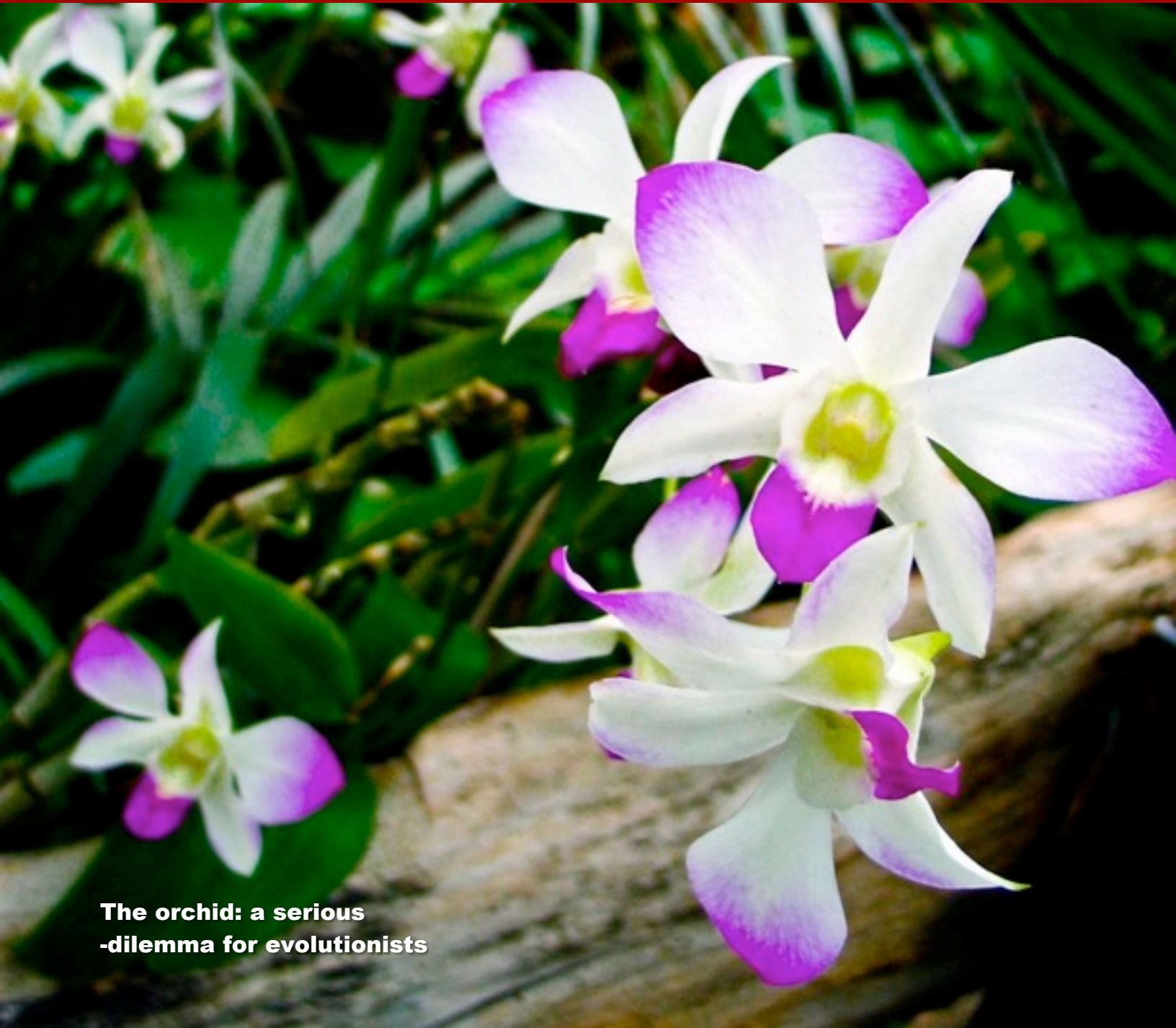


The Sabbath Sentinel

January–February 2008



**The orchid: a serious
-dilemma for evolutionists**

BSA — The Bible Sabbath Association

Jesus said, "the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath"

The Sabbath Sentinel

January-February 2008 Volume 59, No. 1 Issue 529

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Our Cover: "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise" (1 Corinthians 1:27).
(Source: *Dreamstime.com*)

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Young People: Be Ready with an Answer

I would like to address this editorial primarily to the young—to those who are still in high school or college.

Every Christian has heard the words of the apostle Peter: "...always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;..." (1 Peter 3:15, NKJV). Most have assumed that the apostle was aiming his exhortation at adult Christians, and that may have been true at the time, but in our age we have seen a direct frontal assault on Christian young people. It takes a variety of forms, but the message is always the same: Do not trust anything you have learned from your parents; do not trust anything you have learned at church. The problem is, you young people are the future of the Church. If you do not uphold the Truth of Christ in this world, the Church will cease to have any positive effect on the culture around us.

Right now across America a majority of Christian young people leave home and never return to church. For the most part they have come to believe that church is not relevant to their lives. There are many reasons why this is occurring, but I would like to focus on a very important one—that the public school

system, the colleges, and the work environment are fostering and enforcing an anti-Christian environment. At every turn young people are being told that religion, and particularly Christianity, are stupid and irrelevant. They are being told, "If you want to practice your religion, do it in private where it will not 'offend' others."

Atheists and secularists have become much more aggressive in pushing their anti-religious view of the world on students in the classroom and on society at large. We have seen this in the refusal of school administrators to allow Christmas programs. Every year at graduation time we see schools punishing graduates for prayers or the mention of the name of Jesus in valedictory speeches. Businesses such as Target stores have expelled the Salvation Army bell ringers from in front of their stores. Some large retail chains have, as a corporate policy, discouraged their stores from putting up Christmas displays or referring to the birth of Jesus in any manner. I realize that some who read this may not observe Christmas for doctrinal reasons. However, my point has nothing to do with Christmas. Atheists and secularists are not con-

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BSA Board Election Results

**These people will serve on the BSA board
from the Fall of 2008 to the Fall of 2011**

John Guffey
Rico Cortes
Dusti Howell
Darrell Estep
Tom Justus
June Narber
Marsha Basner
Earl Lewis
John Paul Howell
Calvin Burrell
Kenneth Ryland
Bryan Burrell

BSA Scholarship Fund

Each year the Bible Sabbath Association has an essay contest for high school seniors and college students. The contestants are asked to write essays on topics regarding their Christian faith selected by our scholarship committee. The three top essayists receive cash awards that go directly to their colleges to pay for their school expenses.

Our scholarship fund, which is kept entirely separate from our operating expenses funds, is dry.

If you would like to help fund our BSA scholarship program, please send your donations to our office address in Battleground, Washington, USA. Be sure to mark your checks, "Scholarship Fund."

The World's First Theological Discussion Was between the Serpent and Eve

by Kenneth Westby



Surprised? Theology (*theo*=God; *logy*=knowledge) concerns itself with the knowledge of God—what he is like, what he requires, etc. Read about their "deep" theological probings which are quoted in Genesis 3:1-6. This serpent-woman dialogue is quite revealing and typifies the common pattern for much discussion about God. Eve was clearly at a disadvantage to this "crafty" fallen angelic being known elsewhere as Satan or the Devil. He was ever so smooth and a master at pushing the right buttons to move the discussion in his direction.

The serpent asked Eve, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" He was challenging her knowledge of God's actual words and was suggesting that God had forbidden any and every tree. The assumption of his question is that God had unfairly forbidden too much.

Well, Eve didn't initially buy the serpent's characterization of God's commands and she set the record straight saying that God said she and Adam could eat of every tree in the entire garden but one—a specific tree called the Knowledge of Good and Evil located in the middle of the Garden in Eden. This is quite a different picture of God's command, one that is very generous and minimally restrictive. And the restriction had to do with the couple's well-being as she understood it, so that they not touch that particular tree and die. There may have been hundreds or even thousands of trees in the garden, yet only one was forbidden. Eve was unaware that her facts—of what God actually says and does—were irrelevant to the direction this conversation soon took. This is an unfortunate pattern of much theological debate even today.

The serpent now gives Eve his take on what is really going on with God. First, "you will not die," so relax on that score. God doesn't want you to have something quite good, something he himself has, but wants to keep from you. The serpent is directly challenging the truth of God's statements and suggesting that God's motives are suspect. He injects an element of doubt. Don't be so sure that God isn't keeping something you really need and will want to have. The serpent-Eve dialogue is about God. God's commands are restrictively burdensome and are designed to deprive humans from experiencing knowledge that would be desirable. Eve buys the serpent's reasoning as it seems to fit

with her naturally selfish, yet naive, desires. You know the rest of the story.

The serpent's theology is that God can't be trusted for truth; he must be suspect; his motives are not pure; he wants to keep people from deciding for themselves what is right and wrong, good and evil; God wants to keep people from having fun through sin; and God's threat of consequences for disobedience is a lie. This is not a very good, yet an all too common perception of God.

Where do most people get their ideas of God? Where did you get yours? From parents, Sunday School, secular education, the street? We got them somewhere. How accurate to the facts is our theology? Warning: study and deep thought are required to answer these questions.

There is no question that much (most?) of the world's myriad religions are a confusing muddle of doctrines, practices, and worship. But one fact holds true for any particular religion—pagan or Christian—or denomination within a religion: All forms of doctrine, practice, and worship arise, flow from or devolve from that particular religion's concept of God. Theology embodies one's particular concept of God and forms the shape of one's religion.

If your God is a wrathful character that can be pacified by throwing a virgin into a volcano, then that becomes a part of the worship rites. If your God is so insecure and prickly so as to be offended by a little school teacher lady who allowed her class of Sudanese students to name a stuffed Teddy Bear after the prophet Mohammed (which came to crisis status recently), then the teacher lady must be killed to protect God's (Allah's) honor. If you believe God created some humans to be saved and others to writhe in the fires of hell for eternity, then you are at home with other Calvinists who must be conflicted over the mysteriously arbitrary nature of God—a God that doesn't appear all that loving and merciful.

People form their religion based on their concept of God. This is true for Calvinists, Lutherans, Mormons, Pentecostals, Catholics and any group you want to name. This is why their doctrines and practices vary. They are doing what they think God wants...as they conceive him. You can see why getting your theology right to begin with is the key

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The End of the Law

by Daniel Botkin



**"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness
to everyone that believeth" —Romans 10:4.**

Many Christians are taught from today's pulpits that God had to abolish the Old Testament law code because it was just too difficult for His people to obey all those rules. We are told by Christian Bible teachers that under the Old Covenant, it was impossible for people to walk in all the commandments of the Lord blamelessly. However, it is written of Zachariah and Elisabeth, the parents of John the Baptist, that "they were both righteous before God, walking in *all* commandments and ordinances of the Lord *blameless*" (Luke 1:6). Zachariah and Elisabeth didn't have the benefit of our modern-day Bible teachers to tell them that this was impossible. All they had was the Torah to tell them that it *is*:

"For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, 'Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it?' Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, 'Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it?' But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it" (Deut. 30:11-14).

Walking according to the commandments of the Torah is not impossible. It is not some deep, mysterious secret which only a special class of super-spiritual saints can attain. "It is not hidden from thee," Scripture declares.

It is not in heaven: It does not require being caught up into the third heaven. Neither is it beyond the sea: It does not require traveling to the other side of the ocean and conferring with some guru or priest or rabbi. The ability to walk according to the commandments of the Torah is within reach of the average child of God: "But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it."

In Romans 10, Paul writes that "Christ is the end of the law," and he then quotes this passage from Deuteronomy 30 and comments on it. Therefore, if we want to correctly understand what Paul meant when he wrote that "Christ is the end of the law," then we must keep in mind that believing in Christ and walking according to the commandments of the Torah are

not mutually exclusive in Paul's mind; on the contrary, they go together. Otherwise, Paul would not connect this passage from Deuteronomy 30 (which talks about obeying commandments of Torah) with faith in the Messiah.

The Torah describes God's standard of righteousness, and offers it to those who will embrace it by faith. Christians sometimes forget that God's people were justified by faith even before Christ, under the Old Covenant. Three times the New Testament states "the just shall live by faith," and many Christians assume that this is strictly a New Testament concept, something unknown to those living under the Old Covenant. However, this concept was not a new revelation to the New Testament writers; it was a direct quote taken from the Old Testament writings (Hab. 2:4).

Why did Paul connect the passage from Deuteronomy 30, about obeying Torah, with faith in Yeshua as the Messiah? Because Paul knew that the promised Messiah was meant to be *the object* our faith, the key to living out the blessed life described in Deuteronomy 30 and the rest of the Torah. The identity of the Messiah was no longer hidden in heaven nor buried beneath the sea; the long-awaited Messiah had been revealed to God's people in the person of Yeshua of Nazareth. The promised Messiah was the goal, the object, the *logos* made flesh, the fulfillment of the Torah. With this thought in mind, let us look at the statement that "Christ is the end of the law."

When some people hear the phrase "end of the law," they think this means "no more rules to obey." This is anarchy, something which the New Testament clearly condemns. God's Kingdom is not to be characterized by lawlessness. On the contrary, Yeshua taught that at the end of this age, God's Kingdom will be purged of its long-lasting and deep-rooted lawlessness [$\alpha\nu\omicron\mu\omicron\sigma$, *anomos*, "without law," the source of our English word *anomanism*]. (See, e.g., *anomos* Matt. 7:23 and the parables in Matt. 13, esp. vv. 41,49.)

What, then, does "the end of the law" mean in Romans 10:4? Doesn't "the end" of something mean that it's all over, finished, terminated, ceased to exist? This is the usual meaning in English, but the New Testa-

ment is written in Greek, not English. The Greek word translated "end" here is *τελος* (*telos*). According to the Gingrich lexicon, the noun *telos* mean "the end" in one of two senses: 1) in the sense of *termination, cessation, conclusion* [as in the English definition of "the end" discussed above]; or, 2) in the sense of *end, goal, outcome, i.e., the aim or purpose* [as in our English statement "The *end* does not justify the means"].

The important question is this: Which of these two definitions should be applied to *telos* in Romans 10:4? Definition #1 would imply that the commandments of the Torah are no longer valid; they have been abolished by the Messiah who said to not even think that He had come to abolish the Torah (Matt. 5:17ff). Definition #2 does not imply that the commandments of the Torah are abolished, but that faith in the Messiah is *the means* to obtain *the end*—the end (or goal) being the righteousness described in the Torah, and the ability to walk out that righteousness and live a Torah-observant lifestyle.

Unfortunately, most English Bible translations cause the uninformed reader to assume that "the *telos/end* of the law" means that the Torah is now ended and obsolete. Here are a few examples:

- "For Christ ends the law." (*New English Bible*) Here the noun *telos* is magically changed into a verb ("ends") by the translators, so that there can be no possibility of understanding "the end" as "the goal."

- "But now the Law has come to an end." (*Jerusalem Bible*) Here the first word *γαρ* (*gar*) is translated "But," subtly but erroneously implying that there is some contrast between Torah-obedience and believing in Christ—even though *gar* is not a word which implies contrast, but "a conjunction used to express cause, inference, or continuation; or to explain" (Gingrich lexicon), normally translated "for." The *Jerusalem Bible* also made sure to capitalize "Law" so that the reader would know that it is God's Law being talked about here. Paul is referring to God's Law, of course, but these particular translators want the reader to think that the Torah has, in their words, "come to an end," even though the verb "has come" does not appear in the Greek text.

- "For Christ has brought the Law to an end." (*Today's English Version*) This translation, also called *Good News For Modern Man* (or "Good Noose," if you prefer) does the same as the *Jerusalem Bible*, capitalizing "Law" and supplying a non-existent verb, "has brought."

- "He ends all of that." (*Living Bible*) As in the *New English Bible*, the noun *telos* mysteriously changes into a verb, "ends." Thus obedience to God's holy Torah can be dismissed with the belittling phrase "all of that," and thereby be viewed as something vain and futile. (The anti-Torah bias of the *Living Bible* is also

evident in verses such as John 1:17, where the KJV's "For the law was given by Moses" expands in the *Living Bible* to "Moses gave us only the Law with its rigid demands and merciless justice.")

It is obvious that the above translators want their readers to think that "the *telos* the law" means that the Torah is finished and its commandments are no longer valid. David Stern, in his *Jewish New Testament Commentary* (p. 396), points out that *telos* is used 42 times in the New Testament, and according to the Arndt and Gingrich lexicon, *telos* must mean "end" in the sense of "finish" in only four or five of these 42 places. David Stern correctly concludes that "this verse [Rom. 10:4] does not speak of ending anything. It says that the great sweep of God's purpose in giving the *Torah* as a means to righteousness achieves its goal and consummation in the coming of the Messiah."

Faith in the Messiah should not end our obedience to God's Torah. Faith in the Messiah should be the starting point of our obedience. By being "the goal at which the *Torah* aims" (Stern's translation), the Messiah becomes the Source which enables and equips and empowers God's people to live a life of obedience to God's commandments.

The ability to live a life of obedience to Torah is within the reach of the average child of God. "It is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off.... The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Deut. 30:11; Rom. 10:8f).

Some people think that when Paul wrote about being "saved" here, he meant only "saved from hell." While faith in Christ does save us from hell, the salvation to which Paul refers here is also salvation from the powers of our carnal, sinful nature. We are saved not only from hell; we are also saved from those hellish things inside us, those things which seem to make obedience to God's commandments impossible—our greed, our anger, our unforgiveness, our lust, our selfishness, our apathy, etc., etc. Whatever weaknesses and character flaws we have, through faith in the Messiah, we can be delivered from these things, so that we can be free to trust and obey and thereby experience the victorious, blessed life that our Father in heaven wants us to have.

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Why God Requires Moral Behavior

by Brian Knowles

Back in 1998, talk show host and moralist, Dennis Prager, wrote a book entitled *Happiness is a Serious Problem*. It's one of my favorite books. Prager begins with the premise that "...happiness is far more than a personal concern. It is also a moral obligation," (p. 3). Until I'd read that book, I'd never thought of happiness in moral terms – certainly not as a moral obligation.

One night Prager was lecturing on this subject and a lady in the audience spoke up and said: "I only wish my husband had come to this talk." She explained that he was a very unhappy person and that because he was it wasn't easy to be married to him. She loved him, but his chronic unhappiness was a burden to her.

Prager used that example to illustrate the point that married people have an obligation to be as happy as possible for the sake of the person to whom they are married. Writes Prager, "We owe it to our husband or wife, our fellow workers, our children, our friends, indeed to everyone who comes into our lives, to be as happy as we can be," (*ibid.* p. 3).

You may not have thought of it that way before. I hadn't. You, like me, probably thought that you had the right to be as miserable as you wanted to be, "so long as it didn't hurt anyone else." That's the problem: our unhappiness does hurt others.

Writes Prager, "We do not enjoy being around others who are usually unhappy. Those who enter our lives feel the same way," (*ibid.* p. 4).

Unhappiness is like a contagion – it spreads and infects others. In organizations it is often a reflection of leadership. My wife and I shop at several different supermarkets. Each one has its own spirit – and that is often the result of the tone set by the store manager. At one store, none of the employees ever seems to be happy. At another, everyone is friendly, helpful and solicitous of customers. Guess which store we prefer to shop at.

The same thing is true of church congregations. If the pastor is an old grouch, the congregation is probably grouchy too. One clue to a grouchy congregation is if the pastor tends to emphasize corrective or authoritarian sermons delivered with an angry demeanor.

A Second Reason Why Happiness is a Moral Obligation

Prager gives a second reason why we are obligated to be happy: People behave more decently toward others when they are happy. He asks, "Do you feel more positively disposed toward other people and do you want to treat other people better when you are happy or when you are unhappy?" How do we tend to treat others when we're in our "old crab" mode? What's the difference between how we treat our mates, our children, or our co-workers when we're in a good mood, or in a bad mood?

A Third Reason

Prager offers yet a third reason why happiness is a moral obligation: "...unhappy religious people reflect poorly on their religion and on their Creator...unhappy religious people present a real challenge to faith...either they are not practicing their faith correctly, or they are practicing their faith correctly and the religion itself is not conducive to happiness. Most outsiders assume the latter reason...Unhappy, let alone angry, religious people provide more persuasive arguments for atheism and secularism than do all the arguments of atheists," (p. 4).

People judge Christianity by the Christians they encounter, and by their behavior. They look at the Christian historical track record. Sam Harris, an anti-religionist and author of the book *The End of Faith*, calls for an end to all religion on the basis, among other things, of its track record of inhumanity to man. Harris indicts Catholicism, Protestantism, the Bible itself, Judaism and Islam for horrific acts of murder and cruelty that were, during certain periods, the norm, not the exception.

If a religion is characterized by its murders and cruelty, why shouldn't it be done away with? *Evil is evil does*. If a religion does evil, then it is an evil religion and it should be eradicated. Jesus seems to agree with this assessment:

Watch out for false prophets," he said, "They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise

every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you shall recognize them," (Matthew 7:15-29).

A word of qualification: Every person, and every religion, makes mistakes and does some things which in retrospect turn out to be evil. The Dutch Reformed Church, for instance, provided a rationalizing theology for the odious phenomenon of Apartheid in South Africa. Early American Christian denominations found ways to justify slavery in this country. The Roman Catholic Church conducted the cruel and grotesque Inquisition. Catholics murdered Protestants and Protestants murdered other Protestants. They all did it in the belief that they were doing God a service. The issue is, over time, have these things characterized a religion, or were they temporary aberrations? Which way do the scales tip?

Am I justifying the evil that religions have done in the name of God? Never! Evil is evil, no matter who commits it. But if we are going to claim to represent God on this planet, then we have a moral obligation to glorify him in the way we live and treat others. Everything we do should reflect favorably on the God whose name we bear. We are called to be light and salt in a dark world. Our moral obligation to live a godly life extends far beyond the issue of happiness. It involves every area of living.

It involves how we treat our husbands and wives, our children, our parents, our co-workers, our friends, our neighbors and people in the larger community.

Spiritual Exhibitionism

As lights in the world, we don't have to be aggressive in-your-face Christians who are always preaching at someone, lecturing, arguing or practicing spiritual exhibitionism. We don't have to make a show of giving thanks for a meal in the restaurant. We don't need to display garish bumper stickers proclaiming our faith. We just need to quietly and unobtrusively *live the life*. It won't take long for people to notice that you're different.

Every Idle Word

When I was a "baby Christian," one of the first things I did was clean up my language. At age 21 or 22, I worked for a sign company in Vancouver. All day long I'd drive around in a truck assisting the man who serviced neon signs for the company. One day we were driving along Kingsway and he said, "Brian, I've noticed something odd about you." "What's that?" I asked. "You never swear." Now I could have taken an opportunity to preach at him, but it would

have been inappropriate. Instead I said, with a slight edge of self-righteousness, "That's because I don't need to. I have an adequate command of the English language so that I can make myself understood without swearing." Since he swore profusely, that comment could have been taken as an insult, could it not? Instead, he curtailed his own swearing and things worked out quite well.

Another example comes from a time when I worked in a saw mill in British Columbia. It was at a place called Sioux Valley, about 95 miles north of Vancouver. One of the men who worked there kept to himself. He appeared grouchy so people avoided him. He had a gimpy leg, and seemed self-conscious about it. I'd always say "Hi," to him, and occasionally I'd ask him about his leg. One day he said to me, "You know, you're the only person here who's ever showed any concern about my leg. I appreciate that." He then explained how he'd injured it in a mill accident some years before. From that time forth, we had a cordial relationship, and that small example proves the rightness of the proverb that says, "*If a man will have friends, he must show himself friendly,*" (Proverbs 18:24). A friendly person is not an unhappy person.

Without much awareness, I was experiencing what it means to "live the life" of a Christian. It's a matter of quietly, unobtrusively, living up to the moral and ethical standards espoused by Jesus and his apostles. It's about loving, caring, and producing good fruit. It's about doing behaviors that reflect positively on Jesus Christ and his body, the Church.

If we act out monstrous behaviors, then people will think that the God we serve is a monster. If we "follow the way of love" (1 Corinthians 14:1), then some may come to understand that the true God "is love" (1 John 4:8). Jesus taught that the entire Bible is meant to teach us how to love God and fellow man (Matthew 22:37-40). Jesus was referring back to something Moses had written fourteen or fifteen centuries earlier: "*Do not do anything that endangers your neighbor's life. I am the Lord. Do not hate your brother in your heart...Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord,*" (Leviticus 19:16-18, excerpts).

Hatred, grudge-bearing and revenge-taking have no part in the Christian moral repertoire. No Christian should ever endanger his neighbor's life, let alone burn him at the stake, torture him, confiscate his property or otherwise abuse him. (This is not to say that Christians do not have the right to self-defense – we do, but that's a very different matter.)

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The Scientific Evidence: A Critical Choice

Consider the powerful words of the apostle Paul: "Ever since the creation of the world [God's] eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made" (Romans 1:20, New Revised Standard Version throughout this sidebar).

Paul's words remind us that we can look at the miracles in the world around us and see compelling evidence of God's handiwork, understanding not only that He is the Creator but glimpsing some of His nature and character.

Let's take a glimpse at a particular flower, an orchid with the scientific name of *Coryanthes*. Although the scientist's language is a little technical, it's important to read the account in the author's own words as he describes his findings and those of another scientist, a Dr. Cruger. The incredible story is well worth reading.

A built-in bee-bath bucket

According to a famous writer and observer of the wonders of nature:

"This orchid has part of its labellum or lower lip hollowed out into a great bucket, into which drops of almost pure water continually fall from two secreting horns which stand above it; and when the bucket is half full, the water overflows by a spout on one side. The basal part of the labellum stands over the bucket, and is itself hollowed out into a sort of chamber with two lateral entrances; within this chamber there are curious fleshy ridges. The most ingenious man, if he had not witnessed what takes place, could never have imagined what purpose all these parts serve.

"But Dr. Cruger saw crowds of large humble-bees [bumblebees] visiting the gigantic flowers of this orchid, not in order to suck nectar, but to gnaw off the ridges within the chamber above the bucket; in doing this they frequently pushed each other into the bucket, and their wings being thus

wetted they could not fly away, but were compelled to crawl out through the passage formed by the spout or overflow.

"Dr. Cruger saw a 'continual procession' of bees thus crawling out of their involuntary bath. The passage is narrow, and is roofed over by the column, so that a bee, in forcing its way out, first rubs its back against the viscid stigma [the sticky part of the flower that receives pollen] and then against the viscid glands of the pollen-masses. The pollen-masses are thus glued to the back of the bee which first happens to crawl out through the passage of the lately expanded flower, and are thus carried away

"When the bee, thus provided, flies to another flower, or to the same flower a second time, and is pushed by its comrades into the bucket and

then crawls out by the passage, the pollen-mass necessarily comes first into contact with the viscid stigma, and adheres to it, and the flower is fertilised. Now at last we see the full use of every part of the flower, of the water-secreting horns, of the bucket half full of water, which prevents the bees from flying away, and forces them to crawl out through the spout, and rub against the properly placed viscid pollen-masses and the viscid stigma."



Bumblebee. Source: Wikipedia.

Design reveals the designer

These fascinating design details show us the complexity, variety and even a touch of humor in the world around us. Several scriptures acknowledge that we can learn of God through His creation.

One such passage is in Acts 14. The apostles Paul and Barnabas made quite a stir in the city of Lystra by healing a man who had been crippled, unable to walk, since birth. Idolatry was rampant in Lystra, and the instinctive reaction by the citizens of the city to this miracle was to worship Paul and Barnabas!

What was the two men's reaction? Notice what they told the people: "Friends, why are you doing this? We are mortals just like you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. In past generations he allowed all the nations to follow their own ways; yet he has not left himself without a witness in doing good-giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, and filling you with food and your hearts with joy" (Acts 14:15-17).

God's servants deflected these misguided intentions and directed the people to the Creator God.

An orchid that shoots straight

Here's another remarkable example of carefully planned design in the natural world from the same author cited above:

"The construction of the flower in another closely allied orchid, namely the *Catasetum*, is widely different, though serving the same end; and is equally curious. Bees visit these flowers, like those of the *Coryanthes*, in order to gnaw the labellum [lip]; in doing this they inevitably touch a long, tapering, sensitive projection, or, as I have called it, the antenna.



Catasetum saccatum (orchid). Source: Wikipedia.

"This antenna, when touched, transmits a sensation or vibration to a certain membrane which is instantly ruptured; this sets free a spring by which the pollen-mass is shot forth, like an arrow, in the right direction, and adheres by its viscid [sticky] extremity to the back of the bee. The pollen-mass of the male plant (for the sexes are separate in this orchid) is thus carried to the flower of the female plant where it is brought into contact with the stigma, which is viscid enough to break certain elastic threads, and retaining the pollen, fertilisation is effected."

Here we see another marvelous illustration of God's handiwork. Yet not everyone sees the evidence of creation in the same way. The scientist who penned these observations of the wonders of the world around him was none other than Charles Darwin, and the quotations are from his book *Origin of the Species* (pp. 156-157).

Does this surprise you? It should. Darwin used these examples to show the ability of plants to adapt

and to vary rather than to show the variety in God's design. Why?

Divergent views of evidence

Why don't we all see evidence the same way?

Charles Darwin was not the only scientist in his time who interpreted what he studied in creation as evidence of life without a creator. Many others examined what we see as inspiring, incontrovertible evidence of God's handiwork and concluded that God was not involved.

But why did they come to such different conclusions, and why do others still come to those conclusions? Let's examine an important passage in the first chapter of Romans: "Ever since the creation of the world his [God's] eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made," says verse 20.

Paul is saying that the creation is a portal through which we can see the Creator. Although everyone sees the same evidence, each makes a choice as to how to interpret it. Some early philosophers made a conscious choice to reject God. They chose to interpret their studies in a way that would exclude Him. Scholars in various fields since have followed in their wake.

But, since natural structures exist that random cause-and-effect and material causes can't explain, many scientists have been and will continue to be prejudiced in their interpretations. Because nature can't always explain nature, it's perfectly reasonable to infer from natural structures that the supernatural exists; otherwise, many examples from the world around us remain inexplicable.

"So they are without excuse; for though they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools; and they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling a mortal human being or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles" (verses 20-23).

We have an important choice to make about the evidence for a Creator God. We must choose whether we will believe it. Our choice will have a profound effect on our lives.

If we see God in what He has made, then we have a constant reminder of His ability, concern, purpose and even His humor. But, if we do not see God, then there is neither hint nor reminder of His purpose for our existence. Consequently we may imperil the normal workings of our conscience, given by God so that we would question our thoughts and actions.

Belief and behavior

In the remainder of Romans 1, Paul bluntly makes it clear that serious consequences come from failing to recognize God in His creation. Reasoning becomes the substitute for God's Spirit and His Word. Eventually people's reasonings become rationalizations that can lead them to justify almost any kind of behavior.

Psalm 14 confirms this: "Fools say in their hearts, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds; there is no one who does good" (verse 1).

As does Romans 1, this verse implies that people who choose not to believe in God see no need to abide by a divine code of conduct.

However, as the next verse tells us: "The LORD looks down from heaven on humankind to see if there are any who are wise, who seek after God" (verse 2).

God can guide and bless those who wisely choose to accept the evidence and believe in Him. Let's make the right choice.

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Yoked with an Unbeliever

II Corinthians 5:14 Do not be yoked together with unbelievers... You can read the rest of the verse and the remaining chapter for more information about mingling with unbelievers. I'll tell you my story.

During a recent argument with my husband, the kind where each party is truly hurt by the things we say, my non-believing husband told me he hated my religious beliefs, especially the Sabbath. It hurt. It hurt bad.

After Tom and I had become engaged in November of 1992, two dear friends of mine introduced me to the Sabbath and a whole new outlook on life. I was positively enthralled. Life was going to be so great and my fiancée and I were going to have a good Christian marriage and raise a beautiful Christian family. I mean, how could it not turn out that way? Wouldn't my fiancée's eyes see and his ears hear what our Creator was telling him? "Come follow me, and you will have this great and wonderful life." Who wouldn't follow?

The wedding came and went. Tom still didn't believe. O.K. maybe later. We loved each other and I could see that he was growing and changing into a Christian, even if he didn't realize it yet.

Eight years of marriage came and went, along with all the ups and downs of a life built together, and we finally became parents. How could Tom not see the birth of our daughter as a beautiful miracle from our Heavenly Father? Surely now he would believe. Well... no, not quite. We loved each other and I could see that he was growing and changing into a Christian, even if he didn't realize it yet.

We've been married 13 years now, and, you guessed it, he's still not a Christian. I have yoked myself with an unbeliever, and it has made my walk with Christ sometimes very difficult, particularly my desire to honor the seventh day Sabbath. Of course, his profession of hating my religious beliefs and the Sabbath were said in the heat of the moment, and he later told me that he didn't mean it. However, without a doubt he made it clear that he resents my beliefs, and it still stings.

I know my husband loves me. He tells me all the time. He tells me that he loves that I work so hard to take care of my family. He tells me that he loves that I have a genuine fondness and kindness toward other people. He tells me that he loves that I can think for myself and that I'm smart and that I don't easily fall in with popular rhetoric. But this is the part that kills me: I am this way because I am a Christian. Why doesn't he get that?

But, yes, I'm sure you know what I'm about to say. We love each other and I can see that he is growing and changing into a Christian, even if he doesn't know it yet.

—Julia Benson

Julia Benson is a freelance writer who lives in a small town in northeast Iowa. A former school teacher, Julia now works part-time at a local newspaper. Julia has a husband and a young daughter. She attends an Adventist church in Wisconsin.

Islam: Facing the Challenge

The Bible declares curses on anyone who preaches
a message other than the Jesus of Scripture.

by William C. Hicks

Since the terrorism of September 11, 2001, the Western psyche has been awakened to an age-old competitor for the heart, mind, and soul of humanity. Even in our postmodern mindset where the mystical and eclectic are viewed with greater interest than the faith of our forefathers, Islam has been met with paranoia, skepticism, and concern because of the propensity for violence in its fundamentalist expressions. The open challenge presented by a religion seeking nothing less than world domination threatens to capsize our Western moral ambivalence that values plurality and religious tolerance above all. For contemporary Christians, compelled by the Word and Spirit to witness Jesus to those imprisoned in such false religion, the challenge is enormous. The body of Christ is ill prepared for it and ignorant of the beliefs and practices that are taking millions to destruction.

This article offers a scriptural perspective that reveals Islam as a doctrine of demons and suggests that our ignorance and indifference help drive Islam toward its goal of world domination. My work in missions on five continents has brought contact with various expressions of this religion that may be the fastest growing on earth. It is the greatest threat to the world order of my lifetime.

What draws so many to this religion? What do we as Christians need to know to correctly address Islam? Much of the concern about Islam today appears to be a reaction to its violence rather than a realization of its inherent evil. The desire to find a way to coexist with it seems to override our concern for the eternal welfare of those trapped by it.

The neutrality and blindness of the West in our politically correct openness toward Islam are two reasons people embrace it. This is in stark contrast with the clarity expressed by those who live with Islam daily. After months of dialogue, I am counseling for baptism a former Muslim who now trusts the biblical Christ, in contrast to the false Jesus Islam teaches. This man, now living in an Islamic state, is quick to remind me that despite current concerns over countries like Iran, the God of Scripture has used these "Persians" in His plans throughout history for His glory. He also informs me that the Muslims in his homeland do not reflect the same tolerance for Chris-

tians that we westerners give Islam in this culture. The legislated religious freedom and indifference of the West do not exist in the Islamic republics, nor is this freedom the goal of Islam in general. He has warned me that should I have opportunity to pass within contact range for his baptism, we could both be executed — if discovered. I haven't based this writing on some academic or linguistic introduction to Islam in a theoretical sense. Rather, I intend to raise awareness to the basic beliefs and practices of millions who claim Mohammed as their prophet and Allah as the only true God. I offer this article hoping that readers will better prepare themselves to give a biblical defense against Islam in all of its manifestations and to give a clearer testimony of the only way of salvation offered to humanity by faith in the Jesus Christ of Scripture alone. The Allah of Islam and the God of the Bible are definitely not the same!

Why Islam?

The term *Islam* is derived from the Arabic verb "to submit" (to Allah's will). It is by no means a unified religion, having various divisions and sects such as Sunni, Shi'ite, Sufi, Wahhabi, Druze, Alawism, Ahmadya, and Sikh. It is a simple religion that sees itself as the legitimate successor to Judaism and Christianity. Islam is the correct name for the religion that the prophet Mohammed claimed was revealed to him by the angel Gabriel. The content of the Koran (Quran), however, will assure Christians who read it that the angel speaking to Mohammed was not the Gabriel in our Bible. Even Mohammed and his wife, Kadija, wondered if it had been a demonic experience that left him in seizures, making noises like an animal as he received the testimony. This admittedly illiterate fellow then had others write down the words given him in those encounters (seizures), and he later organized them into the Koran.

Muslims claim that the Scripture of Jews and Christians is corrupted and not trustworthy, while they also give lip service to some of its teachings. The Koranic accounts of various events are also different from the biblical accounts. The Muslims teach a Jesus who was not deity and was not crucified or resurrected. They deny any need of atonement before their Allah. They redefine the terms *messiah* and *prophet* and

attribute to Mohammed many of Christ's unique claims: prophet, intercessor, Savior, and Lord. Their strict dogma and fantastic claims to spiritual origin from their "angel" draw many in for a closer look.

Though Islam is growing rapidly where poverty and ignorance provide opportunity for its promotion, it is finding allegiance even in the West. The open anti-Christian bias of the secular intellectual establishment cannot be overestimated in the spread of Muslim faith. Today it is not unusual to see historic, humanist, and liberal "Christian" teachings — particularly those that deny the Christ of Scripture and His written Word — quickly embraced by Islam. One can read quotes by Western authorities like Thomas Jefferson or Abraham Lincoln in the Islamic training materials today.

For example, *Know Your Islam*, by Yousuf N. Lalljee, opens with this from a well-recognized Nobel Prize winner:

If any religion has a chance of ruling over England, nay Europe, within the next hundred years, it can only be Islam.... I believe, that if a man like Muhammad were to assume the dictatorship of the modern world, he would succeed in solving its problem, in a way that would bring it much needed peace and happiness.—*George Bernard Shaw (preface)*.

Even the recent movies that deny the deity of Jesus, such as *The Da Vinci Code*, find great support in Islam. The anti-Christian media and other liberal elements in the West make them great allies.

What Christians can do

Concerning the realities of our conflict in this world, Paul wrote: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12).

He said not to be surprised that false apostles should come based upon the existence of evil angels:

For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

And so it is that what could be the fastest growing religion on earth was started by a lying "angel" who made Mohammed his apostle centuries ago. This is

Devil's Fingerprint?

Islam can be summarized in six basic beliefs, six religious duties, and worship on the sixth day.

• Six basic beliefs

Allah. He is one, with no partners or equals.

Angels. Koran came from "angel" Gabriel to Mohammed.

Holy books. Old Testament Law and Psalms (both now corrupted), plus the Koran.

Prophets. Allah sent 124,000 prophets; Mohammed is greatest — the "Seal of the prophets."

Predestination. All is determined by Allah's will.

Judgment. People's lives will be placed on a scale. If good works outweigh the bad, people go to paradise. If not, they go to hell.

• Six duties

Shahada - testimony, creed of Islam. "There is no god except Allah, and Muhammad is His Messenger."

Salat - prayer. Muslims pray five times a day, bowing toward Mecca.

Zakat - almsgiving. Muslims give a percentage of income to charity.

Sawm - fasting. During the lunar month of Ramadan, food and drink are forbidden from sunrise to sunset.

Hajj - pilgrimage. Once a lifetime to Mecca.

Jihad - struggle. Muslims war to get victory in their personal lives, or to defend Islam against its enemies.

- **Sixth day honored.** Friday is its special day of prayer. Is the apparent affinity to the number six indicative of the real identity of the angel that gave this religion? The 666 here may be speculative, inflammatory, or it may be relevant. Are we witnessing the rise of something of biblical proportions (Revelation 13:18)? Let the reader judge.

—*William C. Hicks*

not about intolerance; it is about truth and lies. It is a life-and-death issue.

In full agreement with these statements, Paul warned in Galatians 1:8, 9 that even an angel from heaven preaching any other gospel than the grace of Christ should be accursed, not tolerated. This speaks to the condition of false religionists before God and not in any way to our actions to harm them. Our goal is to reach them with the truth in Christ alone, not to convert them by force. Jesus laid down His life for His brethren, and we should not be surprised if His call to witness of Him to those who are lost might require the same of us (John 13:34, 35; 15:9-14).

Therefore, we must not be tolerant of those who teach against the gospel of Christ, nor should we look into false religion to find truth. We must confront them with the truth of Scripture in the hope that some will escape even the fires of hell (Jude 23).

Cause for concern

The willingness of some even in historic Christian circles to embrace Islam should cause us great concern. Recently an Episcopalian priest referred to herself as a Muslim, and a Catholic priest in Europe has called for using the term *Allah* as God in their services, apparently to open the door to Muslims. God only knows what could be next as Islam is embraced by the religious confusion that engulfs many because of their neglect in remembering our Book: the Bible! Read the warning of our Savior Jesus again:

“For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened. Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before” (Matthew 24:21-25).

May our heavenly Father give us courage to face the challenges ahead. May those He calls out of religious confusion, including Islam, hear His voice clearly and worship His Son for their own salvation and His glory (Philippians 2:9-11).

William C. Hicks serves the Church of God 7th Day as pastor in Dryden, VA, and in Kingsport, TN, and as director of G. C. Missions Ministries. Scripture quotations are from the King James Version. The entire text of this article is available at www.therestofgod.org.

Recommended Reading

Answering Islam: The Crescent and the Cross, by Norman L. Geisler, Ph.D., and Abdul Saleeb (Baker Books)
Reaching Muslims for Christ, by William J. Saal (Moody Press)
The Dark Side of Islam, by Dr. R. C. Sproul and Abdul Saleeb (Crossway Books)
Unveiling Islam: An Insider’s look at Muslim Life and Beliefs, by Ergun Caner, Ph.D., and Emir Caner, Ph.D. (Kregel Publications)
More than Prophet: An Insider’s Response to Muslim Beliefs About Jesus & Christianity, by Emir Caner, Ph.D., and Ergun Caner, Ph.D. (Kregel Publications)
Christian Jihad: Two Former Muslims Look at the Crusades and Killing in the Name of Christ, by Ergun Caner, PhD, and Emir Caner, Ph.D. (Kregel Publications)
The Facts on Islam, by John Ankerberg and John Weldon, PhD (Harvest House)
Islam Unveiled: Disturbing Questions About the World’s Fastest Growing Faith, by Robert Spencer (Encounter Books)

Out of Weakness Made Strong

by Donald Mansell

He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Isa. 40:29.

Many years ago two Muslim friends, Abdallah and Sabat, left their native Arabia to seek their fortunes. Before long Abdallah was appointed to a high position in the government of Zeman Shah, king of Kabul (Afganistan). Meanwhile Sabat went to Bukhara in search of wealth and position, and the two friends lost contact with each other.

One day Abdallah was given a Bible, apparently by some American missionaries, and was converted. In those days it meant death for a high-ranking Muslim to accept Christianity, so Abdallah carefully tried to conceal the fact that he had changed religions. But his secret got out, and his life was threatened. He decided to seek safety in a Christian community situated near the southern shores of the Caspian Sea. He left Kabul in disguise, but was discovered, when he accidentally met his old friend Sabat on one of the streets of Bukhara.

Sabat, a devout Muslim, had heard about Abdallah's conversion. He upbraided his friend for becoming a Christian and threatened to turn him over to the authorities, hoping this would cause him to abandon Christianity. Fearful of losing his life, Abdallah implored Sabat to let him escape, but Sabat was obdurate. Abdallah was arrested and turned over to Marad Shah, king of Bukhara, tried, and sentenced to death. A large crowd, including Sabat, gathered to watch his execution. Abdallah was offered life on condition he repudiate Christianity, but with unexpected courage he refused. One of his hands was cut off and again he was offered life on condition he recant. He replied he could never do this, and his other hand was struck off. For the last time he was offered life. His only response was to look at Sabat with tears of forgiveness in his eyes. Then he bowed his head and received the death blow.

Sabat could not erase from his memory his friend's look of forgiveness. Filled with grief and remorse, he left Bukhara and wandered from place to place seeking peace, but finding none. Going to India, he met some Christian missionaries and learned the meaning of Christian forgiveness. He accepted Abdallah's Christ and at last found the peace that so long had eluded him.

Martyrdom is not something pleasant to think about. We instinctively shrink from the idea. Yet, God can bring strength and courage out of weakness and win souls in the process.

Donald Mansell, New Every Morning, page 334. Review & Herald Publishing Association. 1981.

How Our Actions Affect Others

Living the moral life means considering, and making adjustments for, how our decisions and actions affect others. If we love our neighbor as ourselves, we will not do anything to our neighbor we would not want done to ourselves. It's that simple.

Consider the extended family unit for example. A family is not made up of independent, isolated human islands. It is a living organism. Like a chain, it is only as strong as its weakest links. Family members whose behavior is immoral or unethical, can be a drag on the whole family.

Think about your extended family — your blood kin, the people you're related to by marriage, and all the people connected to those people. In any large family, you'll find people with criminal records (one out of every 200 Americans is presently in jail), alcoholics, drug addicts, sick people, weak people, wealthy people, broken people, people with birth defects etc. etc. The wealthiest people in families are constantly being hit on for "loans" and financial help by those who have been financially irresponsible. Those who own the largest homes end up hosting most of the family social events. Other, less responsible or ethical, family members end up as parasites on the goodness of well-off members.

Now we can look at this scene from two perspectives: from the point of view of the strongest people in families, and from the perspective of the weakest.

Read and think about these two passages of Scripture: Galatians 5:13-14; 6:2 and Romans 15:1-2. What do they mean to you?

If we are strong, healthy, in good financial shape, and mentally sound, we have a duty to help others who are less blessed. We should use our blessings to bless others and in turn, to glorify God. And we can start in our own families and work outward. But we shouldn't make people dependent upon us — we should help them become strong and autonomous. We may need to help them with aspects of character development, health, job-hunting, exercise, moral support, finances or whatever they need to get the pump primed for success. If someone needs money, and you loan it to them, insist that they pay it back. I've found that people in families who borrow money from each other almost never pay it back. It takes character to pay one's debts, even when it hurts.

Don't misunderstand me: if we are in a weakened condition, we should be able to turn to our families for help. All the homeless people out there came from families. Many have been abandoned by them. Did you know that Tyler Perry, the author of "Diary of

a Mad Black Woman," and the hit TV series "House of Payne," was once homeless? Today he gives God the credit for pulling him out of that life and bringing him into success and prosperity.

Recently, we heard of a case where a woman, who owed her son and other relatives money, inherited a substantial sum of money. Instead of paying the debts she owed, she went out and bought a Mercedes. She explained, "I've always wanted a Mercedes." Now the chances of her paying off her debts are even slimmer because of the expenses involved in maintaining a high-dollar car. Her greed, lack of personal integrity, and lack of character worked a hardship on other family members to whom she owed money.

The point is: every action we perform whether good or evil has a ripple effect. No one is an island. Our ideas have consequences, and our actions have consequences, many of them unintended. A family is only as strong as its constituent members. Some day I'd love to write an article about Abraham and his family; or about David's. All these factors were in play in those two families. The strong members built up the families; the weak members tore them down and weakened them. Whichever element prevailed at the moment affected the state of the whole family.

God expects moral behavior because all behavior affects others.

All behavior has that ripple effect, and sometimes the waves it creates are tsunamis. Everything in life is cause and effect. All of the world's troubles today are the result of specific, particular, causes. Change the cause and you change the effect.

The values we hold determine our behavior and our behavior affects everyone in our sphere of influence. All that we do in life has a ripple affect. First it affects those closest to us, and it spreads outward in concentric circles. Each event generates another. Before long the whole family, the whole neighborhood, the whole community is affected. If one person lets his home become a dump, it can affect home values throughout the neighborhood. If the people in one house are "party animals," a whole community can be negatively affected.

Sin begets sin, evil begets evil, and bad behavior can become a contagion. If terrorists take over a neighborhood in Bagdad, they run it like a gang runs a neighborhood in Western countries. One evil leads to another. Evil is like cancer: it metastasizes. That's true in families, neighborhoods, communities, towns, cities and even countries.

It is in our best interests to help fellow Christians behave in a godly way. Note the words of James in James 5:19-20. If we learn to bear the infirmities of

those who are weak in families, families will be strengthened. If we take an interest in, and learn to help, our neighbors, neighborhoods will be strengthened. The effects of good works ripple on and on into communities, cities, and nations. We are here to be light and salt. We are here to live the moral and ethical life because all that we do affects others. Our behavior and example as Christians reflects on God. Our values determine our behavior.

Let's try to accept God's mandate for moral and ethical behavior so that the ripple effects we create produce only good. When you get a chance, open up your Bible and study closely 1 Corinthians 6:1-20. Now consider this statement by Dennis Prager: "... moral values matter more than anything else and are what most determine an individual's and a society's behavior," (*Think a Second Time*, pp. 156-157).

Our values are tested every day — at both micro and macro levels. We are challenged to be truthful, loyal, kind, generous, loving, caring, sensitive to the needs of others and proactive in meeting others at their real points of need. And happiness really is a moral obligation.

This article is based on a sermon given by Brian Knowles on Aug. 18, 2007, to the ACD Virtual Church. Brian is a professional artist and writer and is a former magazine editor. Brian is an avid student of the Bible and a frequent contributor to the Association for Christian Development web-site (www.godward.org).

The Prophecy Pit, Part 2

We apologize for not bringing you Part 2 of "The Prophecy Pit" by Kenneth Westby. Part 2 will appear in our next edition of *The Sabbath Sentinel*.

In Part 2 we will investigate the genre of biblical literature called "apocalyptic." We will attempt to answer the questions: What is the reality behind the symbols of evil and benign beasts, numbers, and why the Book of Revelation seems to be in code language? Why is the future partly set and partly open? How can God prophesy events and bring them about without abridging the freedom of either men or angels? What is the prime purpose of prophecy and the two-word answer to how it all finally ends?

Sabbath Morning Companion

The Casting of the Net

"I will make you fishers of men" -- Jesus, Matthew 4:19.

As the fishermen in Jesus' entourage well knew, to catch fish you have to use the right bait. You can't just throw a hook into the water and expect the fish to strike. The marketing of Christianity, aka, fishing with the right bait, is big business these days. It is the subject of hundreds of books, thousands of magazine articles, and scores of seminars. Some people call it evangelism, and evangelism a good thing. But we should bear in mind that the fishermen Jesus knew fished with nets, not with hooks. With a hook and a minnow, you'll catch a fish one at a time, and that's good, but with a net, you'll catch thousands.

In the book of Acts we see Peter and the others not just reaching people one at a time (although they certainly), we also see them converting thousands by their preaching and example. When three thousand converted in Acts 2 and five thousand in Acts 3, it was in response to inspired teaching and the spoken word. In those days as in ours people hunger for the truth of God, spoken boldly and directly from the Scriptures.

The trend toward attracting the favorable demographic in the marketing of religion might draw numbers, but it cannot be at the expense of solid teaching from the Word. The net must be cast wide without bait and hook, based on the universal truths that define the core of Christian theology. But beware, for the core of the Christian faith is a dangerous thing to proclaim. It requires its adherents to do something radical.

After Peter's sermon in Acts 2, the people who heard asked, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Both then and later, the answer was always the same: Repent! Change the way you live your life. Admit that the lifestyle you are living is wrong. Both then and now people don't want to here that, and ironically, often it is the religious types who become offended at the allegation of sin in their lives.

In fact, in the book of Acts and beyond we often see powerful preaching and the casting of the net leading to persecution and imprisonment. The world resists the proclamation of the light because its own deeds are evil. A religion that is crammed only with liturgy and ritual is a threat to no one, but to rise and unmask the sins of the world is a threatening experience and often leads to unpleasant consequences for the preacher.

But herein is another miracle in the casting of the net. Historically, persecution leads not to the weakening of the church, but a strengthening of it, both in spirit and in numbers. Under such circumstances, Christians can no longer have a form of godliness while denying its power. It is either all or none when the glory of God is revealed in our weakness.

—Lenny Cacchio

Finding Shalom

The inner peace only Jesus can give

by Candy Mayer as told to Muriel Larson

"We're going to take you to a psychiatrist," my parents told me. "Maybe he can help you." "But everyone will think I'm crazy," I protested. "Well, we've got to do something, honey," my dad said. "We've tried everything else." I had always been nervous. When I was small, my parents took me to a child psychologist. In my early teens, they took me to a hypnotherapist. More recently, Daddy put me on medication to help my nerves, but nothing really helped.

I always had felt lonely and unhappy. Sometimes I felt as though I were living in hell. I never got a full night's sleep and often had awful nightmares. I thought of killing myself, but feared death.

How I longed to talk more to my parents about my depression! But both were busy with their professions. A series of housekeepers cared for my two older sisters and me as we grew up. Not until Eleanor came along, when I was 13, did I find someone to talk to.

Caring housekeeper

Eleanor Stoppe was different: She always bubbled. After a while, I went to her with my problems. Sometimes she invited my sisters and me to her house to eat. What a warm, pleasant place it was! I always felt tense at our house, but at Eleanor's I felt at ease.

When I was 16, Eleanor took me to a Christian youth rally. A line in a song, "Lord, make me whole," made a special impression on me. Was being "whole" what made the difference between Eleanor and me?

My parents are Jewish, but, like many Jews, they were agnostics. Though they went to synagogue only two or three times a year, they made certain my sisters and I went for religious training every Saturday at the Reformed Synagogue. I later dropped out of these classes and became interested in art. Now I realized that even though I had been religious, I had never known the peace and joy Eleanor experienced in Jesus Christ.

Close call

Not long after the rally, all my family went to a benefit dance. But I didn't go. "I don't want to leave

you alone," Mother said. "Whom would you like to have over?"

I opted to go to Eleanor's house, and Mother agreed. Eleanor picked me up the next afternoon. As she drove toward a shopping center, two cars suddenly careened toward us. Eleanor swerved, just missing the cars.

My heart pounded wildly. "Wow, that was close!" We started talking about death. "If I had died just then," Eleanor said, "I know I would live in eternity with the Lord one day because I have received Jesus Christ as my Savior." I didn't understand that kind of talk. Nor did I understand her quiet confidence.

We didn't shop that day; we just talked. And when we returned to Eleanor's house, we kept talking.

Spiritual discussion

Eleanor's husband and sons came home from a church ball game, sat down in the kitchen, and talked with us. Here I am, a Jew, I thought, yet these people know God better than I do! Mr. Stoppe brought out a Bible and showed me verses that said all have sinned and that Jesus died for our sins. He also explained what it meant to believe in Jesus.

When the Stoppes' sons went to bed, we kept talking about God, Jesus Christ, and the Bible. I later learned the boys were praying for me in their rooms. "I want to believe!" I finally cried. "But I'm a Jew. A person is either a Jew or a Gentile. If I accept your religion, I'll be a traitor and outcast to my people!" Somehow I could not take that step, though I wanted so much what the Stoppe family had. Around 2 a.m. I sat alone in the room and felt compelled to look up. I saw Jesus Christ — yes, I actually saw Him!* He was reaching out His hand to me. And oh, what compassion and love I felt!

"Take My hand," He said. "Believe in Me. I'll replace your miserable life with a new one and give you peace." "Eleanor, I believe!" I cried. Eleanor ran in. "What did you say?" "I believe!" I repeated. "Well, praise the Lord!" she exclaimed.

Continued on page 20

cerned about who is right or wrong on the subject of Christmas or any other religious holiday. They want to expunge any reference to God or Christ from society because they hate religion (and many hate God) and do not want ever to be reminded of His existence.

I suppose we could waste a lot of time psychoanalyzing atheists and anti-religious secularists and come up with a mountain of reasons why they hate religion and why they have become so militant in their attempt to eliminate all mention of Christ and God from our lives, but the point is that they do hate religion—particularly your religion, Christianity. So, what are you going to do about it?

Are you prepared to defend your faith?

Young people are on the front line of this war we are in between religious faith and secularism. Because you are young, you have been deliberately targeted due to the fact that many people your age have not had their religious beliefs set in concrete like their parents. There is an old Catholic saying, "Give me your children until they are six years old, and they will be Catholic for life." The age of six is not a magic number, but the secularists have picked up on the point of the saying: Gain control of children during their youth, and they will reject religion for life.

I dare say that you have met other students or young people in the work place that have no religious training at all. What God thinks never enters their minds when they have to make a decision. This situation was unheard of in my generation. Everyone's decisions about right and wrong were based on the beliefs of their parents, who derived their beliefs principally from the Bible. American society in general accepted the Bible as the final arbiter in questions of right and wrong. That is no longer the case. Many in your parents' generation began to lose contact with God and the Bible when the U.S. Supreme Court declared prayer and Bible reading in school to be unconstitutional in separate cases in 1962 and 1963.

Because we no longer have a common standard, the Bible, to judge what is true and false, what is right and wrong, we are left to decide these matters for ourselves. In fact, we are encouraged to decide what is right or wrong based on our personal preferences and our own judgment. Have you ever talked to someone about their beliefs or personal conduct and been told, "that may be right for you, but it's not right for me" or, "what's true for you is not true for me?" Matters such as lying or sexual conduct are considered personal choices these days, and if you object, you are condemned for "judging."

Are you prepared to defend your faith in front of your class when the teacher states that evolution proves that the Bible is not true? How would you counsel a friend who is planning to have an abortion because she has been taught and believes that the life in her womb is nothing more than an inconvenient mass of tissue? What will you say to the boy who thinks that sex is for recreation or the girl who can't wait to lose her virginity?

Such questions can only be answered by those who are prepared. There is hope in you for the kingdom of God, but are you ready to lead others in that direction? Are you prepared to oppose those who would lead others into hell, even if it means opposing someone in authority? God tells us in Proverbs 24:11, "Deliver those who are drawn toward death, and hold back those stumbling to the slaughter." You can only fulfill this command if you are ready and willing to take on the responsibility of leading your friends and others away from sin and death.

Friends and Enemies

Make no mistake about it; you are under attack, and the stakes are high—your eternal life. The enemy dons many masks in his attempt to seduce you into rejecting God and embracing a lifestyle that will make you an enemy of God. The enemy might come to you in the form of a religion-hating teacher, a "shock jock" on the radio who constantly ridicules religion (i.e., Christianity), or a boy- or girl-friend who is continually tempting you to throw caution to the wind and have sex "just for the fun of it." However the temptations come, are you ready to resist them, and are you ready to help your friends resist them?

Unfortunately, many Christians have difficulty distinguishing their friends from their enemies. Because of an obsession with doctrinal purity, many Christians refuse to cooperate with others whose faith in Christ is under attack. They are as much an enemy of the victim of attack as the perpetrator. This is a tragedy for a variety of reasons—not the least of which is that it portrays Christians as intolerant and unmerciful, even to their own people. This is not how Christ expected us to display his life and love in us to the world.

Let me reemphasize something that I stated earlier. The secularists and atheists who are seeking control of our minds and beliefs do not care whether you keep the Sabbath or Sunday. They do not care whether you are a Messianic Jew or a Catholic. They are at war with all of us to eliminate any mention or thought of Christ from public view or private thought. We as Sabbath or Sunday

keepers find ourselves in a perfect situation to apply the words of Christ our Lord, "Now John answered and said, 'Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow with us.' But Jesus said to him, 'Do not forbid him, for he who is not against us is on our side' " (Luke 9:49-50). We should be busy applying that principle to those around us with whom we do not agree doctrinally. If Christ has taught you something that someone else does not yet understand, is that cause to shun the person—especially when both of you are under attack because of your faith in Christ?

One thing I have observed is that many Christians are not confident enough in their own faith and beliefs to feel comfortable in the company of others who do not share all of their beliefs. As a result of that lack of confidence, they retreat to their own suburb in the Christian community. If you are going to stand for Christ, you must have enough faith in the living work of Christ to allow Him to complete in others the work He has started, and His work needs to go forward without our interference. Often we are like little children who want things done our way or not at all, and when we see someone else who says he is a Christian taking a path different from our own, we avoid that person. Never forget: Christ is the head of the Church; we are not. Our responsibility is to prepare ourselves for our work in the world—a world that is becoming increasingly more hostile to anyone who names Christ as Lord. Nonetheless, our world is also in greater need of the Truth of Christ than it ever has been.

Let's say you want to start a Bible club at school, and the school administration opposes you. Will you quit or find others you can work with to get your Bible club going? It is unlikely that you will receive any help from your school's gay and lesbian alliance. If you really want your Bible club, you will probably have to work together with students who are Baptists, Methodists, Nazarene, or from other denominations. The goal is to start your Bible club and invite interested students to join you to study God's Word. You have to be as the apostle Paul, "...I have become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some" (1 Corinthians 9:22). Paul never sacrificed his faith, his beliefs, or his doctrine, but he was willing to work with any person so that person could be saved. He knew what he believed and was confident in that knowledge because he knew his teaching had come from Christ. That allowed him to put aside all prejudice towards others so that he could teach them about Christ and His salvation.

You can apply this same principal in any situation whether you praying with others at your high school

or college, or bringing in a Christian speaker to present his or her views on abortion, evolution, atheism, or the truth about the so-called "separation of church and state." You just have to be confident enough in your own faith to cooperate with students from other churches about ways to present the truth about Christ and his message to any who may be interested.

Know Why You Believe

We don't often think of the Church's future in this manner, but those who are now children will be the leaders of the Church in the coming generation. Many adults have the idea that children of 10 or 12 years of age cannot understand the Truths of God and the Bible. Yet, when I think of the 12-year-old American sea captain during the War of 1812 (David Farragut), I know that it is possible for young people to take on adult responsibilities and succeed on the front lines in our war to preserve and advance the gospel of Christ. Each day stories come across my desk telling of young Christian children and teens in other countries who are paying a huge price for refusing to renounce their faith in Christ. Some are thrown into prison; some in Muslim countries are being made slaves to cruel masters. By comparison, the burden of young Christians in America and other Western countries is light.

The key to being able to succeed is to know why you believe what you believe. We know that God is no respecter of persons, so no matter how young you are, you can give yourself into God's hands and allow Him to teach you the things you need to know. If you don't know the Bible, study it. If you don't pray regularly, start praying tonight. The Bible says that if we draw close to God, He will draw close to us (James 4:8). You can never know why you believe something until you understand what you believe, and Bible study and prayer are the first steps to becoming a true servant of God.

For those in high school and college, I would like to recommend a couple of books that will help you understand why you believe in the God of the Bible. First, I would recommend to anyone the book, *Mere Christianity*, by C. S. Lewis. Lewis was an unbeliever well into his adult life but eventually came to believe in Christ and God. *Mere Christianity* is a book that describes some of the difficult questions about Christianity that he had to deal with before he became a believer. For example, Lewis tells why miracles are possible, why bad things happen to good people, and why science is compatible with the Bible.

Another book that I recommend is *What's so Great about Christianity* by Dinesh D'Souza. D'Souza discusses why Christianity explains the

existence of creation much better than modern atheistic science. The book also deals with man's special place in creation, why atheism can give us no answer to questions of morality, and why religious faith is reasonable.

There are many other books that I could recommend, but these two will provide a good foundation in helping you understand some of the broader social and cultural questions of our day in the light of biblical truth.

Above all, do not be afraid. Trust God and move boldly forward in the knowledge that He is with you and will help you defend His truth. Have faith and trust in the words of the apostle Peter: "And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled. But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil" (1 Peter 3:13-17).

—Kenneth Ryland

Westby—Continued from page 4

issue: knowing who God is and what he is like and what he expects of those he created in his image. These are the big issues that should inform the nature of our religious beliefs and practices.

The task of developing an accurate and true theology is not as daunting an enterprise as you may think. God has made the task possible by his own self-disclosure in Scripture and Creation. He tells us what he is like, what he has done, what he expects of us—and he has a long historical track record to validate his self disclosure. The data are best read without tradition-tainted glasses. You'll be surprised how much can be known about God. And I believe you'll find theology is the most exciting of all studies—and the most important. It reigns supreme above all other fields of knowledge.

Ever let another creature pawn off upon her his own bad and prejudiced theology. We should know better. Why not start your quest for a true theology by mediating upon God's self-disclosure found in Jeremiah 9:23-24, and continue from there.

Ken Westby is a board emeritus of the BSA and founder and director of the Associations for Christian Development and the Virtual Church (www.godward.org).

Finding Shalom—Continued from page 17.

The heavy burden was lifted from my heart. For the first time in my life, I felt happy. Eleanor asked me to pray, and to my amazement, I knew God and could pray to Him.

"I have been praying for your salvation for several years now," Eleanor told me. When Mr. Stoppe came back and saw me, he knew what had happened.

Although I slept on the floor in a sleeping bag that night, I had my first peaceful sleep.

Profession and peace

When I went home the next day, I didn't know how to tell my parents. Mother just looked at me strangely. "You look different. What happened to you?" "I've found something, Mom," I replied. "I'm a Christian now. I believe in Jesus Christ!"

To my surprise, my parents took the news well. I guess they were just glad to see me happy and peaceful at last. Even the psychiatrist thought it was a good thing. I told him Jesus Christ changed me.

Right away I started attending church with the Stoppes. The services were new and strange to me, but I still made public my commitment to Christ. I

wanted to be baptized, but hesitated. If I carried through with baptism, my family would really know I was a Christian. Would they reject me? I finally decided to take my open stand for Jesus Christ and was baptized. My family, being broad-minded, did not reject me as I had feared.

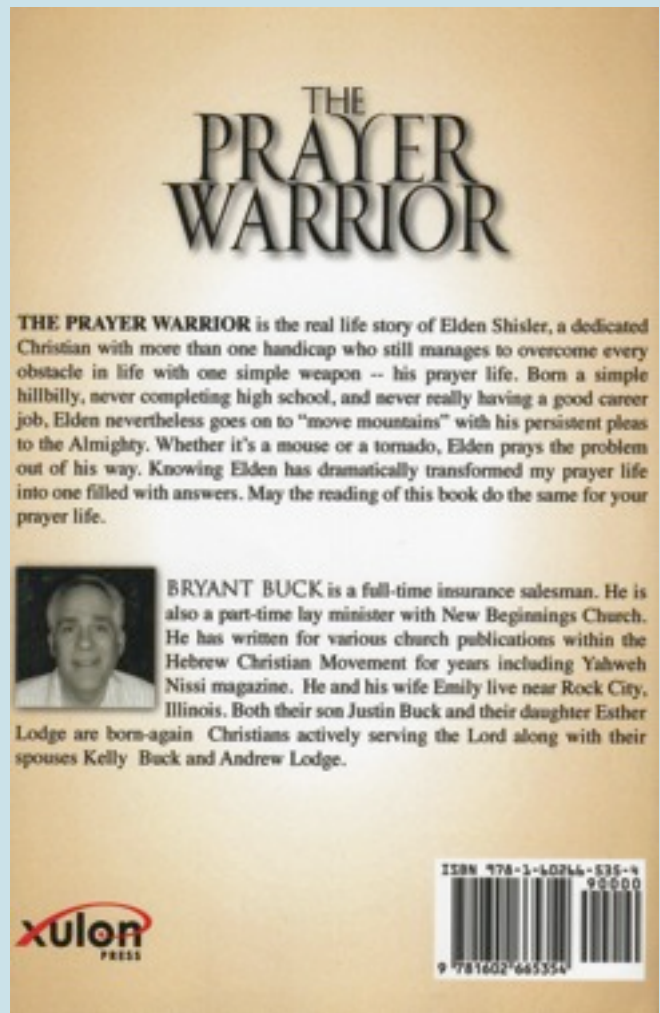
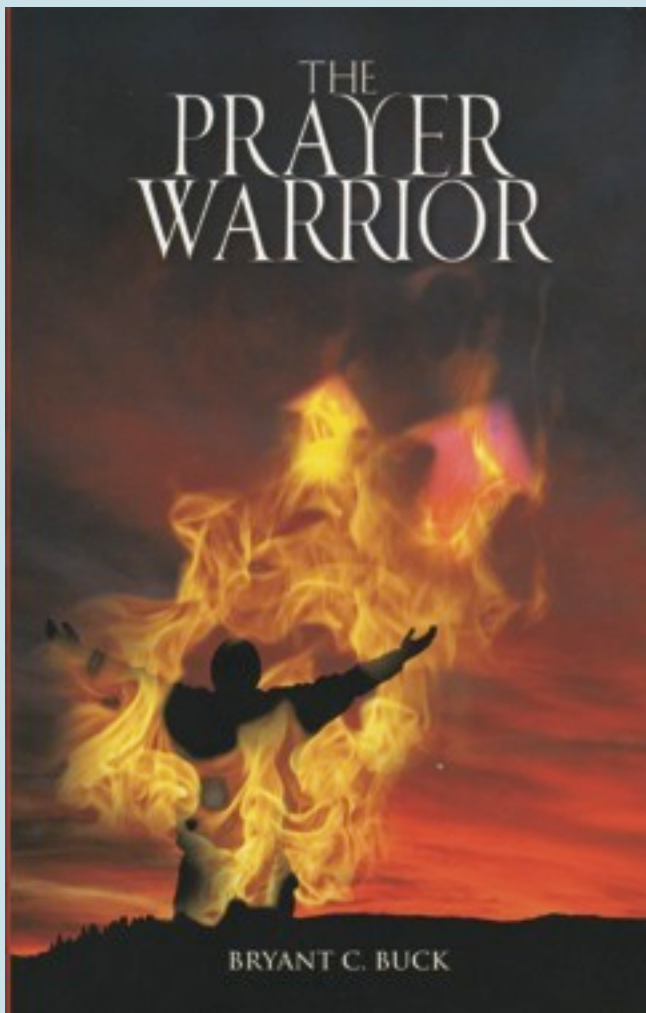
I had always been a self-centered person, but now as a Christian, I began thinking of others. Eventually, God led me to attend a Christian university, where I grew in my faith and learned more of the Bible.

A favorite greeting of Jewish people is "Shalom" (peace), but people really don't know what it means until they come to know the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Thank God, I know what it means at last. I have the peace I desperately desired for so many years!

** Author's note: Several other Jewish Christians I have interviewed told me of remarkable experiences similar to Candy's just before they yielded to Jesus Christ.*

Muriel Larson writes from Greenville, SC.

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The Church in the World

Sunday, January 6, 2008

Pakistani Taleban kidnap five Christians **Swapping release for five detained militants demanded**

By Sheraz Khurram Khan

Special Correspondent for ASSIST News Service in Pakistan

PESHAWAR/TANK, PAKISTAN (ANS) -- Suspected militants associated with Commander Baitullah Mahsud on Friday kidnapped five Christians in South Waziristan Agency (SWA), Pakistan's English Daily "The News" has reported.

Also, militants blocked the main Wana-Jandola Road where they stopped all passing vehicles to look for the security personnel and government employees, it said.

The story quoted unnamed sources as telling "The News" by telephone from the troubled region that the armed militants stopped a vehicle, which was carrying passengers from Wana, headquarters of South Waziristan, to Dera Ismail Khan.

Among the passengers, five were Christians, whom the militants took into custody and drove them later towards an undisclosed location, said the story.

Three abductees, according to the story were identified as Altaf Masih, Babar Masih and Emanuel, while the names of two other Christians could not be ascertained.

The identified captives it said belonged to Pakistani city of Gujranwala and were employed in Wana.

The two other Christians were their relatives, who had come from Gujranwala to see them in Wana, which is considered a place of terror among the people living in rest of the country, it said.

The story said the hosts and their guests were returning to their hometown when captured by the suspected tribal militants.

Local officials of the political administration confirmed the kidnapping and said no effort could be made for their release as the area where they were disembarked from a vehicle was a stronghold of Mahsud tribal militants, it added.

"[We traveled] even [though] we had been directed by the high-ups to avoid traveling in the area inhabited by the Mahsud tribesmen," it quoted a senior official of the political administration as saying.

On the other hand, militants affiliated with Baitullah Mahsud made the release of Christians conditional with the freeing of six prominent militants now in custody of law-enforcement agencies, it maintained.

The story went on to say that one of them, identified as Commander Raees Khan Mahsud, was arrested by the law-enforcement agencies at a check post near canal in Dera Ismail Khan while coming to DI Khan from South Waziristan. The other five were said to be very important militant commanders of Baitullah Mahsud group picked up earlier from various areas of the tribal region.



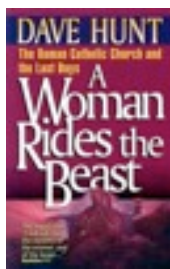
Tribal elders in Wana, Pakistan

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A Woman Rides the Beast

by Dave Hunt



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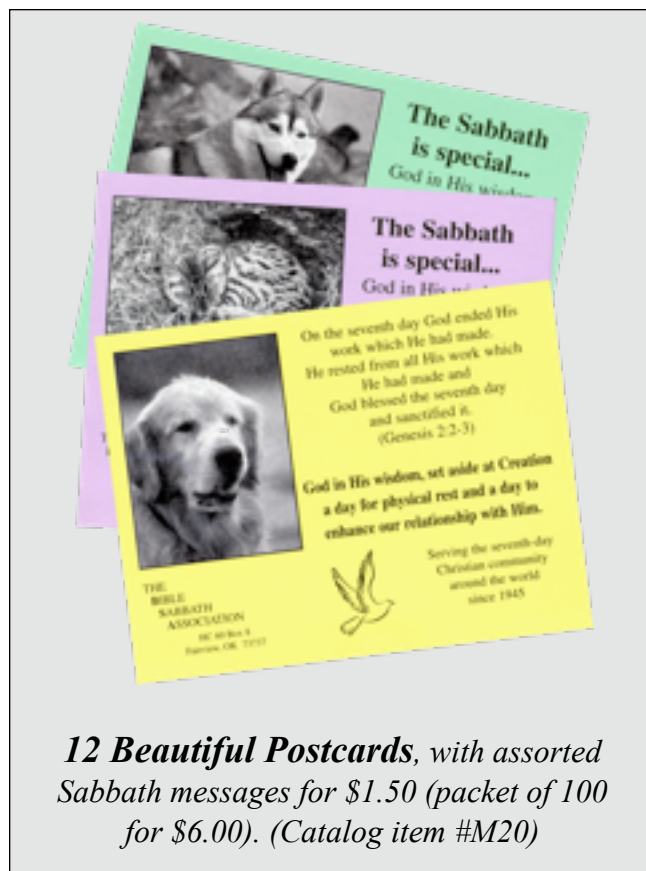
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Personal

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Ten Commandments Twice Removed

by Danny Shelton and Shelley Quinn

A backlash of attention to the Ten Commandments—unleashed by recent U.S. court rulings rallied Christians in defense of its public display. Amid the crescendo of concern, a lone voice vies for attention, “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15). Is our defense of the Ten Commandments triggered simply by a sentimental interest of Christian culture? Is it possible the Church stands before God as guilty as our government for discarding the Decalogue? The book answers critical questions with compelling clarity and Bible evidence. Did the Ten Commandments exist before Mt. Sinai? Were they nailed to the cross? How do we demystify Paul’s writings about the law? Does man have authority to change God’s Law?

(B 256 \$5.00 + \$3 shipping and handling for non members)

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