



# THE Sabbath Sentinel

May–June 2005

*"...you shall bring a sheaf  
of the firstfruits of your  
harvest to the priest. He  
shall wave the sheaf before  
the LORD..."*

**BSA — The Bible Sabbath Association**

*"...the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath."*

# **The Sabbath Sentinel**

May–June 2005 Volume 57, No. 3 Issue 513

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# The Legacy of Pentecost



There is one festival mentioned in Leviticus 23 that is still celebrated by the Christian Church at large. It is Pentecost. Even though Passover, Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles can cast great light on the sacrifice of Christ, His atonement, and the coming Kingdom of God, these festivals have long since been abandoned by Christendom, along with the Saturday Sabbath, primarily due to anti-Semitism in the early Western Church—a fact made obvious in the writings of the early Church fathers.

As we near the time of Pentecost, it would be good to look at what this one festival means to all Christians. Whether you call it Pentecost, Feast of Weeks, Whitsunday, or *Shavuot*, the day drips with meaning for all of us.

The word Pentecost comes from *Pentecoste* in Greek. Although many may think this term has to do with the Latinization of biblical terminology that occurred after the death of the apostles, this is not the case. Greek-speaking Jews gave this festival the name of Pentecost (meaning “fiftieth” in Greek) since it occurs 50 days after Passover. It is a rough Greek translation of the Hebrew term *Shavuot*, meaning “festival of [seven] weeks.”

The Jews of Jesus’ day had at least two ways of marking the 50 days between the Passover week (Unleavened Bread) and the Feast of Weeks. The tradition of the Pharisees, which most Jews observe today, was to count the days from the “morrow after the [first high day] Sabbath” of Passover. This meant that the festival of Pentecost or *Shavuot* would always occur on Sivan 6 on the Hebrew calendar. The Sadducees, on the other hand, believed that the Sabbath referred to in Leviticus 23:15 was the weekly Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread (Passover week). This calculation always put Pentecost on the first day of the week rather than on a fixed calendar date. The Sadducees believed that this counting of seven Sabbaths (a jubilee of days) exactly matched the marking of seven-year cycles until the Jubilee, or the fiftieth year, when debts were forgiven and land was returned to its original owners. This also allowed for two Sabbaths on consecutive days, the forty-ninth day (a weekly Sabbath) and the fiftieth day

(the high-day Sabbath of Pentecost). This was considered a special blessing from God and a reminder of the Jubilee (fiftieth) year.

As you can see, Pentecost is tied directly to the Passover. The waving of a sheaf of barley “on the morrow after the Sabbath” during Passover marked the beginning of the harvest season. The offering of loaves made from the new wheat marked its completion at Pentecost fifty days later. Because the grain harvest was looked upon as a great blessing from God, the people were told to rejoice, feast, and share their bounty in freewill first-fruits offerings with others: Levites, foreigners, orphans, and widows (Deuteronomy 16:9-12 and Exodus 34:22). In other words, they were to share with those who had not worked for the harvest with the admonition to “remember that you were once slaves in Egypt.”

One point that stands out with regard to Pentecost as well as the other festivals (that is, Passover and the festivals of the seventh month) is that their emphasis was on grace, not on a slavish obedience to the Law. We don’t see “legalism” here. What we see is “freely you have received, so freely give,” (Matthew 10:8) and “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” (Romans 8:32). Pentecost and the other harvest festivals in particular—Passover and Tabernacles (*Succoth*)—are a celebration of the freewill offerings that God has poured out on His people. We, in turn, like our Heavenly Father, are to pour out our blessings on others.

It is true that the counting of Pentecost has changed from what it was during the time of the Apostles and the first century Church. With the ascendancy of Rome and its tightening grip over the entirety of Christendom after the death of the Apostles, the starting date for the celebration of Pentecost was changed from Passover to Easter.

Pentecost is, according to Jewish tradition, the day of the giving of the Ten Commandments. The day of

*Continued on Page 14*

# The Land Sabbath in Modern Israel

by Doug Ward, Ph.D.



Rest can be hard to come by in twenty-first century Western societies. With so much to do, it is all too easy for us to become enslaved to our busy schedules.

The Bible gives indications that our Creator did not intend for us to live such restless and hurried lives. In Genesis 2:1-3 we read that God rested on the seventh day of the creation week, setting an example for mankind. Later, in proclaiming the Decalogue from Mt. Sinai, God reminded the children of Israel of that example (Exod. 20:8-11).

The weekly Sabbath is one of the foundations of the Torah, God's wise and loving instruction for his people. The Torah also makes provision for the land of Israel to "rest" every seven years (see Exod. 23:10-11; Lev. 25:1-7). In a sabbatical year (known in Jewish tradition as a "*shemittah* year," from a Hebrew word in Exod. 23:11 that means "let drop"), farmers are not to plant seed, prune their trees, or harvest crops. For that year the land becomes public property, and people may take what grows by itself according to their needs. The seventh year is also a time for cancellation of debts (Deut. 15:1-2) and release of indentured servants (Deut. 15:12-18).

The sabbatical commandments of the Torah are designed to maintain and strengthen the relationship between God and his people. They provide time for fellowship with God. They teach the lesson that God is the source of all blessings and can be relied upon to provide human needs. They promote compassion for the poor and responsible stewardship of the land.

Can the application of these ancient principles bring rest to today's stressed-out world? One man who hopes so is Dr. Don Stanley, a Christian who holds a Ph. D. in Jewish Studies from the University of Melbourne. With the help of a grant from an Australian Jewish organization, Dr. Stanley spent five months in Israel (July-November 2004) investigating the experiences of Israeli farmers who have observed the *shemitta* year. On the Sabbath of April 2, 2005, Stanley reported on the results of his research at a worship service of the Church of the Messiah in Dayton, Ohio.

## Land Sabbaths Ancient and Modern

By way of introduction, Dr. Stanley summarized the history of the land sabbath. The *shemittah* year was

kept during both the First and Second Temple periods, though not always consistently. In fact, even before the Israelites reached the Promised Land, Moses prophesied that neglect of the land sabbath would be a factor in Israel's eventual exile (Lev. 26:34-35). 2 Chron. 36:21 indicates that Moses' prophecy was fulfilled in the Babylonian captivity of the sixth century B.C.

One example of land sabbath observance in the Second Temple period is recorded in the book of 1 Maccabees. 1 Macc. 6:48-54 reports that in about 162 B.C., the Jews faced a disadvantage in their war with the Seleucid empire because of a famine resulting from the sabbatical year. They were soon blessed for their obedience, however. Power struggles among the Seleucid leaders caused the enemy general to depart, giving the Jews a welcome reprieve (1 Macc. 6:55-63).

After the destruction of the Second Temple and the failure of the two Jewish revolts, observance of the land sabbath became a moot point; there were very few Jewish farmers left in the land of Israel. During the Talmudic period, the *shemittah* year had only a theoretical existence as a topic for rabbinic discussion.

Things changed in the late nineteenth century when there began to be enough Jewish farmers in Israel to make the land sabbath a real issue again. But because these Jewish farmers were very poor, rabbinic authorities feared that they could not survive a sabbatical year. Therefore it was decided that in each *shemittah* year, the agricultural land in Israel would be temporarily deeded to a trustworthy Gentile, allowing the poor farmers to continue working their land without technically being in violation of the commandment.

This practice continues today in the modern state of Israel. In the last sabbatical year, which began on Rosh Hashanah in A.D. 2000, the temporary owner of Israel's land was Hussein Ismael Jabar. Jabar, who also owns all the leavening in Israel each year during the Passover celebration, is a resident of Abu Ghosh, a town about eight miles west of Jerusalem. In trusting Jabar with this responsibility, Israel remembers the fact that Abu Ghosh did not oppose the Jewish cause during Israel's struggle for independence in 1948.

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# Faith Busters or Faith Builders?

by Brian Knowles



The purpose of this column is to stimulate its readers to think outside of the box, to shift paradigms, and to entertain new possibilities. It is not to denigrate or discourage faith. I believe deeply in the principle that truth, if indeed it is such, will set us free and not bring us into bondage (cf. John 8:32).

In what, or whom, do we place faith? What is truth and what is freedom? These are crucial questions.

If we place faith in human leaders, we will be let down. As Jeremiah the prophet wrote: *"Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength"* (Jeremiah 17:5). All of us have feet of clay. Sooner or later, all of us fail, sin, err, and fall short of the divine standard. As they say, "We all make mistakes." Problem is, in authoritarian religious systems, all depends upon the glorious human leader, who perpetuates the self-serving mystique that he is indispensable to, or central to, God's Plan. I don't know what psychologists call this now, but they used to call it a "Messiah complex."

No human being is infallible, indispensable, or immortal. Sooner or later even the most charismatic and domineering of leaders dies. Before they do, they make mistakes, errors in judgment, and they reveal their humanity. If you place faith in human leaders, even popes and ministers, you'll be disappointed. I don't know of any who understands the Bible perfectly or comprehensively. I don't know of any minister who lives a perfect, exemplary life. Whom do you know who walks fully in the Spirit and displays a Christ-like demeanor on all occasions? I've never met such a person. All of the Christians I know, ministers included, are imperfect "works in progress," myself included.

## The Authoritarian Trap

Authoritarian religion is a deadly trap. It weakens its adherents. It renders them dependent upon flawed and imperfect human leadership. It robs them of autonomy and freedom of choice. It seeks to control behavior and to rein in its followers to the point of perfect conformity to a corporate standard. It is yellow pencil religion.

If you find yourself caught in one of the authoritarian manifestations of the churches of God, you owe it to yourself to escape and learn to "work out your

own salvation with fear and trembling." The more dependent you have been, the more frightening and challenging will be the journey. You will have to learn to replace the fear of man with an autonomous fear of God. This is a major, and most significant, step. Never underestimate the importance of it! It will require lowering your expectations of man, and raising them of God.

Many authoritarian Christians, once they escape the grip of an autocratic leadership, find themselves adrift, unable to think clearly about anything, confused and disoriented. They are used to being told what to do. They have had faith and confidence in men, rather than in God. Consequently, they have in place no critical thinking skills. They are accustomed to complying with a group standard arbitrarily imposed by leadership. Consequently, they find that they have no moral compass of their own. The journey to faith in God is a frightening one. Yet, Jeremiah also wrote: "But blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in Him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream" (Jeremiah 17:7-8).

If we can learn to have faith in God rather than in man, we will have made a giant spiritual leap forward. God, not human leadership, is the proper object of faith (Mark 11:22).

## Human Leadership in Perspective

This is not to say that we should disrespect human leadership. Paul wrote, "Follow me as I follow Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). The operative term here is "as." We should follow human leaders to the degree that they live exemplary lives and teach authentic, Christian truth. Yet no man should be the object of faith. That is reserved for God alone.

Building the faith of God's people in God ought to be one of the premier tasks of true ministers of God. The purpose of the various ministerial roles is "...to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12-13).

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# Do Tsunamis Come in Super-size?

by William A. Hoesch and Steven A. Austin\*

(\*William Hoesch, M.S. geology, is Research Assistant in Geology, and Steven Austin, Ph.D. geology, is Chairman of the Geology Department, both at ICR.)

Fast-food consumables like french fries are known to come in "super-size." According to Hollywood, tsunamis do also. But is there scientific evidence for super-size tsunamis in the past? The Indian Ocean tragedy has brought attention to the fact that these large water waves rank among earth's most severe natural disasters. Because water is incompressible, disturbance at the ocean floor generates a surface wave. In deep water such waves propagate at speeds (celerity) as high as 800 kilometers per hour, and their passage through the deep ocean is barely perceptible. As water depths shallow, however, wave energy becomes packed into a smaller column of water, the wave slows, or "shoals," and its form builds to fearsome proportions.

## The Indian Ocean Tsunami of 2004

The catastrophe began on December 26, 2004, with a magnitude 9.0 earthquake in the deep-water Sunda Trench offshore Sumatra. Within 3–4 minutes, a 1200 kilometer-long rupture opened the seafloor, and a region roughly the length and half the width of California was displaced vertically by about two meters. The work involved is a measure of the raw energy imparted to the tsunami. In this case, it was equivalent to about 100 Hiroshima-sized atomic bombs. Directly east of the epicenter lies the coastline of Sumatra's Aceh province which experienced wave run-ups as high as 30 meters above sea level (height of a ten-story building). Across the Indian Ocean, the Sri Lanka coast received devastating waves with run-ups to 10 meters. Hollywood imagery of steep-fronted and curling waves may appear spectacular, but are generally not true. Rather, tsunamis are best likened to an advancing plateau of water, and the shape of the wave front has probably less significance than the mass of water behind it. Both the rushing waves and receding waves do geologic work, creating distinctive sedimentary deposits.

## Earthquake-generated Waves

Four mechanisms are responsible for most, if not all, tsunamis: earthquake, landslide, volcano, or extraterrestrial impact. The Indian Ocean tsunami was an example of the earthquake-generated type, but there have been many others. In 1775 a big wave struck Lisbon,

Portugal, following an estimated 8.7M earthquake that reduced that nation's shipping industry and navy to a shambles overnight. A seismically active deep-sea trench very similar to the Sunda Trench seems poised off the Washington-Oregon coast. Evidence for several tsunami strikes over the past few hundred years has been found by geologists in the coastal marshes of the Pacific Northwest.<sup>2</sup> The tsunamis in these cases were probably comparable in size to the December 26, 2004, Indian Ocean event.

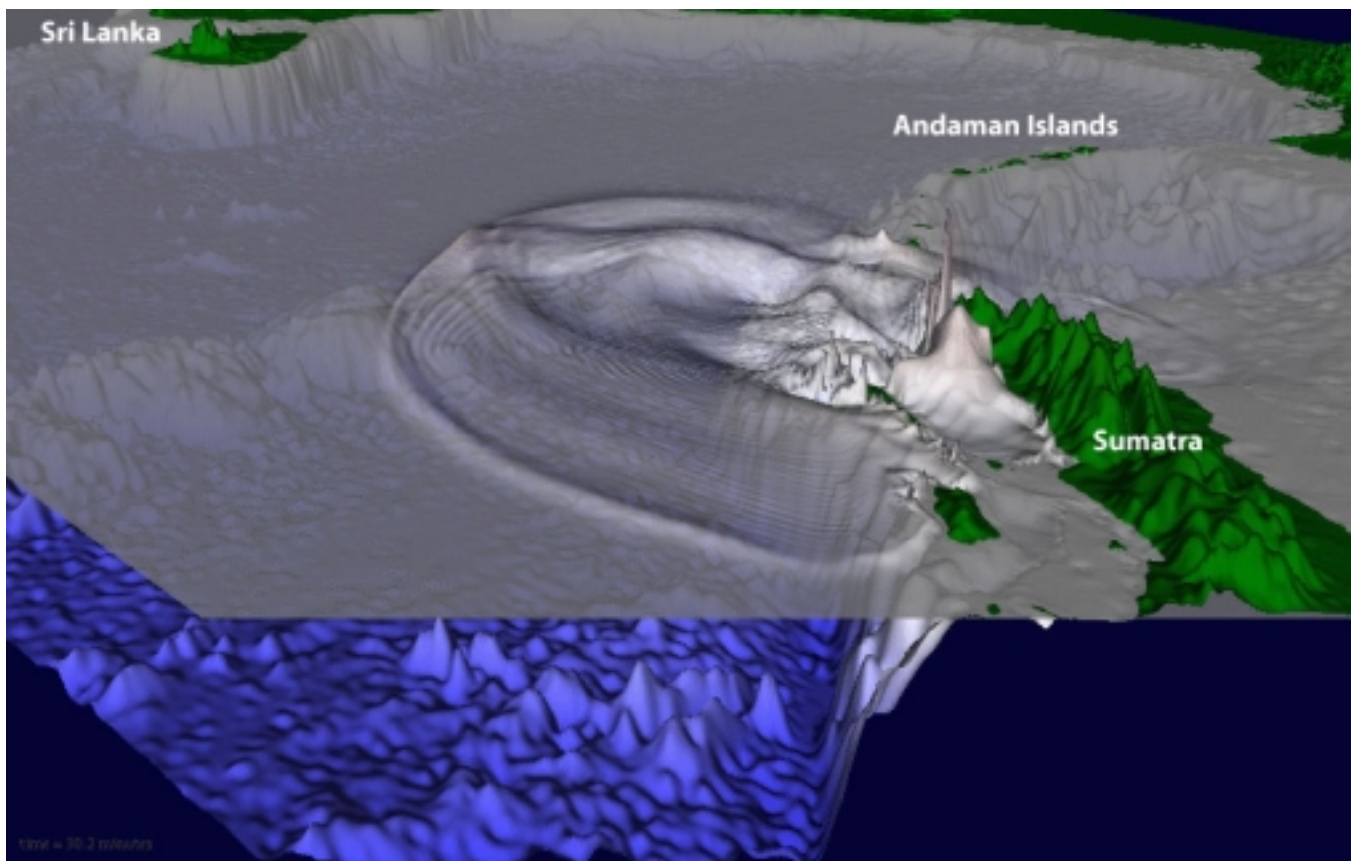
Shallow-focus earthquakes, the kind that generate most tsunamis, seem to be size and energy limited. Deep-focus earthquakes, on the other hand, are generated by an entirely different process. Low density minerals (like olivine) can transform to higher-density minerals (like spinel and perovskite), abruptly changing the volume of rocks.<sup>3</sup> Volume reduction associated with this sudden phase-change is capable of delivering an immense seismic jolt. Historic deep-focus earthquakes may represent mere residual stresses left over from much greater, planet-wide plate movements that are modeled to have accompanied the Genesis Flood. Magnitude-13 earthquakes and greater are conceivable during this time of theoretical whole-mantle overturn.<sup>4</sup> Herein lies a mechanism for generating "super-size" tsunamis in the past.

## Landslide-generated Waves

Big waves that struck the sparsely populated Newfoundland coast in 1929 and the north coast of Papua New Guinea in 1998 testify to landslide processes. Landslide scarps and debris deposits from both tsunamis have been located on the ocean floor.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the evidence for past tsunamis can be found by wash marks on shore, or, indirectly, in the form of large landslides, scarps, and debris piles lying on the deep ocean floor.

Landslide debris covers the mostly underwater Hawaiian Ridge over an area that is five times greater than the area of the Hawaiian Islands themselves.<sup>6</sup> Individual landslides have been identified that are as large as 17,000 cubic kilometers. Underwater mapping reveals a lumpy appearance to the deposits that is strikingly similar to that left by the 1980 Mount St. Helens landslide, only 1000 times larger. These landslides must





*Tsunami wave field in the Bay of Bengal. View to the north west, focused near the earthquake epicenter (northern Sumatra).—US Geological Survey*

have traveled underwater at speeds on the order of 100 kilometers per hour and unquestionably caused monstrous tsunamis. But how big were they? Basalt cobbles and reef debris found 375 meters above present sea level on the island of Lanai, testify that waves ten times the height of those that recently struck Sumatra washed the debris onto the Hawaiian mountainsides. Similar landslide debris offshore from both New Jersey and Oregon testify of enormous past tsunamis that struck the U.S. mainland.<sup>7</sup>

The largest landslide-generated tsunami appears to have occurred when the entire continental shelf surrounding the Gulf of Mexico gave way, and produced 200-meter-plus tsunamis across that region.<sup>8</sup> The trigger for this simultaneous collapse across such a large area is postulated to have been the Chicxulub (extraterrestrial) impact on Mexico's Yucatan peninsula. Some of North America's largest oilfields owe their existence to sediments moved by this tsunami.<sup>9</sup> Oilfield geologists take catastrophic geology seriously in the Gulf region.

### **Volcanic-collapse Generated Waves**

Large composite-cone volcanoes usually collapse inward after eruption and form a crater like depression called a caldera. If near sea level, the sudden rush of ocean waters into a hot and instantly formed caldera

can generate impressive tsunamis. The crater left by the explosion of Krakatoa (1883) in Indonesia's Sunda Strait measures about 5 kilometers by 6 kilometers. The sudden infilling of this caldera with seawater is the probable cause for tsunami wave runups of 37 meters on neighboring coastlines that killed 36,000 people. Santorini Volcano in the Aegean Sea erupted explosively around 1490 B.C., and left a caldera of about 8 by 11 kilometers, over ten times the collapsed volume of Krakatoa. Sea-borne pumice deposits 250 meters above sea level on the nearby island of Anaphi, and an unusual deep-sea deposit tens of meters thick across much of the eastern Mediterranean, have both been attributed to the Santorini tsunami.<sup>10</sup> Globally, at least 37 volcanic craters are known to be more than ten times bigger than Santorini and Krakatoa, and many of these are found at, or near sea level.<sup>11</sup> Certainly volcanic-collapse generated waves, including some of super-size, played a major role in earth history.

### **Impact-generated Waves**

Craters and suspected craters have been found in continental margins that record at least 18 large asteroid or comet impact events.<sup>12</sup> Despite the lack of historical precedent, tsunamis of potentially super-size by impact have occurred in the past. The 90-kilometer-diameter Chesapeake Bay structure lies

beneath 400-500 meters of coastal sediments in northeastern Virginia.<sup>13</sup> Seismic imagery reveals a near circular crater as deep as Grand Canyon and encompassing an area twice that of Rhode Island. Waters that rushed into this instantly formed crater must have generated outward-bound waves with initial or "primary" heights of up to 500 meters, modeling predicts, which probably put the Appalachian foothills underwater.

Impacts of much larger proportions struck when most of the continent was under water, probably during Noah's Flood. Across a 10,000 square kilometer area in southern Nevada, disrupted limestone blocks and as many as five graded beds occur, as if great tsunamis sorted debris by size.<sup>14</sup> The Manson impact structure, located in north-central Iowa, also took place when the continent was underwater, and is associated with a widespread limestone tsunami deposit.<sup>15</sup>

### Do Tsunamis Have a Size Limit?

Life on our blue planet has had to cope with tsunamis of super-size, even in human history. Science has discovered this fact. What is the size limit for tsunamis? An ancient text says, "In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened" (Genesis 7:11). The text provides the date, the duration, the depth and the extent of a seafloor disturbance that began a Flood affirmed to be worldwide by the prophet Moses, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the apostle Peter. If this really happened in the fabric of space-time history, it surely would have created the greatest of tsunamis. As the people of South Asia pick up the pieces from the Indian Ocean catastrophe, perhaps they will discover a new and unique perspective on this passage of Scripture. May they find the Ark of salvation that is in the Lord Jesus Christ.

### Endnotes

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# The Fire, the Water, & the Desert

## Three Elements Necessary for Divine Revelation

by Daniel Botkin



When Israel received the Torah at Mount Sinai, the revelation of God's Word was given in the context of fire, water, and the desert. "And Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because Yahweh descended on it in fire," and "Yahweh spake with you in the mount out of the midst of the fire," Moses said (Ex. 19:18 and Deut. 9:10). Later, in the Song of Moses, the revelation of God's Word is compared to water: "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distill as the dew as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass" (Deut. 32:2). The same Song of Moses mentions the desert as the place where Israel received instruction. "He [Yahweh] found him [Israel] in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; He led him about. He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye" (Deut. 32:10).

Thus we see that the revelation of God's Word to Israel is connected to these three elements, the fire, the water, and the desert. We need to experience these three elements in a spiritual sense if we want to receive Divine revelation from God's written Word, the Holy Scriptures.

Some people read the Bible as nothing more than literature or history. If that is all you want to get out of reading the Bible, you do not need to experience the fire, the water, and desert for that. The Bible is a great literary masterpiece and a good source of historical information, but the Word of God is meant to be much more than that. It is meant to be a source of revelation to God's people. Paul's prayer for the believers in Ephesus was "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, The Father of Glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him (Eph. 1:17). If we want to receive the spirit of wisdom and revelation, we need to experience the fire, the water, and the desert. Let's consider each of these three elements.

### THE FIRE

The revelation of the Torah was received in the context of fire, and the spirit of wisdom and revelation must also be received in the context of fire. Fire speaks of God's holiness. "For our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29). The fire of God's holiness burns away

the worthless wood, hay, and stubble in our lives, purifying the gold, silver, and precious stones (see 1 Corinthians 3:10-15).

Because of its purging, purifying, cleansing effect, fire speaks of perfecting holiness in the fear of God: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7:1).

Notice from the above verse that the fire of God's holiness affects us both internally and externally. We are to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh (which speaks of external holiness) and spirit (which speaks of internal holiness).

Some churches emphasize only (or primarily) external holiness—modest dress, abstinence from smoking and drinking and worldly entertainment, etc.—but ignore the importance of inward purity of heart. They shun any and all outward forms of worldliness, but like the hypocrites of Yeshua's time, they are white-washed tombs full of dead men's bones.

Other churches emphasize only (or primarily) internal holiness of heart, but have little or no concern about externals such as dress, bad habits, worldly entertainment, etc. "It's what's in your heart that really matters," they say, implying that the externals are of very little importance.

The biblical view of holiness is not an either/or option. Biblical holiness is a fire that purges both internally and externally. This truth is seen in other verses which refer to both internal and external holiness:

"Who shall ascend into the hill of Yahweh? Or who shall stand in His holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart" (Ps. 24:3f). Clean hands speak of external holiness; a pure heart speaks of internal holiness.

"Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded" (James 4:8). Here again we see external holiness in clean hands and internal holiness in purified hearts.

"For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's"

(1 Cor. 6:20). Glorifying God in both the body and spirit speaks of holiness which is both external and internal.

External and internal holiness are both necessary if we want to receive divine revelation when we read the Scriptures. Peter tells us that the Holy Scriptures were written when “holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:21). Consider this well: If it took holy men of God moved by the Holy Spirit to pen the Holy Scriptures, then it is reasonable to conclude that it will take holy men of God moved by the Holy Spirit to receive divine revelation from the Holy Scriptures.

According to the Bible, the holy fire of God literally fell from heaven on a few occasions. Sometimes it fell to consume the wicked; sometimes it fell to show God’s approval and acceptance of the sacrifice that was laid on the altar. It never fell on an empty altar, though. The fire does not fall unless there is a sacrifice on the altar. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service,” Paul wrote (Rom. 12:1). Paul was not concerned only about external holiness, “your bodies,” though. His concern for internal holiness is evident in the very next verse, where he says, “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.” The renewing of the mind brings us to our next element, water.

## **THE WATER**

“Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind,” Paul says. Our minds are renewed as they are sanctified and cleansed “with the washing of water by the word” (Eph. 5:26). Just as old leather wineskins were renewed in biblical times by soaking them in water, so our minds are renewed by saturating them in the water of God’s Word.

When a man first comes to the Lord, his mind is like an old, dried-up wineskin—stiff, brittle, inflexible. In this carnal condition, the mind can receive very little divine revelation. If very much new wine is poured into an old wineskin, the wineskin will burst. Too much revelation poured into a carnal mind will blow that mind. The mind has to be soaked in the Word of God so it will become pliable. Flexibility is necessary, because the mind must conform to the shape of the new wine of Divine revelation which is being poured in.

A dried-up wineskin has to soak in water for a considerable length of time before it is renewed and ready to receive the new wine. A quick dip won’t do the job. In the same way, our mind has to spend a lot of time soaking up the water of the Word of God through prayerful reading and deep, focused meditation on the Scriptures.

Sometimes the Scriptures seem to yield no water. Sometimes the Bible seems dry even to a thirsty soul.

Yet we know that the wells of water are found in the Scriptures. How is it that the wells sometimes yield no water?

Isaac had the same problem. His father Abraham had dug several wells. When Isaac brought his flocks and herds to these wells, he discovered that the envious Philistines had filled the wells with earth.

What did Isaac do? He got the rubbish out of the wells and re-dug them and found the water he needed. This is what we have to do. We need to remove the rubbish of our own sins, the rubbish of worldly ways, the rubbish of those man-made traditions and doctrines which block the flow of the Spirit. We need to dig and re-dig in our study of God’s Word and remove the “earth” from our theology. We need to quit looking at things from an earthly perspective, and look at things from the heavenly perspective. Otherwise, the waters of revelation will not flow.

Re-digging the old wells of his father Abraham brought strife into Isaac’s life. “And the herdmen of Gerar did strive with Isaac’s herdmen, saying, ‘the water is ours’” (Gen. 26:20).

When we start removing rubbish from old wells that the Enemy long ago filled with earth, it will bring strife into our lives. For example, when we begin to quench our spiritual thirst at the well called Sabbath, well-meaning Christians will warn us that these waters are not for us. Or when we swallow the revelation that our faith in Israel’s Messiah makes us a part of the commonwealth of Israel, well-meaning Jewish believers will strive with us, saying, “The title of Israel is ours and ours alone! You can’t drink from that well!” Sorry, brothers, but it’s too late. We Gentiles—former Gentiles, actually—have already tasted the living waters from the wells of Yeshua, and those waters turned us into full-fledged Israelites. But not to worry—there’s plenty of water for all of us, an endless supply! So drink up. You’re going to need water where we’re going—which brings us to the third element necessary for Divine revelation, the desert.

## **THE DESERT**

Yahweh led Israel deep into the desert before He took them into the Promised Land. He chose to reveal Himself and His Torah in “the waste howling wilderness,” far away from the worldly splendor of Egypt. The desert is bare and barren and does not bear the mark of man’s meddling. There is a purity in the desert. It is virgin territory, where God’s expression of Himself is not filtered through the clutter of human culture and civilization. If you go deep into the desert at night, you will be aware of nothing except the silence of the stars and the Voice of God.

The clearest revelation of the Almighty is given to those who figuratively go into the desert. Our minds

are crowded and cluttered with lies, misinformation, and vain thoughts which have seeped into our thinking from the world around us. To think rightly, we have to restore our spiritual sanity by separating ourselves from the culture that surrounds us. We do not need to physically and geographically go into the desert; we just have to spiritually and mentally separate ourselves from the world around us, so that we are in the world but not of the world.

It's okay to be thankful that we are American citizens living in 21<sup>st</sup> century America, but we must not let 21<sup>st</sup>-century American culture affect how we view the Scriptures. To receive divine revelation from the Scriptures, we must approach them without our 21<sup>st</sup>-century American eyeglasses, because those eyeglasses will distort our spiritual vision. If we want divine revelation from the Bible, we must forget our own time, our own nationality, our own culture, and even our own family. None of these things should dictate our view of the Scriptures. If we want divine revelation, we need to look at the naked truth of God's Word apart from the influence of our times, our nationality, our culture, and our family.

"Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house" (Ps. 45:10). These are the instructions to the Bride of Messiah in Psalm 45. The Book of Hebrews tells us that Psalm 45 speaks of the Messiah. (See Hebrews 1:8f.) Psalm 45 presents the Messiah as a Warrior King going to battle against the Enemy. The Messiah King's victory is followed by a description of His Bride. To fully appreciate the words spoken to the Bride in this Psalm, we need to consider Deuteronomy 21:10-13. These verses give instructions concerning captives taken in war. If a man sees a woman among the captives and wants to marry her, the woman must do five things. She must go to the man's house, shave her head, pare her nails, take off the raiment of her captivity, and mourn her father and mother a full month. After that, she can be the man's bride.

These Torah instructions to a captive bride have a deep spiritual application to the Bride of Messiah. Like the captive Gentile bride who had to shave her head, pare her nails, and take off the raiment of her captivity, we have to strip away our old identity. We have to forget our former Gentile identity, because we are now being joined to Israel through our union with our Israelite Bridegroom, the Messiah. We have to forget our 21<sup>st</sup>-century American identity, because we are entering an eternal kingdom which includes people from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. We even have to forget our family ties if they interfere with our relationship with the King, because He has said, "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me" (Matt. 10:37).

The instructions to the Bride to forget her own people and her father's house are introduced by attention-getting words: "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house" (Ps. 45:10). Notice those words: Hearken. Consider. Incline thine ear. The Holy Spirit wants to be sure that these instructions are heard, considered, and obeyed. The result of hearing, considering, and obeying is expressed in the next verse: "So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for He is thy Lord; and worship thou Him."

If we want to be the Bride whose beauty the King greatly desires, we have to go to the desert. We have to separate ourselves from the world system in which we live, and live a life apart. We are called to live as a holy nation in the midst of a harlot nation, a wilderness people in the midst of a worldly people.

John Owens, a Puritan preacher of long ago, told the church people of his day that some of them were following another Jesus, not the real Jesus. "You have an imaginary Christ," he said, "and if you are satisfied with an imaginary Christ, you must be satisfied with imaginary salvation."

Yeshua, the real Christ, warned that there would be false messiahs. Counterfeit messiahs are not just men who say, "I am the Messiah." Counterfeit messiahs are also the distorted versions of Jesus that are preached from the pulpits of many churches. Paul warned the Corinthians about false religious leaders who were preaching "another Jesus, whom we have not preached" (2 Cor. 11:4). Paul's warning is still relevant today.

We need to be sure that the Jesus we follow is the true Jesus, and not another Jesus we heard about from preachers who don't even know Him. Yeshua of Nazareth is not a Jesus who wants only lip service in the form of a "sinner's prayer." The real Jesus expects a genuine commitment which is expressed by acts of obedience and a life of holiness. The real Jesus expects His people to experience the fire, the water, and the desert. He doesn't expect us to go through these things alone, though. He has promised to go with us:

When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee:

When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am Yahweh they God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour" (Isa. 43:2). □

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## **Viewpoint:**

# **Is God's Love Unconditional?**

## **(Part 1)**

*by Tim Endecott*

*Unconditional.* The word itself stirs emotions in me. Have you ever bought something with an unconditional money-back guarantee? I have.

As I set the item on the service counter, the lady asks, "May I help you?"

"Yes," I reply. "I'm here to return this and get my money back."

She notes the item's less-than-perfect condition and asks, "What's wrong with it?"

I explain that my son left it in the rain once. Then I forgot it on the tailgate of my pickup, and it fell on the road. But none of that matters because of the guarantee. I show the lady again the card from my wallet, with "Unconditional Money-Back Guarantee" in bold print at the top.

She then says something that tells me this is not going to turn out my way. "Sir, you need to read the rest of the card—the 'Terms and Conditions.' See, there at the bottom in fine print."

I would reach for my glasses, but it won't do any good. When someone says "fine print," it never seems to be good news. So my unconditional money-back guarantee has conditions after all. Suddenly, I remember the "bumper-to-bumper" warranty on a car I once bought. It really wasn't bumper-to-bumper, but that's a different story.

Considering God's love, I'm feeling a bit of the same skepticism. I've listened to several messages about unconditional love, and I've preached a few myself. But I can hardly believe that the Creator could love me that way. I need to recheck some fine print.

Most of us can think of someone we love unconditionally: our parents, our spouse, our children. Usually, those people love us the same way. But before we start thinking that makes us pretty special, read this: "But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them" (Luke 6:32).

What about the person who doesn't love us? Just for a moment, think of one person you know who does not like you, and ask yourself if you feel the same way

about him. Now compare this: "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

If God's love were as fickle as ours, we might wonder whether He still loves us when we mess up. But God does not love His creation one day and then quit the next. His love is not dependent upon our conduct. This unconditional love of God is reported from Genesis to Revelation, like this verse in Jeremiah: "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you" (31:3).

The death of Jesus Christ was no accident. Jesus did not die because religious leaders decided to crucify Him or because Pilate chose not to stop it. He was killed because He willingly laid down His life and because it pleased the Father to have Him killed. Imagine! Our Father in heaven was pleased to bruise to death His only begotten Son (Isaiah 53:10).

Read this closely: The greatest example of God's wrath was seen when He allowed His Son to die on the cross. It took Christ's death to satisfy the wrath of God against sin. And the greatest example of God's love was seen when He allowed His Son to die on the cross. It took Christ's death to show us just how much God loves us.

Our heavenly Father knew that by permitting His Son to die, many sons would be brought to glory. He had you and me in His heart when Christ was killed. If that isn't unconditional love!

The difference between the fine print on my unconditional money-back guarantee card and that in God's Word is that the fine print on my card makes the guarantee worth less—almost worthless. The fine print in the Word of God makes His unconditional love even more marvelous and reassuring.

I still get a little skeptical at times, but His love is still working on me.

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*Tim Endecott serves with the Church of God, 7<sup>th</sup> Day in Marion, Iowa, and as superintendent of the Central District.*



# Is God's Love Unconditional?

## (Part 2)

by Calvin Burrell

"Yes, God's love is unconditional," many say, and with good reason. It's the right answer for every repentant sinner and every struggling believer. Though we've failed God a thousand times, His mercy to the humble is not limited by our sins; His love endures forever (Psalm 136).

For most of us, this assurance of unconditional love does not become a license to sin. Rather, it frees us from a focus on performance and orients us to a grace-based faith, actually energizing us for greater obedience!

This understanding, true enough as far as it goes, is what most people have in mind when they speak of God's unconditional love. All of us will need it often along the journey.

But more must be said. What follows will not negate the free flow of God's grace to every humble heart but will speak of His love in closer context and with finer nuance.

*Unconditional* means without requirements or limits—no strings attached. If God's love is fully unconditional, then it is universal in scope, eternal in duration, and unaffected by human response. It implies that God does not love anyone more because of faith and conduct or less by the lack thereof, and He never will.

One can make a fair case that God loves like this. He is generous to all His creatures (Acts 14:17; 17:24–27; 1 Timothy 6:17b). His love for Israel was not contingent, but constant through their unfaithfulness (Deuteronomy 7:7, 8; Hosea 3:1; 14:4). God loves strangers—even His enemies (Deuteronomy 10:18; Matthew 5:44–48). He loved the whole world and paid the ultimate price for sinners (John 3:16; Romans 5:8). Love is God's essence (Jeremiah 31:3; 1 John 4:7–19), and He loves us in these ways—no strings attached—just because He is God.

In this context, *love*, it must be noted, means God's good will and common blessings toward all, His desire and provision for the salvation of all. These are elements of His unconditional love. We don't have to *do* anything to receive it; we just have to *be*!

On the other hand, another level to God's love is not universal and indiscriminate. We will now show that God's *special* love goes beyond creation care and His offer of redemption to all.

- God's special love is **elective**. He chose Jacob instead of Esau: "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated" (Romans 9:13; Malachi 1:3).
- God's special love is **redemptive**. It operates toward those who trust Him in a way that it does not toward those who choose iniquity (Isaiah 63:9; Ephesians 2:4–10).
- God's special love is **filial**—inherited. His love for His children means that they experience nurture and correction from the Father in a way that others do not: "Whom the Lord loves, He chastens ..." (Hebrews 12:6, 7; Proverbs 3:12).
- God's special love for the generous is **different** from His love for the greedy: "God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7).
- God's special love is **reciprocal**: "He who loves me will be loved by My Father" (John 14:21, 23; 16:27; also Proverbs 8:17), and its maturity in us is **conditional**: "If we love one another ... His love has been perfected in us" (1 John 4:12).
- God's special love is **discriminatory** between good and evil (Psalm 45:7; Isaiah 61:8). He uniquely loves those who love Him and keep His commandments (Exodus 20:6; Jeremiah 32:18). To those who persist in evil, He says, "I hated them.... I will love them no more" (Hosea 9:15; Proverbs 6:16–19).

These are the conditions God's Word imposes on God's love. Far from causing despair, they lead us to Christ by whom God's love is poured into us through the Spirit (John 3:16; Romans 5:5). As we continue to receive His love through Christ, nothing can separate us from Him (Romans 8:35).

God generously loves everyone as Creator, Sustainer, and Provider. Beyond that, He graciously loves believers as their Savior and King. The special favors of His love—forgiveness, eternal life—are given only to His redeemed children, those who walk in faith and obedience. Thus, these favors are conditional.

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Calvin Burrell is the editor of the *Bible Advocate* and a board member of the Bible Sabbath Association.

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"the birth of the Torah" is considered to be the date at which the nation of Israel became a constitutional body and a special treasure unto God. Israel accepted God's requirements and He, in turn, possessed them as His own people.

Every Christian rightly associates Pentecost with the coming of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the Church. It is the day when the God of Israel began to write His law into the minds and hearts of the people (Hebrews 10:15-17). Thousands were baptized, people heard the Apostles speaking in the languages of the Diaspora. It was just as Jesus said; the Apostles would be imbued with power from on high. It was a spectacular event. The Holy Spirit descended on the Apostles like tongues of fire. Miracles were performed. People witnessed firsthand the power of the coming Kingdom of God as it filled the Apostles. And, most important, people learned about the One who sent that power—the same One who died and rose from the dead, the One who lived and taught among the people for 40 days after his resurrection.

What is puzzling to me is that many Christians do not associate that day of Pentecost with the life and times of the people of Israel. Yet, if these observant Jews had not come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Weeks that year, the Church would have been born with a whimper and not a loud cry.

Pentecost has everything to do with the continuation of the nation of Israel, not its demise. At Pentecost in the year of our Lord's crucifixion, God took a faithful remnant of Jews and began to rebuild the nation of Israel through them. The foundation for that rebuilding was Christ, the Cornerstone, and the apostles, as well as the prophets of Israel. Through that faithful remnant, the Lord refashioned Israel, not in the image of the faithless Pharisees and Sadducees, but in the likeness of the father of the faithful, Abraham, and his faithful Son, Jesus Christ. It was Jesus, like Moses and Joshua before him, leading the way to the Promised Land. Only the faithful were bound to follow and ultimately possess the land. In this case, the land to be possessed was not a piece of real estate in the Middle East, but the world itself under the King of kings and Lord of lords. It was not to be possessed in terms of land titles and deeds, but in the bringing of righteousness to every man, woman, and child. As those transformed Jews on that special Pentecost went out from Jerusalem to their own lands, they took the message and the power that they now possessed from God and began to speak of the great things the Lord had done in Jerusalem. In so doing, they transformed the cultures of entire nations.

Yet, God did an even more amazing thing than this. He repeated the miracle of Pentecost in the house of Cornelius, the Roman Centurion (Acts 10). Beginning with Cornelius and his household, He began to graft into the remnant of Israel the faithful believers of all nations. From that point forward any man, woman, or child, no matter what his country of origin, could, through faith in Christ, become a child of Abraham and an Israelite (Galatians 3:29, Ephesians 2:12-13).

The message that the apostle Peter preached on Pentecost when the Lord sent His Holy Spirit came straight from the Hebrew Scriptures—from the prophet Joel. It was about how the Lord would bring salvation to the remnant of His people: "And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, as the LORD has said, among the remnant whom the LORD calls" (See Joel 2:32 and Acts 2:21).

The day of Pentecost gives every Christian much to think about. It is a holy day whose influence is waning, but its important place in the plan of God should never be overlooked. It marks the beginning of the spreading of the good news of Christ and the power of His kingdom. It is also a witness to the world that He will return and possess the kingdoms of this world (Revelation 11:15). As this special day approaches, take some time to allow its powerful significance to renew your zeal for the Church's mission in this world.

—Kenneth Ryland

## **Scholarship Essay Contest 2005**

We are now taking applications for our 2005 Scholarship Essay Contest. If you are a college student or are planning to attend college in the near future, write us for a contest application and rules for this year's contest.

For 2005 the amount of scholarship money has been increased to \$1500 for first place, \$1000 for second, and \$500 for third. There will only be three prizes given in 2005, and native English speakers and those who speak English as a second language will have an equal chance of winning.

If you as a BSA member or reader of *The Sabbath Sentinel* would like to donate specifically to our scholarship contest fund, just write on the check "Scholarship Fund," and your donation will be separated into a fund designated only for our scholarship essay contest.

## Dr. Stanley's Findings

When Dr. Stanley arrived in Israel in July 2004, he found that Israelis have some creative ways of circumventing the spirit of the land sabbath commandment. For example, since trees housed indoors are exempt from the sabbatical prohibition on pruning, one nursery has a portable canopy that it places over a tree as it is being tended during a *shemittah* year. The tree technically counts as being indoors while it is under the canopy.

On the other hand, since 1972 there has been a growing trend in actual sabbatical observance among Israeli farmers. Some farmers simply let their land go untended. Others harvest a crop but donate it to a central storehouse that sells the food to the poor at reduced prices. Participating farmers are reimbursed for their labor but not for their produce.

During his visit to Israel, Dr. Stanley interviewed a number of *shemittah*-observing farmers to learn something about their experiences. A number of farmers spoke of the sacrifices they willingly made in keeping the land sabbath. A wheat farmer mentioned that wheat is planted in the late autumn during an ordinary year, shortly before anticipated winter rains. But since the *shemittah* year begins at Rosh Hoshanah, farmers plant the wheat a couple of months early in those years and hope for the best. This farmer, who participates in the food storehouse program, estimated that his farm loses about 2-2.5 million shekels (\$450,000 to \$570,000[US]) by observing the sabbatical year.

Some of the interviewed farmers spoke of miracles and blessings that occurred during a *shemittah* year. A fruit grower recalled that in one sabbatical year, an unusually warm March had been followed by a late freeze in April, causing damage to that year's fruit crop. Farmers who had pruned their trees had very little fruit that year, while those who had left their trees unpruned had a nearly normal crop. In another *shemittah* year, heavy winds had caused damage to the fruit crop, but again those who had left their trees unpruned sustained far less damage.

Other farmers mentioned the value of the extra time available for family activities and Torah study during a *shemittah* year. For these farmers, the sabbatical year had been a life-changing experience, strengthening relationships with God and family.

The next *shemittah* year will begin at Rosh Hoshanah in 2007. Stanley noted that there is already much discussion of this upcoming event in the Israeli press.

In Jewish tradition (based on Deut. 11:8-11), the land Sabbath is only applicable in the land of Israel. According to this tradition, God has a special relation-

ship with the Promised Land. However, one rabbi told Dr. Stanley that such a relationship might extend to the entire world during the time of the Messianic Kingdom. Stanley wonders if communities of Christian farmers might also benefit from the adoption of some form of sabbatical observance. Sabbatical principles should be of benefit to all followers of the God of Israel by allowing them to periodically rest from their labors and find rest in their Creator.

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*Doug is a Ph. D. and professor of mathematics at Miami University in Ohio. He and his wife have four children. He is a student of the Hebrew roots of Christianity and publishes a quarterly journal, **Grace & Knowledge** which he sends free of charge (write him at 307 N. Elm St., Oxford, OH 45056; e-mail: wardde@muohio.edu). Doug is an independent Sabbatarian who fellowships with various groups.*

## **Bible Sabbath Association Expands to the United Kingdom**

Robert Taylor, a 30-year-old single man, has founded The Bible Sabbath Association in the United Kingdom. Robert lived in South Africa from 1976 to 1989, where he began reading The Plain Truth magazine and increased his knowledge of the Bible. He emigrated back to England where he now resides.



Taylor has been a member of the Sabbath community since 1991, being called by God in his early teens. He joined the Worldwide Church of God at the age of 16. He diligently studied the Bible to find out the answers to life's questions, and was perplexed by the answers found in the Bible in light of his upbringing in the Church of England.

Robert Taylor recently founded the Bible Sabbath Association in the United Kingdom. He says it was "after my deep desire to serve the people of God in the United Kingdom through a process of reconciliation amongst the various Sabbatarian organisations." Mr. Taylor is distributing *The Sabbath Sentinel* magazine in the United Kingdom and Europe, as well as BSA literature in the region. The Gillette, Wyoming, BSA office plans to bulk ship materials to Robert Taylor for European distribution. Visit the BSA United Kingdom website: <http://www.biblesabbath.org.uk>. Taylor's E-mail address is [robert@biblesabbath.org.uk](mailto:robert@biblesabbath.org.uk). You may wish to write him at: PO Box 2086, Abbeylea, Gloucester, GL4 4WD, UNITED KINGDOM, telephone: 01452 417116. Robert brings to the BSA a great deal of enthusiasm for spreading the Sabbath truth. I am looking forward to working with Robert Taylor!

— by Richard C. Nickels

Ministers should be faith-builders, not faith-busters. We should be building up the Body, imparting knowledge, and fostering spiritual maturity in the Church. This is a weighty responsibility. We cannot afford to be cavalier about it.

A true servant of God is more interested in building people's relationship with God than with himself. He points them God-ward, not self-ward. He does what he can to encourage God, not man, to be the object of the Christian's faith.

Real Christianity must be portable. It cannot depend upon one's association with a particular denomination, pastor or congregation. These configurations are all temporary. God alone is permanent, unchanging and omnipresent. Who you are when you think no one is watching is who you really are. We are most "real" when we are alone with God. Our relationship with Him must be one-on-one. It must carry us through any form of isolation from our human support system.

If we find ourselves alone in a hospital room, at the mercy of a medical bureaucracy and a gaggle of domineering know-it-all nurses and doctors who couldn't care less about our wishes, it is our faith in God that can pull us through.

If we wind up in prison, as have many Christians down through the centuries, we must rely on the Lord to support us. We have heard the testimony of Chinese Christians who have suffered enormously in Chinese prisons for their faith. Some have died in those prisons. As Paul wrote, "Whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's" (Romans 14:8). We were "bought with a price" (1 Corinthians 6:20), and the Lord will not discard what He has purchased with his own shed blood (Romans 1:6). The writer of Hebrews captures this thought in Hebrews 13:5-6: "Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you,' so we may say with confidence, 'The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid, what can man do to me?'"

Peter taught, "We must obey God rather than men!" (Acts 5:29).

Jesus instructed us: "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28).

If, when we age, we find ourselves "warehoused" in a costly nursing home staffed by abusive attendants who barely speak English, we can trust in the Lord to get us through the ordeal. Though our families may abandon us to the mercy of strangers, God will not be a stranger to us if we place faith in Him.

No matter what dire straights we find ourselves in, Jesus says to his people, "I am with you always, to

the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20b). We can count on the Lord, but not on man. In the world of man, life is cheap and getting cheaper. As we age, we are progressively devalued by society, by our families, and by the institutions around which society is built. At some point, we become downright invisible – yet we will always be both precious and visible to God.

Even when we find ourselves helpless, or at the mercy of men, or inconvenienced relatives, as was Terri Schiavo, God is with us for we are precious to Him. He will not allow us to slip through the cracks. Sometimes the Lord allows men to have their way with us because he has better things in mind: "The righteous perish, and no one ponders it in his heart; devout men are taken away, and no one understands that the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil. Those who walk uprightly shall enter into peace; they find rest as they lie in death" (Isaiah 57:1-2).

### **Dante's Inferno Writ Large?**

There is much evil in our world. In some situations it may be better to be dead than alive in such a world. Surely the cries of a world in pain rise to the ears of God, and not without result. The world is an increasingly dangerous place, especially for Christians. For millions, life is a living hell that looks like a painting by Hieronymus Bosch or a scene out of Dante's Inferno. Yet it is a world of our own devising. Society's holocausts are the result of evil men and women doing evil things. Life, as it unfolds, is largely cause and effect. Man, cut off from his Creator, can create only hells, infernos and holocausts. The prophet Isaiah wrote of ancient Israel: "...your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear...The way of peace they do not know; there is no justice in their paths..."(Isaiah 59:2, 8). The prophet's words ring true today do they not?

The word "peace" here is *shalom*. It means "completeness, soundness, welfare, peace." Without God, and without Jesus, God's Anointed One, the world is unsound, incomplete, filled with wars and terrors, pain and unbearable suffering. We can thank human leadership, which has provided opportunity for the devil, for the state of the world and of the Church.

### **The World to Come**

In the world to come, we will have occasion to thank God and His Messiah for the "restitution of all things" (Acts 3:21). God has a plan of redemption for planet Earth. All that the first Adam has undone, the second Adam will restore.

No matter the chaos that surrounds us, there is only one conclusion for the true Christian: "Have faith in God" (Mark 11:22). When all of the world's systems collapse around us, God will remain solid, immovable—"eternal in the heavens." The Lord is the Rock of our salvation. He alone can be counted on in a pinch. God's



redemptive purposes will not be denied. His will, will be accomplished in the world. God alone is the legitimate object of faith. We must have faith in Him, and we must be faithful to him, for God is faithful to His children. As Paul told the Athenian philosophers, "In Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28).

If we wrap our lives in a bundle with God, then God will ever be with us. God alone is reliable, trustworthy, pure of heart, and all for us. God's children are precious to Him. He will not abandon us, though at times he may correct us for "...the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son" (Hebrews 12:6).

Some things happen to us because they need to happen for our own spiritual development. Other things happen simply because we are Christians. Still others occur because of our own sins. Not a few things happen because of "time and chance"—i.e.: being in the wrong place at the wrong time. All of it – the pain and the pleasure – are part of life on this planet. We all share in its up and down sides.

### **A Word of Qualification**

I am not saying that everything mankind does is evil. The state of the world is a mixed bag. Much of what happens is because of sin – missing the mark of the divine standard. Sometimes, however, people do things right. As Paul reminds us, "Even the gentiles, who have not the Law, do by nature things contained in the Torah" (Romans 2:14). When we do things right, accidentally or on purpose, it pays positive dividends.

Science is morally neutral. When we do things scientifically, like sending rockets into space or building massive bridges and buildings, they work. An automobile works because it is scientifically designed to work.

Civilization is civilized to the extent that it operates within the laws of science and divine morality. On the other hand, science in the hands of a madman or a megalomaniac is a dangerous thing. No human being could ever be trusted with ultimate power. Power does corrupt. Few of us handle it well. That's part of the reason we're here: to learn how to handle power (*cf.* Luke 19:17). Until we do, we need checks and balances. Humanistically speaking, democracy founded upon Judeo-Christian values is the best system yet devised for bringing about peace, order and prosperity in the world. It's far from a perfect system. In our time, even this system is decaying from slow rot. Its institutions are being compromised. The balances of power are being upset. Our Western culture is drifting inexorably into secular socialism – and that means the erosion of Judeo-Christian standards, and the rise of the all-powerful State. In today's America, the Constitution is being undermined by activist judges on the Left who are making rulings contrary to the spirit of the Constitution.

If you step back even farther and study the whole organic human culture, you will note a steady drift in the direction of world government. Once this government is in place, it will not be benign (Revelation 13). Yet its arrival will signal the soon return of *Yeshua ha Meshiach*—Jesus the Messiah.

In a world such as this, there is no justification for placing faith in man. The track record of the human race has been written in its own blood, and the results are there for all to see. After millennia of technological "progress," what have we to show for it but a world in chaos?

Yet, even in the chaos, there is hope. There are flickers of light within the general darkness. The Kingdom of God is in formation. The children of the King are being prepared for a new dawn in which there will be order and *shalom*. Study closely the wording of Isaiah 35. Read also the entirety of Isaiah 11. The second Adam, Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:45), will lead the world to the Father. At the conclusion of His work, God will be "all in all" (1 Corinthians 15:20-28). That glorious state is described in Revelation 21:3-4: "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death, or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.'"

It all boils down to this: No matter how many "isms" mankind invents—Nazism, Communism, Fascism, Islamism, Catholicism or Protestantism—he cannot bring about utopia. Ideas forged in the fires of idealism eventually die in the flames of powerism. Human nature, in all of its grotesque ugliness, inevitably asserts itself in any human system. The lust for power, money and influence tend to corrupt virtually any process. Even as noble a document as the U.S. Constitution has been all but abandoned by our nation's courts and politicians, no matter how often they pay lip service to it. Never listen to what politicians say. Note only what they do.

If you place faith and confidence in men – even the most noble of them – you will eventually be disappointed. Fortunately for all of us, the future does not lie in the hands of men but in the power and goodness of God. He is our only hope.

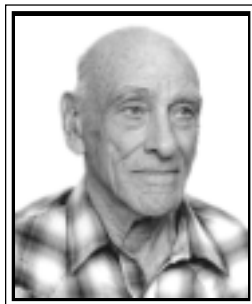
Have faith in God, and whenever or wherever you can, be a faith-builder in others, not a faith-buster. As Jude put it: "But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit" (Jude 20).

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*Reprinted from Brian Knowles' "Out of the Box" column, a regular feature of the Association for Christian Development Web site: <http://www.godward.org/>.*

# Brother Orval Harden

Longtime friend and supporter of the Bible Sabbath Association, Orval Harden, died peacefully at age 97 in his home in Grand View, Idaho, on Feb. 18, 2005.



Orval was born in Cherokee County, Kansas in 1907, the fourth child of John William Erastus Harden and Cora Ann (Belk) Harden. He joined two older sisters, Lola and Leona, and a brother who died shortly after he was born. He worked in his father's tire store in Sabetha, Kansas, in his youth, and acquired a Model T, which he drove to Idaho for a visit when he was 16 years old. His family said that "as he lay on his back at Riggins watching a pack train high up on the mountain coming around the trail, he vowed he'd be back."

He graduated from Sabetha High School and the College of Agriculture at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln. While attending college, he worked at a tire shop and in 1930 met a young graduate nurse, Mada Cathern Furry. They were married in October 1931, although, his family said, she had to promise to move to Idaho. He was still a full time student and working when his first son Duane was born in 1932. He graduated in June 1933, and in July they visited family in route to Idaho—tenting along the way.

They lived in New Plymouth while Orval worked at Cabarton for a logging contractor. When winter snows shut them down they moved to Des Moines, Iowa, where he built houses with his father, and took his Civil Service exams.

Their second son, Hugh, was born in 1934 in Des Moines, which he had described to his family as "a hard depression year."

In March 1935 Orval went to work for the old Bureau of Farm Management and Costs. That job had him in northern Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio. He then went back to school for graduate work at Iowa State University in July 1937.

Their third son, Hal, was born at that time. "Orval seemed to think he was making a more honest living working in the private sector," his family said, so in September 1937 the family moved to Phoenix

## MY GRANDPA

When I heard you left us, my thoughts wandered  
back to a 'younger' time:

...When I was a young girl I rather feared you,  
When I was a bit older I learned to respect you,  
When I was a young woman I revered you,  
And when you got older I wished to honor you.

Some things I remember: The scoldings we received  
The fences we built  
The meals we shared  
Heavy conversations of religion and politics  
The hard work and horseback rides  
Cold winter mornings  
The hearth full of logs  
And in the kitchen smells of potatoes for breakfast

The berries and nuts and sandwiches for brunch  
The toilet outdoors  
The bears in the woods  
The warm feather beds  
Log floors with Grandma's knitted slippers

Family "get-togethers," the Pacific Coast trails  
Your "hard earned" life  
The sides of beef  
The pork from the ceiling  
Your words of wisdom

Your honorable ways And my long walks to school  
The cold winter nights filled with warmth from the fire  
Your books to read and your books you wrote  
Grandma's letters written on bark  
And knowing your bark was worse than your bite!

**Ride on my Grandpa**—and this time, as many times  
before—your horse is your transport, and for me and  
for many, you will always and forever have a place in  
our hearts for all eternity and throughout history,  
old or new.

**I LOVE YOU, YOUR GRANDDAUGHTER,  
SHARON FAY HARDEN**

where he attended trade school and learned the plumbing trade. In 1938 they moved to Nampa, Idaho, where Orval worked as a plumber and Cathern worked as a nurse. They later bought a plumbing business in Grand Junction, Colorado, but business was poor, so Orval took another government job in Amarillo, Texas. Several moves later, in 1940 in Blackwell, Oklahoma, their fourth son Harvey was born. They again headed for Idaho, and partnered with another family to purchase and farm 80 acres south of Meridian, while Orval also worked as a plumber. That farm was eventually sold and the family moved to a better farm near Emmett, where in 1945 his fifth son, Quentin, was born.

They completed their family in 1949 with Orval F., son number six. They lived over twenty years in the same spot near Eagle, during which time the boys grew up.

In 1965 they emigrated to central British Columbia settling at Burns Lake. Orval and one driller operated two rigs, drilling wells from Vanderhoof to Prince Rupert.

Then Orval and Cathern were allowed an agricultural lease on Crown land near Terrace, which they had to develop to acquire title. Orval sold out and retired in 1976. In 1983 they moved to a place on the Moyie River near Yahk, B.C. and continued their snowbird life traveling to California and Mexico in the winter.

Cathern died of cancer in 1988, and Orval moved his residence to Saskatchewan. Orval advertised for a pen pal in *The Sabbath Sentinel*. A friend of Dorothy Childs challenged her to write Orval. Written correspondence between Saskatchewan and Oklahoma soon turned into phone conversations. After a while, Dorothy gave Orval permission to visit and in 1991 two people, each missing happy, lifelong loving mates were soon married. They continued traveling, but now the path from Mendham, Sask. to Bay of Angels, Baja California, was a circuit that included Dorothy's family in Oklahoma.

In 1999 macular degeneration in Orval's eyes forced them to settle down near family. They rented the Heinbach place west of Grand View, Idaho, and in 2002 moved into Grand View to have neighbors closer.

Orval is survived by: his wife Dorothy; sons; Hugh (Gloria) of Mountain Home, Hal (Warrine) of Wenatchee, Wash.; Harvey (Pat) of Sandpoint, Quentin (Kathy) of Bonners Ferry, and Orval (Alinder) of Centennial, Colo.; 13 grandchildren; and 21 great grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his first wife Cathern, his first-born son, and a grandson. Memorials in Orval's name may be made to Rimrock Senior Citizens Center, Grand View, ID 83624.

## Even Man's Wrath Can Praise God

*"Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee" (Psalm 76:10).*

I once read of an infidel who received a tract in the mail entitled "Prepare to Meet Thy God." He was about to throw it into the trash can in disgust when the thought occurred to him to send it as a joke to one of his companions in unbelief. The joke boomeranged, for the second man, who probably would never have taken a tract from a Christian, accepted this one, read it, and was converted. But this was not all. He in turn mailed the tract to a third skeptic, who also accepted Christ.

The "wrath" of unbelievers also has been known to praise God in other ways. Some years ago an avowed atheist and his wife were leaving a house, where they had boarded for several months. As they bade the landlady goodbye, the conversation turned to religion, and the man declared his disbelief in God's existence.

"You mean you do not believe God exists?" the landlady queried.

"No, I do not," the man replied brusquely.

"Well, let me tell you how *you* confirmed my faith in God. You did not know it, of course, but when you and your wife knocked at my door several months ago and asked whether we had a room for rent, my daughter and I were down on our knees, praying that God would send us some means of livelihood. We were out of food and penniless. When we heard your knock we arose, and I remarked to my daughter, 'Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear'" (Isa. 65:24).

"After you had arranged to room and board with us, I wondered how I was going to buy food for your first meal. Do you recall that just as we got to the garden gate you turned to me and said, 'Here is a pound note I am putting down as a deposit.' You did not know it, of course, but your act was an answer to prayer. Is it any wonder that I believe in God and that He cares for His children?"

What prompted the atheist's action we can only guess, but he did admit, "Madam, what you have said is a stronger argument for God's existence than many others I have heard."

The Word of God indicates that even scoffers can fulfill His word without realizing it. For instance, it predicts that "there shall come in the last days scoffers.... saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (2 Peter 3:3, 4).

No, God is never left without a witness. If we fail to give His message to others we lose a great blessing, but His truth sweeps ever onward—even if the wrath of man must praise Him.

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*Reprinted from New Every Morning, p. 83. Author: Donald Ernest Mansell. Publisher: Review and Herald Publishing, 1981.*

*In Memory of*

# Brother Eugene Lincoln



We learned just recently of the death of longtime *Sabbath Sentinel* editor, Eugene Lincoln. A friend and tireless laborer on behalf of the Bible Sabbath Association, Eugene passed away on July 17, 2004.

Eugene Lincoln served The Bible Sabbath Association as member, board member for many years, President for several terms, and editor of *TSS* for over 25 years when the magazine was being published monthly.

During most of his years of service to the BSA he resided primarily in Silver Springs, MD. For the past few years he and his wife, Darlene, have been living in North Carolina in a retirement village near their son David.

Eugene Lincoln was editor of *The Sabbath Sentinel* from 1960 to 1985. Eugene was very active in his local SDA church. He believed in preaching the gospel through his writing.

Calvin Burrell, vice president of BSA, wrote this tribute to Eugene Lincoln in 1985 upon Lincoln's retirement as TSS editor:

"What we are saying about Eugene Lincoln on these pages would probably be the last thing he would want us to say, either on **SENTINEL** pages or anywhere else. But that fact is just further confirmation of the exemplary Christian character which has been developed in him by God's grace.

"We read in Titus 2:2 that older men are to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in endurance. These are the qualities which abound in Brother Lincoln.

"Many **SENTINEL** readers have had the opportunity to know Brother Lincoln only by his words and picture. To you, he has kept this magazine alive and well—often on the strength of his personal efforts and literary contributions. In an association where diverse views prevail on many peripheral issues, his balanced and tolerant spirit has been good medicine for us all."



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Send your comments about *The Sabbath Sentinel* to [tss\\_editor@biblesabbath.org](mailto:tss_editor@biblesabbath.org), or write to Kenneth Ryland, editor  
1204 N. First  
Mulvane, KS 67110, USA



Sirs,

The abortion article (Nov.-Dec. 2004) is very good, and progress in the right direction. Yet, we as Christians must cry out to God as an “agreement” prayer (Matt. 18:19) daily for Him to change out the “abortion engineers” of the abortion train, that is, the nine Supreme Court judges.

The Supreme Court reversed its decision about Prohibition. Now they need to reverse abortion. And, it will take God to change them or their minds, and it will take us, as Christians, crying out together, a complete movement among all congregations to agree to ask God to do so, repeatedly, until it’s done.

If your publication devoted a quarter page ad to this, continually calling upon all congregations to agree (Matt. 18:19), it would be a very powerful weapon against Satan’s evil forces.

Thank you.

Alan Croyle  
Emporia, Virginia

Dear Mr. Ryland,

I have noticed that you have made what appears to be a permanent change to TSS—no more letters section! This is a terrible change....

You did a disservice to the mass by telling people to avoid the ad announcement 2 issues ago by Norman Edwards (Jan.-Feb. 2005). This man initiated a community and other people came in and slandered him and nearly squashed one of the only fruitful things to come from Sabbatarian Christianity. You have reported biasedly by telling readers to avoid Port Austin Community because you listened to one side. I visited there and will likely be moving my life that way; N. Edwards is in charge of the campus and is continuing its purpose. You need to allow him one more issue to re-advertise it’s goals and purposes as they stand now instead of speaking on behalf of the dissenters and blasphemers!

Please reverse some of your errors.

For the love of Yah,  
John Qavah

Dear John,

Thanks for writing and giving me your comments.

*As for why we don’t often have letters from readers, we receive very few other than those saying, “I like the magazine; keep doing what you are doing.” We receive lots of those, but, even though we are glad to get such letters, they are not very interesting to our readers. That is why I don’t run them in the magazine. Your letter is an exception, and I will run it. I have another one or two that I have been saving so that I could do a letter section in this coming issue.*

*I did not in any way slander Norm Edwards. If you re-read my comments, I said, in effect, that people need to refrain from sending their kids or money up there until the group in Port Austin is able to sort out their differences and not fight with each other. It would be terribly irresponsible of me to encourage people to support S.E.E. if the organization is in turmoil. Until they have unity among themselves, I think it is my responsibility to encourage people to find other options for themselves, their children, and their money (really God’s money). God is not the author of confusion. Satan is, and the Sabbath community in Port Austin is in confusion and turmoil. I cannot in good conscience before God recommend that people send their children or their money there until it becomes obvious that God’s blessing is on the place, and right now it is not.*

*Thanks again.*

*Ken Ryland, editor*

**ADDENDUM:** *After receiving the above letter from Mr. Qavah, I received a letter and additional information from Norm Edwards on the formation of what is now called the Port Austin Bible Campus (formerly S.E.E., Sabbatarian Educational Environment). Mr. Edwards outlines the steps he has taken to resolve the discord among trustees of the property in Port Austin, and explains how the PABC is now in operation, although not at the level originally envisioned, due to the setbacks that have taken place over the past several months. Speaking on behalf of the BSA, I cannot give unqualified endorsement to the PABC, but Mr. Edwards assures me that progress is being made in resolving the issues in dispute. If you are considering supporting PABC or sending your children there, please do yourself a favor and take a trip to Port Austin to see for yourself whether you agree that the promises being made regarding PABC are indeed being fulfilled.*

## The Church in the World

### PAKISTAN: One Killed and Six Injured as Assailants Attack during Church

*The Voice of the Martyrs (Canada)*

The Voice of the Martyrs has learned that the church service of the Victory Church International (also known as the New Apostolic Church) in the village of Khambay near Lahore, Pakistan, was disrupted as four armed assailants opened fire on the church property,



*Ismael Masih injured in church shooting on March 27, 2005*

murdering one Christian worshipper and injuring six others. Killed was Arshad Masih, a young husband and father of a one-year-old daughter.

According to reports received by The Voice of the Martyrs, members of a Muslim family who had long been opponents of the congregation entered the church property at about 10:00 a.m. as the congregation was

worshipping and began shooting. Some reports indicate that there were children playing outside. Arshad Masih was reportedly shot and killed as he went outside of the church building to find out what was happening. Six other believers including Pervez Masih, Naeem Masih, Arshed Masih, Ismael Masih, and two others (exact names to be verified) also came out from church and the attackers also fired on them. The attackers then fled.

VOM sources report that Muhammad Mukhtar Dogar, Muhammad Sardar Dogar and Muhammad Malki Dogar have been arrested in connection with the attack, while two other suspects are still at large. The



*Christians read the Bible at the funeral for Arshad Masih*

injured are in a hospital in Lahore, one of them in critical condition. This incident comes after a weekend of threats and intimidations by the Dogar family against the congregation. The 150-member church was forced to cancel services when the family threatened to kill anyone who came to the church. The Dogar family is apparently seeking to take possession of the land that New Apostolic Church and its graveyard has been located on for the last century.

If you feel led to pray for these people, please remember Arshad Masih's wife, Fozia, as she grieves the loss of her husband. Also, there are several church members who are in the hospital seriously wounded. Those responsible will be brought to justice, and the church in Pakistan needs to testify to the Living Christ and His resurrection.

**SRI LANKA:** The Sri Lankan government may adopt anti-conversion legislation in April when the decisive vote is taken on the "Act for the Protection of Religious Freedom." Approved in principle by the cabinet in June 2004, the Act stipulates that no person should "attempt to convert or aid or abet acts of conversion of a person to a different religion." Christians say the pending law contravenes religious freedom guaranteed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. And despite a Supreme Court ruling last year that declared a similar bill unconstitutional, many believe the Act could pass. "Parliament will only vote against this bill if it is held under a secret ballot," a Methodist minister told Compass Direct. "Nobody will raise their hands in public to vote against it." To read the complete story, click on the following link: <http://www.odusa.org/WPAcurrent>

**JORDAN:** Siham Qandah's case was postponed once again. The next hearing is scheduled for April 3. Again the judge is declaring that it is the LAST one, and he'll give his final judgment then. Keep praying that Siham will be allowed to keep custody of her two children, Rawan and Fadi. The state has tried to take the children from their mother after their converted Christian father died in order to force the children to be raised as Muslims (*Source: Compass Direct*).

**CHINA:** Letters reveal personal trials facing house-church Christians. The following link gives the complete story: <http://www.odusa.org/WPAcurrent>

Couriers from the US who are traveling across the borders into China need our prayers for safety and good health, and that they would be successful in getting Bibles and other supplies into the hands of those who need them the most.

**ERITREA:** One of the leading evangelical pastors in Eritrea disappeared off the streets of Asmara on March 18, presumably detained by Eritrean security forces. Pastor Weldou's family and church members have been unable to learn anything about his whereabouts or the charges under which he is being held. Read the complete story at: <http://www.odusa.org/ProminentPastor>

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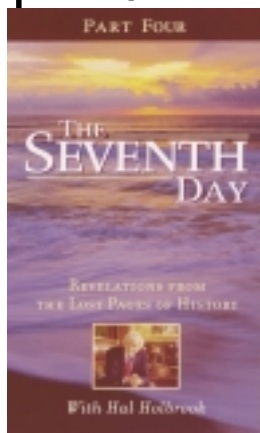
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(June 05)

### **The Seventh Day:**

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Any one: **\$20.00**. Two or

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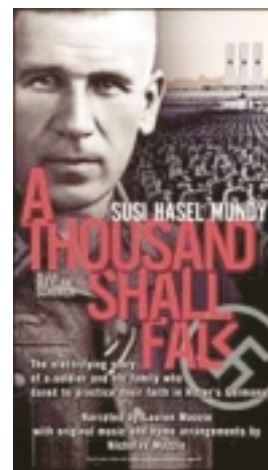
**\$5.00** for 14-day **LOAN**.

**V215**

(Order from the BSA's Wyoming address.)

## **A Thousand Shall Fall**

by Susi Hasel Mundy



I'm not much for reading books on history, so when my husband, Richard, kept bugging me to read *A Thousand Shall Fall*, I kept ignoring him. Finally out of frustration I picked it up. I started reading it Friday night and put it down about midnight, and then finished reading it the first moment I had free. It's the most fascinating book I've ever read. Reading about the pure faith and trust that this entire family had made me wonder if ever tested, I would be able to hold to my beliefs in the face of persecution so severe that I could lose my life. **Franz Hasel** on the German front never wavered, and his wife, **Helene Hasel**, at home, never had one moment of indecision when it came to obeying God. Yes, both along with their children, suffered many hardships and hunger, and Franz could have lost his life at the snap of a finger, but they knew what they believed and chose, against tremendous odds, to obey their God.

Every time we turn around, we see our religious rights being taken away. How do we know how much longer we will be able to worship in peace? Read this true story and see what kind of faith it takes to continue to worship God in the face of possible death.

—Shirley Nickels

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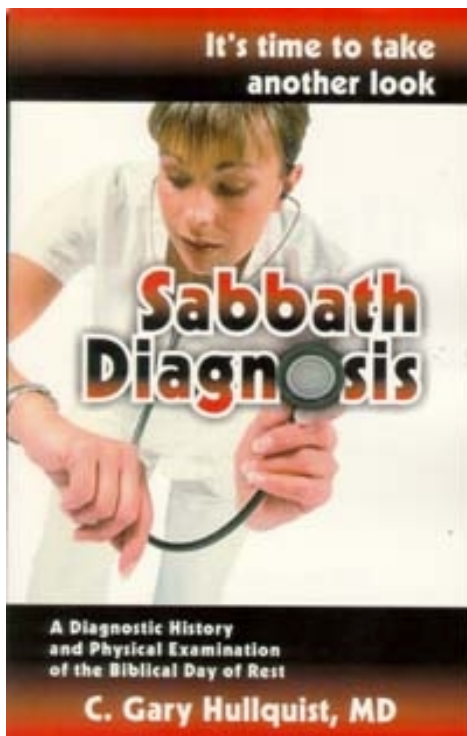
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*Sabbath Diagnosis* is a fresh and in-depth investigation of the biblical Sabbath from a unique medical viewpoint. The author, a medical doctor, uses his perspective as a physician to portray Sabbath observance as a prescription for many of daily life's problems using patient's complaints, life story and so on. It is a rich contrast to many of the normal "dry" writings by putting Sabbath observance in an uniquely personal example most people can relate to. While doing this, the author also dives in and presents one of a most exhaustive and complete discussion of Sabbath history: how Sabbath was changed to Sunday by the Roman Catholic Pope (in the chapter, "Family History") that I have seen in any book, and the proof of the validity of the Ten Commandments in a uniquely titled chapter called "Excision and Biopsy." The heart is explained as being the center of the law, while the Messiah "The Lord" is the heart. This book covers "everything Sabbath" and is a must-have for any Sabbath observer's home library. This book is a fascinating read that reaches across denominational lines into biblical, historical, and personal truth.

— by June Narber

*Sabbath Diagnosis*, by C. Gary Hullquist, M.D. Brushton, New York, Teach Services, 2004. 469 pages, \$13.95, from **The Bible Sabbath Association, 3316 Alberta Drive, Gillette, WY 82718.**

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