

EDITORIAL

The late Editor Hartley Coles said it best...

A small seed

This weekend, from Thursday to Sunday, is a commemoration of events that happened almost 2,000 years ago in the tiny country of Palestine (Israel) and particularly in its capital and centre of worship – Jerusalem.

Palestine was under Roman domination in an empire called the greatest in the known world. The Romans kept their conquered countries subjugated, so when Jesus of Nazareth was accused of blasphemy by religious authorities, he was eventually taken to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, to be tried.

The events which revolved around Jesus' arrest, trial, and execution, have been graphically shown in Mel Gibson's, *The Passion of Christ*, two hours of film dramatizing the same.

For those who prefer the Christ of a stained glass window, the sanitized Prophet, this is not a film to see. It's a bloody account of a time when brutality and bloodshed were rampant. Roman crucifixion, a common death for rebels and criminals, was a horrible way to die.

In Jesus' case, the gospels tell us, it was preceded by a scourging which barely left Him alive. The Romans spared no part of the body in their humiliation using knotted whips that had pieces of metal imbedded every few inches to inflict grievous cuts.

Gibson's film, which we have seen, has been criticized for its bloodiness, although it apparently relied on information from authorities who have studied life in those times. Perhaps there was too much time spent on the passion of the Christ and only fleeting time for the Resurrection. However, critics who have lambasted the film for dwelling on the misery and degradation meted out to the Christ, were not so vocal about previous Gibson films such as *Braveheart* or the reality shown in the D-Day landings of *Saving Private Ryan*.

We suspect some of them had ulterior motives in their critiques of the film especially since some were critical before they saw it. That was evident when they went after Gibson's father, someone who likely belonged to the flat earth society, so they could portray Mel Gibson as a bit unhinged. Their criticisms didn't stop *The Passion of Christ* from being a box office success, something which probably has critics gnashing their teeth. It has also triggered a new interest in Jesus Christ.

Gibson's film aside, this weekend, which ends with the feast of Easter, is at the heart of the Christian religion. Modern Gnostics question the gospel accounts as if they had been there and seize on improbable events to cast aspersions on its authenticity. No matter. Even the date of Easter has been the source of dispute. Eastern churches still celebrate Easter according to the old Julian calendar. Most others follow the formula that states Easter comes on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the 21st of March.

The word "Easter" is an Anglo-Saxon word from the Teutonic "Easter", an ancient German goddess of light. No, it hasn't got anything to do with the goddess as some would have us believe. The early Christians knew "Easter" as "Paschal" time. The Greek word "Pascha" was derived from the Hebrew word, "Pesach," meaning "Passover." The word "Easter" simply derives from the time of year Anglo Saxons observed the resurrection of Jesus.

There have been other symbols used at Easter which have nothing to do with its religious aspect such as eggs, buns and bunnies. Most symbolize the commercial aspects of the feast now but they have been around as symbols of spring long before Christianity existed. They no longer symbolize devotion to the rite of springtime.

Easter is at the heart of the Christian faith. It celebrates the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead after He had been crucified and buried in the tomb. The fact it comes at a time when our Canadian spring arrives with its rebirth may be coincidental but it is a symbol of resurrection. After all Christianity started as a seed in a small country in Asia Minor and has grown to encompass much of the world.

So this weekend is a solemn and glorious time for Christians revering the crucifixion on Friday and celebrating the feast of the Resurrection on Sunday

HAPPY EASTER.



LESS LITTER

A vacuum, dishwasher and beer bottles were among the litter collected from the ditches on 25 Side Road, between Highway 25 and Dublin Line, as part of the Town's annual cleanup on Saturday. One volunteer said the amount of litter along that stretch of road was half of what it was last year.

— Frances Niblock photo

Genome studies lead to unexpected results

By David Suzuki

Science often focuses on a part of nature, isolating that part, then describing and probing it. This is called reductionism. Although the approach can provide powerful insights, it can also cause scientists to lose sight of the context or surroundings, which are intimately connected to the part being studied.

I spent almost four decades in one of the most reductionist of all sciences, genetics. This field of biology started gaining popularity in 1900, when the laws of heredity determining the behaviour of genes and chromosomes were discovered. The science hasn't been without controversy. It has been used to argue the "nature" side in the "nature versus nurture" debate, and it has led some to claim a genetic basis for everything from homosexuality, social class, and IQ to criminality, mental illness, and a range of diseases. With its focus on genetic causes for illness, the science has also to some extent absolved government, industry, and health professionals of their responsibility to limit possible environmental and social contributors to disease.

Still, it has been an exciting and promising field. With the acquisition of immense powers

Science Matters
By David Suzuki



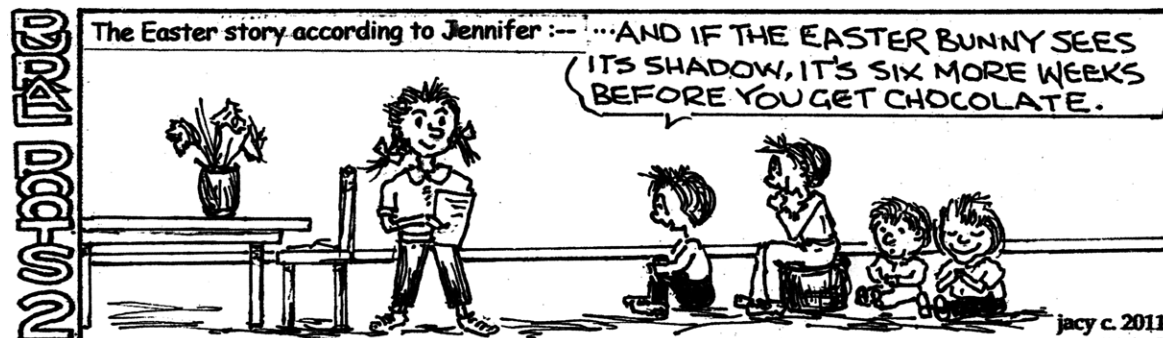
to extract, analyze, and synthesize genetic material, or DNA, scientists embarked on an awesome quest to determine the exact sequence of all three billion letters of the genetic code in a human genome. When I graduated with a PhD in genetics in 1961, I never dreamed that we would acquire such capabilities within my lifetime, yet by 2001, the Human Genome Project was complete.

Billions of dollars were spent to map the human genome because scientists hoped to find the genes responsible for diseases like cancer, heart disease, and stroke. This knowledge, they thought, would allow them to design specific drugs and maybe even find a way to replace defective genes. For decades, we assumed that the Human Genome Project would reveal a hereditary basis for most diseases, just as they had been found for phenylketonuria, Huntington's chorea, Duchenne muscular dystrophy, sickle cell anemia, and cystic fibrosis.

Armed with the entire sequence of genes, scientists have also developed ways to compare

genomes of groups carrying different diseases in the search for stretches of DNA that might be correlated with the conditions. This is referred to as genome-wide association, or GWA. According to Jonathan Latham and Allison Wilson of the Bioscience Resource Project, more than 700 studies examining over 80 different diseases have all come up with similar results. Comparisons involving heart disease, cancer, stroke, autoimmune diseases, obesity, autism, Parkinson's disease, depression, schizophrenia, and other common illnesses reveal that many genes may have a tiny influence but none can be considered the major factor underlying the condition.

This is a stunning revelation that some geneticists find difficult to accept because it means designer drugs and genetic engineering to target or replace a genetic defect are not the answers. Billions of dollars have been and are being spent on GWAs and the search for major genetic determinants of disease. It's time to accept the reality that they won't be found and that we must instead turn to the challenge of addressing the more important contributors to human disease: malnutrition, lack of exercise, and polluted air, water, and soil.



THE NEW TANNER
PUBLISHING LTD.

373 Queen Street East, Unit 1
Acton, Ontario L7J 2N2
email: thenewtanner@on.aibn.com

(519) 853-0051 Fax: (519) 853-0052

Publisher
Ted Tyler

Editor
Frances Niblock

Editorial Contributors

Mike O'Leary Angela Tyler Kelly Kennedy

Advertising and Circulation

Marie Shadbolt

Composing Ken Baker

Distributed to every home in Acton and area, as well as adjoining communities.

Every effort will be made to see advertising copy, neatly presented, is correctly printed. The publisher assumes no financial responsibility for typographical errors or omissions in advertising, but will gladly reprint without charge that part of an advertisement in which an error may occur provided a claim is made within five days of publication.

All articles, advertisements and graphic artwork appearing in The New Tanner is copyrighted. Any usage, reproduction or publication of these items, in whole or in part, without the express written consent of the publisher of The New Tanner is a copyright infringement and subject to legal action.