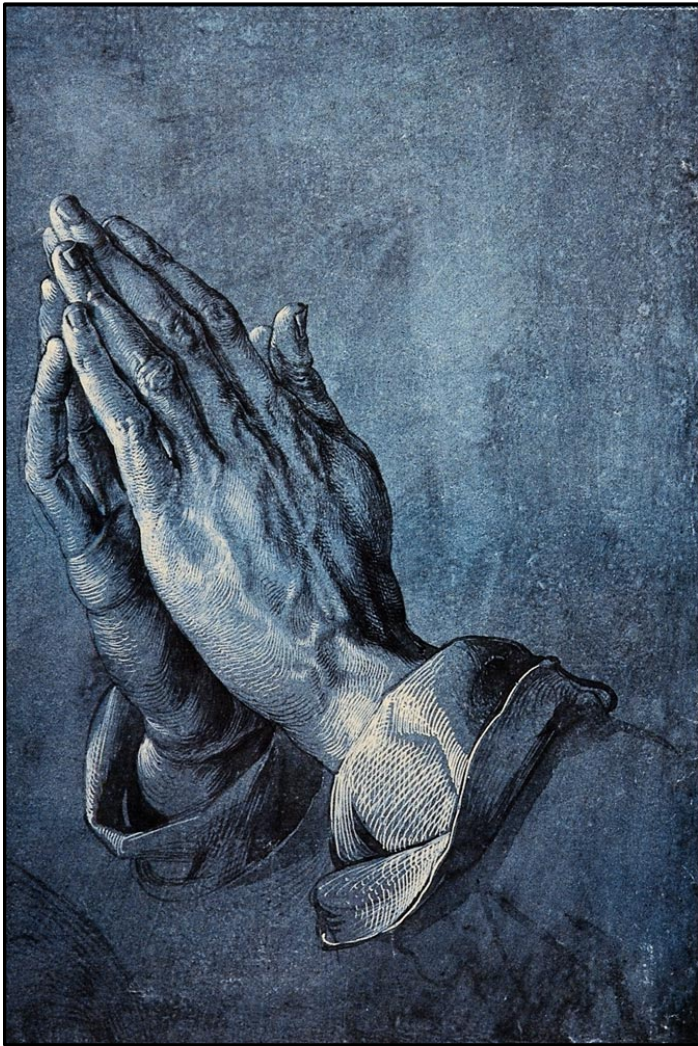
# THE EPISTLE

Saint James' Episcopal Church  
Livingston, Alabama



Volume XXIII, Number 7

July/August 2016



July/August 2016

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

Our cover picture this month is *Praying Hands* (*Betende Hände*) by Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528). It is Dürer's best-known work, and one of the most famous drawings of the German Renaissance. It is a pen and black ink drawing using a white highlighting technique, on blue-green paper that Dürer made himself. The drawing was made in 1508 as a preparatory study for the hands of an Apostle in a triptych, a three-panel altarpiece. The original is currently in storage in a museum in Vienna. The triptych was commissioned in 1506 for the cathedral in Frankfurt by Jakob Heller, a wealthy merchant and patron of the arts. It was later bought by a Bavarian king and moved to Bavaria, where it was destroyed in a fire in the 17th century. Fortunately, the famed copyist Jobst Harrich made a copy of it in 1615 that still survives in two museums. The center panel, which has the hands, is in Frankfurt, and the side panels are in Karlsruhe.

There are many legends surrounding this drawing, most of which are deemed apocryphal. The most popular is that two of the eighteen Dürer children, Albrecht and Albert, were talented artists, but their father, a miner in Nürnberg, could not afford to pay for the training of even one. The boys agreed to toss a coin, and the winner would go to the Nürnberg Art Academy, while the other would work in the mines to support his studies. When the training was completed, the trained artist would then support his brother through art school. Albrecht won the coin toss, but when his training was finished, Albert's hands were so gnarled and arthritic from years of working in the mines that he was unable to draw. Albrecht honored his sacrifice by drawing his hands for use in the triptych. This is a lovely legend, but the facts do not back it up.

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In the first place, Albrecht and Albert are the same name. Albrecht is simply the old German form of Albert. No one (except perhaps George Foreman) would give the same name to two of his sons. Albrecht Dürer the Elder was not a miner, but a successful and prosperous goldsmith who could have well afforded to support his son's art training, and who was his first teacher of drawing and goldsmithing. There was no art academy in Nürnberg. The hands show the possibility of damage from either arthritis or diabetes mellitus, but they show no calluses and the nails are well groomed. They are not the hands of a hard laborer. Finally, the hands are almost identical to those of the artist himself, as evidenced by several self-portraits. Most art historians and critics believe that Dürer used his own hands as the model for the drawing.

This drawing is one of the most popular of all time, and has been reproduced in every imaginable art form, including sculpture and embroidery. It is found in almost every home in Germany, and has become a beloved Protestant icon around the world. It has been so overworked that many today classify it as Art Kitsch, although the original is ranked among the greatest works of the German Renaissance.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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

Summertime, and the livin' is easy;  
Fish are jumpin', and the cotton is high.  
Oh, your daddy's rich, and your mama's good-lookin';  
So hush, little baby, don't you cry.

This wonderful song from Gershwin's opera *Porgy and Bess* epitomizes the slowing down of the world as summer comes in and "the livin' is easy." Summer brings less hustle-and-bustle, and we tend to have a good deal less stress than during the rest of the year. I for one intend join the relaxation—this will be the last *Epistle* until September. We have to be careful, though, to remember that just because we have an opportunity to slow down, that does not relieve us of our duty

to God and to one another. Unfortunately, summer is a good time to refinish the church pews, because so few of them will be needed until fall. Just because we are traveling we still have no excuse for not going to church—despite the current decline in church membership, it is still a very rare town that doesn't have a church. We need to remember that God doesn't take a vacation from us, and we shouldn't take one from him. It is true that you can pray as well on the golf course as in church, but do you? I have heard many an ecclesiastical word on the golf course, but rarely in a religious context. It is also true that God is in the woods and on the beach, but our sacramental life with him usually is not.

What we miss when we are not together in the church is not only the sacramental life, but also the mutual reinforcement and encouragement that comes with communal worship. When we allow ourselves to sink to the “just you and me, Jesus” attitude we are denying the unity that is the very basis of the Church, which is the body of all the faithful in Christ.

Let the livin' be easy this summer, but don't let it be spiritually sloppy. Worship regularly in the community of faith.

*Father Rick Losch+*

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## ***United Methodist Church and Israel***

At its quadrennial General Conference in May the United Methodist Church (UMC) voted to withdraw its membership, financial support and staff participation from the “U.S. Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation,” a coalition encouraging boycotts of Israel. It also voted down four resolutions to divest from companies that do business with Israel. It recognized that “blaming only one side while ignoring the wrongdoing of Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran will not advance the cause of peace.” The CEO of StandWithUs, Roz Rothstein, said, “By severing its ties with anti-Israel groups, the UMC has reaffirmed its role as an agent of reconciliation and peacemaking between Israelis and Palestinians.” Well done, UMC.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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*Why do they lock gas station bathrooms? Are they afraid someone will clean them?*

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

On Monday, July 4th, Independence Day, we will have a service of Evening Prayer at 6:00 p.m. with a cookout following in the parish house. Pulled pork barbeque will be furnished. Signup sheets for baked beans, salads, buns/bread, deserts, other items, and tea are posted on the bulletin board in the narthex of the church, as well as a sheet for those planning to attend so that we may know how many to plan for. So that we may know how many hamburgers and hot dogs to cook, you are asked to sign up no later than Wednesday, June 29th. A nominal contribution will be asked of each person to defray the expenses for this event and 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.

*Hiram Patrenos*

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## ***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 of the flowers in the prayer garden. We appreciate their hard work and generosity!

*Hiram Patrenos*

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## ***Community Fifth Sunday Service***

The Fifth Sunday Community Service this month will be hosted by St. James' on July 31st at 11:00 a.m. Please make your plans to attend and help to continue this unique Livingston tradition.

*Hiram Patrenos*

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## ***Department of Human Resources Food Pantry***

St. James' will be responsible for supplying the Department of Human Resources Food Pantry with canned goods and nonperishable food items during the month of August. A basket is in the vestibule for your contributions.

*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 in writing or by e-mail at [patrenoj@bellsouth.net](mailto:patrenoj@bellsouth.net). The Parish Directory will be updated again in November.

*Hiram Patrenos*

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## ***No Men's Breakfast In July***

Normally we have the Interfaith Men's Breakfast on each month that has five Sundays. Because it would fall on the 4th of July weekend and because so many people are away during the summer, we have decided to cancel it for July. Our next Men's Breakfast will be on October 2 at the First Livingston Presbyterian Church.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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## ***Bishop Marray to Leave***

Bishop Santosh Marray, the Assistant Bishop of Alabama, will be leaving us to become the Bishop of Eastern Maryland. Bishop Marray came to us from the Diocese of East Carolina, before which he was the Bishop of Seychelles. He has served Alabama faithfully, and is well-liked here. We will miss him, and we wish him the best in his new charge. No decision has yet been made as to whether Bishop Sloan will engage another assistant or call for the election of a Bishop Suffragan.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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## ***Be Wordly Wise***

### ***Verbing***

If you ever want to drive a linguist to distraction, verbing is a good way to do it. Verbing is the use of a non-verb, such as a noun or adjective, as if it were a verb. One of the most common examples of verbing is the abuse of the noun “fellowship.” I cringe when I hear “We always fellowship after church.” You can *have* fellowship or *enjoy* fellowship, but you cannot fellowship. I rarely shout out loud at the TV, but I recently yelled “Ignoramus” at a major politician who said, “We often friendship together.” Likewise, there is no such word as “to surveil.” This is what is called a back-formation from the noun “surveillance,” which is a French noun that means observance (literally watching over). Also, Google is the name of a company and of its search machine, not a verb. You can use Google to search, but “to Google” something is another example of verbing, as is “to Xerox” something. The irony is that the very word “verbing” is the gerund of “to verb,” which is a verbification of the verbed noun “verb.”

It may seem nit-picky to object to such usage, since common use ultimately determines what is correct. We nit-pickers serve a valuable purpose, however, in providing resistance to weak or obfuscatory changes in language. It is our duty to fight back against linguistic changes in order to deter those that are not worthwhile. If new usages are worthy, they will survive. If not, they will disappear. For example, some verbed words are now completely acceptable, and some are well along the road to being accepted. There was a time not long ago that “access” was strictly a noun, but today no one objects to the idea of “accessing” someone’s email account. A word that is still in the process is “impact.” We hear that Britain’s decision on the EU will impact the American economy. Many accept thus usage today, yet there are also many who cringe when they hear it (I am one of them). Whether or not it survives depends only on time and usage.

*Richard R. Losch+*

## *Saint Christopher*

What ever became of Saint Christopher, the patron saint of travelers? We older folks can remember when Saint Christopher medals hung from the mirrors of countless cars, even those of many Protestants, and people would often hang one around their necks when they were traveling. He was venerated in the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Anglican and Lutheran Churches. The Feast of Saint Christopher was celebrated on July 25 (May 9 in the Orthodox Churches). In 1970 he was removed from the Roman Catholic calendar, and subsequently disappeared from most other traditions, although he is still venerated in some branches of the Eastern Orthodox Church. The reason for his removal is that no one is sure exactly who he was, or even whether he ever existed at all. There are so many conflicting (and in some cases imaginative) legends about him that there is little that can be honestly venerated other than the symbolism of what he represents.

The earliest reference to Saint Christopher by that name is in the dedication of two churches in the 7th century, although he did not become widely popular until the late Middle Ages, at which time came to be generally accepted as the patron saint of travelers.

The best known of the legends of Saint Christopher is that he was a very large man of limited intellect who wanted to serve Christ, but because of his stupidity he found little that he could do. He spent his life living by a river on the path that many pilgrims took. The river was so deep that many could not cross it, so he would carry them over on his shoulders. One day a little boy wanted to cross, and as usual Christopher hoisted him up onto his shoulders to carry him to the other side. As he was crossing the boy became heavier and heavier, to the point that Christopher could barely



*Saint Christopher, by Albrecht Dürer, 1521*



walk by the time they reached the opposite riverbank. When he put him down the boy revealed himself as Christ and blessed Christopher for his service. His name comes from the Greek for Christ-bearer. Because of his service to pilgrims he is venerated as the patron saint of travelers.

There is no agreement as to who Saint Christopher was if he did actually exist. Many scholars maintain that he is nothing more than a Christianization of a similar ancient Greek myth. Others identify him with an unnamed martyr under the reign of the Roman emperor Decius (249-251) or Dacian (308-313).<sup>1</sup> He has also been identified with Saint Menas (285-c.309), an Egyptian soldier in the Roman army who was martyred because he refused to renounce his Christian faith.

One of the most fanciful of the legends is that Saint Christopher was a giant named either Reprobus or Reprobatus. He was a 7½ foot tall Syrian<sup>2</sup> with an enormous and hideous head. Some versions say he had a dog's head.<sup>3</sup> He dedicated himself to serving the most powerful man on earth, so he sought out the Syrian king and offered himself to his service. One day he saw the king make the sign of the cross, and he asked him why. The king said that he was afraid of the devil. Reprobatus thought that if the king were afraid of something then he was not the most powerful man, so he went off to seek the devil to serve him. He saw the devil go out of his way to avoid a roadside cross, so he decided that if the devil were afraid of Christ, then Christ must be the most powerful. He went to a hermit to learn the Christian faith and how to serve Christ, and the hermit told him that Christ would be pleased if he helped the pilgrims cross the river. As Paul Harvey would say, "Now you know the rest of the story."

*Richard R. Losch+*

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<sup>1</sup> The discrepancy may be because of the similarity of their names.

<sup>2</sup> The Roman province of Syria included what is now known as Palestine.

<sup>3</sup> If Saint Christopher did really exist he may have suffered from a disease called Proteus Syndrome, which causes excessive growth and often causes grotesque facial distortion. The "Elephant Man" had this disease.

## ***Culture and Religion***

It is often difficult to draw a distinction between cultural and religious demands, because frequently each has a strong influence on the other, to the point that they can be said to be inextricably interwoven. Two examples come to mind immediately. In the majority of Islamic countries women are required to dress extremely modestly at the least, and in many cases must cover their bodies completely, not even showing their eyes except from behind a mesh veil. That, however, is a cultural requirement, not a religious one. All the Qur'an calls for is that women cover their hair with a headscarf called a *hajib*.<sup>1</sup> As another example, for two thousand years a basic Christian doctrine has taught that the only acceptable venue for sexual activity is within the context of monogamous heterosexual marriage. In the last couple of decades, however, cultural pressures have had such a powerful influence that most Protestant Churches now accept and sometimes even applaud homosexuality, same-sex marriage, cohabitation, and even "recreational" sex. Until recently all of these were strongly condemned by all Christian sects, but now they are tolerated by most Christian denominations except the few that have refused to "cave" to secular cultural pressures.

Christianity and Islam are catholic (small-c) religions in that they are open to any convert from any racial, ethnic or cultural group.<sup>2</sup> Ideally they allow a convert to retain his culture (with some obvious modifications) while still adhering to

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<sup>1</sup> Until very recently it was unheard of in almost all Christian churches for a woman to go into the church without a head covering of some kind, either a hat or a scarf. Similarly, in most synagogues men wore a head covering. These were cultural requirements, however, not religious ones.

<sup>2</sup> By the 4th century the Christian Church regularly called itself the Catholic Church. The Eastern (Greek) Church leaned toward the term Orthodox ("Straight Teaching"), although they also acknowledged themselves as being Catholic. Both branches of the Church were one until they separated in 1054, after which the Latin Church continued to be called Catholic, while the Greek Church preferred the term Orthodox.

the tenets of the religion. Christianity and Islam are found in almost every culture in the world, and for the most part they live by the rules of the local culture, and are accepted by it.

The opposite of a catholic religion is a tribal one. That is a religion in which converts are expected to accept not only the theological and ceremonial tenets of the faith, but also to assimilate into the culture of that faith. Until after the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70 and the expulsion of the Jews from Palestine in A.D. 132, Judaism was a tribal religion. The Jews, even those who lived far from Palestine, saw themselves as a single nation with its own culture and its own faith. If someone wanted to adopt Judaism as his faith, he was also expected to adopt the total Judaic culture and way of life, and consider himself a Jew by cultural heritage. In effect he joined the tribe, becoming a member of the People of Israel and obeying their law, as if he were actually a descendant of Jacob.<sup>1</sup> The classic example of this is David's great-grandmother Ruth the Moabite, who adopted her mother-in-law Naomi's faith and culture: "Your people will be my people, and your God my God" (Ruth 1:16).

On the other side there were those like Naaman the Aramean (Syrian), whom Elisha healed of leprosy (2 Kg. 5). He became convinced that God is the only God, and according to the custom of the times took some soil from Israel back to Aram so that he could worship him (2 Kg. 5:17).<sup>2</sup> In effect he

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<sup>1</sup> Until the 2nd century AD there was no formal definition or creed of Judaism. Judaism was a culture with a common set of undefined beliefs and ritual expectations based on the Torah and the writings of the Prophets. After the expulsion of the Jews from Palestine in A.D.132 a group of rabbis drew up a set of creedal expectations that more or less defined what it means to be a Jew by faith. That marked the beginning of the end of Judaism's being a strictly tribal religion.

<sup>2</sup> Most ancient religions believed that the gods had power only in their own countries. If someone traveled he would bring a little of the soil of his country with him so that he could worship the god and receive his help. Naaman brought soil from Israel back to Aram because he believed that without it he could not offer sacrifice to God.

said, “Your God will be my God, but my people will still be my people.” People like Naaman were called Sojourners (*toshabim*, תושבים). The Jews held them in high regard, and although they were still considered Gentiles they were not excluded from Jewish activities to the extent that most other Gentiles were<sup>1</sup>. A similar group developed after the Greek and later the Roman incursions into Palestine. These were primarily Greeks and Romans who worshipped God and fully accepted the Jewish moral and ethical law, but not the ceremonial law or the cultural demands. These were called God-Fearers, and they were respected and honored by the Jews at least as much as were the Sojourners. It is very likely that Saint Luke, a Greek, was a God-Fearer before he became a Christian. In ancient times it was often difficult to distinguish between a Sojourner and a God-Fearer.

In the 2nd century AD, after the Romans had driven all the Jews out of Palestine, Judaism slowly ceased being a tribal religion and became more of a catholic religion on the world scene, without the earlier cultural or tribal attachments. Unlike Christianity and Islam, however, Judaism has never been and is not to this day a proselytizing religion. It hesitatingly accepts converts, while Christianity and Islam actively seek them. The first Christians considered themselves a sect of Judaism, and the question arose very early as to whether Sojourners and God-Fearers should be accepted into the faith without also adopting the full Jewish culture. After all, if the Christians were Jews, then these outsiders should be required to assimilate fully into the Jewish culture in order to convert.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In many Reform synagogues today there are Sojourners. A Sojourner, usually the Gentile spouse of a Jew, is not a convert, but honors the Jewish traditions. Some Sojourners read Scripture passages in English and are even allowed to open the Ark.

<sup>2</sup> All the books of the New Testament were written long before the Jews were expelled in A.D. 132. What is called “Second Temple Judaism,” the Judaism that was practiced in the time of Jesus and the very early Christian Church, was still very much a tribal religion.

This was the first major dispute in Christianity, and it came to be known as the “Judaizing Controversy.” Paul, who called himself “the Apostle to the Gentiles,” was adamantly in favor of accepting Gentiles without full conversion to Judaism, while Peter stood in exactly the opposite camp. Peter and Paul reached a major conflict over this until God sent a vision to Peter effectively telling him to baptize the Roman Centurion Cornelius, who was a God-Fearer (Acts 10). At the Apostolic Council in Jerusalem (Acts 15) it was decided that Jews accepting Christianity were still bound by the Jewish Law, while Gentiles were not. The key symbol of this was circumcision, which was no longer required of Gentile converts.<sup>1</sup>

While Peter is usually accepted as the Apostle to the Romans, he did not bring Christianity to Rome. Neither did Paul, whose Epistle to the Romans was written in the hope that when he was on his way to Spain he could visit for the first time the Christian Church in Rome that was already strong there. There were many Jews in Rome in Jesus’ time, and in their travels many heard the Gospel and brought it back to the other Jews there. Many accepted it, and in turn spread it to Romans, many of whom also accepted it. Most of the converted Romans, however, fully converted to Judaism, accepting the culture as well. On the other hand, many were much like the Palestinian God-Fearers, accepting the faith but not the ceremonial law. In the 4th century Ambrosiaster wrote,

It is established that there were Jews living in Rome in the time of the apostles and that those Jews who had believed passed on to the Romans the tradition that they ought to profess Christ, but keep the law... One ought not to condemn the Romans, but to praise their faith, because without seeing any signs or miracles and without seeing any of the apostles, they nevertheless accepted the faith in Christ, although according to a Jewish rite.

When the Jerusalem Council sent the letter to Christians

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<sup>1</sup> Because of this most Jews rejected Christians, even casting them out of their synagogues. We recognize this as the point of separation of Christianity, at that time known as “The Way,” from Judaism. It was in Antioch that the members of “The Way” were first called Christians (Acts 11:26).

around the world that circumcision and adherence to the Jewish ceremonial law were not required (Acts 15:22ff), conversions in Rome abounded. When Peter and Paul arrived in Rome they found a robust Christian Church already there. Peter, however, is generally credited with being the primary force in bringing the Romans into closer agreement with the tenets and practices of the rest of Christianity. For this reason it is often said that he brought the Church to Rome.

The Greco-Roman culture, which was the basis for later Western culture, had no concept of the separation of religion and state. Culture and religion were inextricably interwoven. It was not a theocracy (a governmental system run by religious leaders), but religion and secular matters were so thoroughly meshed that there was no distinction between them. Almost all major public officials held or had held various priesthoods, but these were seen more as political positions than religious ones, even though they entailed some religious duties. Caesar as a 12-year-old boy served as *Flamen Dialis*, a priesthood that was conferred on him by his dictator uncle Gaius Marius. This kept the ambitious young Caesar from holding any other political office, thus quelling a rivalry. In his later years until his death Caesar held the post of *Pontifex Maximus*, High Priest, which was the highest religious office in Rome. Although again it bore some religious duties, it was actually the most powerful political office other than Consul. The Romans were not a particularly religious people, but they were very superstitious. Their relationship with the gods was not one of love, but one of constantly trying to keep from offending them. Sacrifices and rituals were performed to propitiate the gods and keep them from wreaking vengeance for some offense. When Christianity came to Rome one of the most difficult parts of conversion was the abandonment of this attitude in favor of looking to God for help and support, and accepting the fact that God is loving and righteous, and demands the same of his worshipers. By the 4th century, when Christianity became legal and soon thereafter became the official religion of the Roman Empire, this had made a

significant change in the Roman culture. This same change came about as Christianity spread through the outposts of the Empire and into the northern so-called barbarian states. One of the significant cultural/religious changes was that for the first time there was a distinction between Church and State. Instead of being interwoven, they were seen as distinct institutions with interwoven responsibilities. This is a subtle difference, yet an extremely important one. Before this time the Emperor was not only the head of the State, he was also the head of all religious matters including the doctrinal and liturgical ones.<sup>1</sup> With the rise and eventual legalization of Christianity in Rome, the Pope became the ultimate religious authority and the Emperor the ultimate secular authority, bringing about for the first time in history a separation of powers between Church and State. Constantine I called the Council of Nicaea, the bishops made the decisions in it, and then Constantine saw that they were carried out. From a religious/cultural perspective, this was a major change in Roman culture from that of earlier times. As the Western Roman Empire collapsed, the Emperor's role in the Church became phased out by that of the Pope, while the Pope was not expected to "meddle" in affairs of state. There were times, however, when the Pope was looked to more and more to guide

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<sup>1</sup> This was universally accepted in all ancient cultures. The head of state (king or emperor) was always also in charge of the religion. Judaism was the first to draw a distinction between the king and the High Priest, although the king appointed the High Priest. This continued in some branches of Christianity until 1918. Tsar Nicholas Romanov II of Russia was the last ruler who had doctrinal authority in the Church, although he rarely exercised it. In the Middle Ages the ruler determined all religious matters in his realm. After the Reformation the local ruler determined whether his realm would be Catholic or Protestant (the traditional epigram was *Cuius regio, eius religio*—"Whose region, his religion"). This caused some regions to bounce back and forth between Catholic and Protestant as their rulers changed. In England the Queen is the head of the Church of England, although she has no theological or doctrinal authority, and the rest of her religious authority is more titular than real.

the State as the emperors became increasingly weaker. It was Pope Saint Leo I (“the Great”) who negotiated a truce with Attila the Hun in 452 while the emperor Valentinian III was cowering in his palace. Someone had to deal with Attila, and since the emperor failed to do so, Leo stepped up. By that time the distinction (but not separation) between Church and State, an idea unheard of three centuries earlier, had become an integral part of Western Culture, although it would not come to the East until relatively modern times. Notwithstanding, over the centuries the balance of power shifted back and forth several times. Leo I was a strong Pope who took the reigns of state because the Roman Emperor Valentinian was too weak to do so; eight centuries later the weak Pope Clement V would be placed under house arrest and held hostage by the powerful Philip IV of France.<sup>1</sup> In Italy, the Pope was the head of state of the Papal States, and was thus both a king and a religious ruler.<sup>2</sup> Pope Julius II, Michelangelo’s patron, was known as the Warrior Pope because he spent most of his reign at war with other Italian city-states in an attempt to secure his secular power. During this same period all the European Christian states were attempting to hold off the constant threat of invasion from the spreading Muslim nations. This clash of cultures had a powerful influence on the activities and attitudes of both religions, Christianity and Islam. Likewise, both religions wrought great changes in the cultures of the peoples whom they influenced.

When the Puritans came to New England in the early 17th century, they brought with them a cultural mindset that had a powerful influence on the formation of the culture of most of New England, the Middle West and the western South. Today

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<sup>1</sup> Clement was so weak that in 1307 he allowed Philip to force him into a conspiracy to destroy his most loyal followers, the Knights Templar, who as a result of his betrayal became one of his most formidable enemies.

<sup>2</sup> Vatican City in Rome is the last vestige of the Papal States, which once ruled half of Italy. Vatican City is recognized by the U.N. and by most nations as an independent nation, and the Pope is its head of state.



we call it the “Protestant Work Ethic.” They dreamed of building “a shining city on a hill,” the New Jerusalem. It was to be a perfect social order that would be erected on a foundation of Biblical morality, obedience to law, hard work and personal accountability.<sup>1</sup> This cultural mindset was deeply rooted in their religion. The Protestant Work Ethic is the basis of the modern Conservative political movement. Even though today it is embraced just as much by many Catholics, Jews, Muslims and even non-religious people as by Protestants, it is a powerful symbol of the influence of religion on culture.

Culture and religion are so mutually influential that no matter how much people may desire a separation of Church and State, religion and secular culture are inseparable. Even in basically atheistic cultures, such as China has been for thousands of years,<sup>2</sup> the spiritual beliefs of the people have had a powerful influence on their culture, even affecting their architecture and music.

Most psychologists are convinced that belief in deity is one of our most basic “hard-wired” instincts,<sup>3</sup> right along with the instincts to survive and to reproduce. Thus culture is formed by religion, and many of the practices of religion, despite its primary allegiance to God, are also influenced by culture.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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<sup>1</sup> The Protestant Work Ethic had less of an influence in the Southeast in the early days, because that region was primarily Anglican and Roman Catholic. Although those faiths also embraced many of the same social values, Protestantism (mainly Methodists and Baptists) did not dominate the Southeast until the early 19th century.

<sup>2</sup> China was atheist for millennia before Communism took it over in the 20th century. While many Chinese have practiced various religions throughout history, the primary “religion” of China, Confucianism, is not a religion but a philosophy of life. It professes no deity. The majority of Chinese throughout history, although they have been very superstitious, have had no allegiance to any defined deity. Buddhism, also more a philosophy than a religion, is a relative latecomer to China from India.

<sup>3</sup> This includes belief in powerful external nature spirits, which is the basis of paganism and superstition, as well as of magic and sorcery.

# Pray for America!

No matter whom you are supporting or plan to vote for (or against) this fall, please pray fervently that we all make wise decisions as the political campaigns come into full flower this summer. Trust God to guide us, and pray regularly for that guidance. No one, regardless of his political leanings, can deny that our country is in need of all the help that God will give us. We can't do it on our own, but with God all things are possible.

*Richard R. Losch++*

JAMIE by Richard R. Losch



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