

The Sabbath Sentinel

May–June 2007



BSA — The Bible Sabbath Association

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

The Sabbath Sentinel

May-June 2007 Volume 58, No. 3 Issue 525

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Rain on the Just and on the Unjust

“...He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 5:45).

I never cease the marvel at the kindness of God. The range of gifts and talents He has given to mankind is without end. He continues to pour out his blessings on those who hate Him or refuse to acknowledge His existence as well as upon those who love Him. He seems to take no note of the defiance of His human creation when it comes to handing out gifts. His love for the human race has no end.

I have also noticed that people flourish in the development of their God-given gifts in free societies. One of the primary reasons that innovation in science and technology have blossomed in America is the freedom that this society allows to anyone who has imagination and skill. Over the years I have traveled quite a bit in Latin America and have seen how oppressive governments and stifling social structures have suffocated creativity and entrepreneurship. In some cases the government allows creative expression only in certain arenas. In others, religion and social mores forbid a young man or woman to follow their particular talents and heartfelt desires to their full development.

Communist China is the perfect example of a government that has exploited the gifts that God intended for its individual citizens for the purpose of advancing its own geopolitical ambitions. The “opening” of China to narrowly limited economic freedom has been a very calculated plan by those in control of that totalitarian

state. Its purpose has been to create wealth through technological innovation solely for the benefit of the State. Its citizens are free to create businesses and technology, and to become millionaires, so long as the controlling Communist Party considers it important to its long range goals. The rights of Chinese citizens are under the complete control of the State, and the benefits that a citizen enjoys on Tuesday may be taken away on Wednesday.

In contrast, rights in American society are not derived from the State, but from God, so, in theory at least, they cannot be taken away by the State or any human being. Of course, neither the American nor any other society is perfect, but the American Founders used their understanding of God’s will as revealed in the Scriptures to structure a society that would permit each citizen to follow the dictates of God and conscience with the least interference from the State. One of the principal purposes for the founding of the American form of government was to “stay out of God’s way” as He worked with His people.

This afternoon I was watching 13-year-old Leeza Ali of Minnesota play a sonata by Mozart on the piano at Carnegie Hall in New York. I could not help wondering where this young prodigy’s talents would have landed her if her family had not chosen to come to the U.S. Leeza and her two equally talented older teenage sisters would probably have been denied the opportunity to express their God-given gifts because their family belonged to a minority religion in India. It is not uncommon in India for Christians and other minorities to be denied rights to property, assembly, equal treatment under the law, and opportunities by militant Hindu political leaders and government bureaucrats. The wonderful free gifts we receive from our loving Creator require a climate of freedom to allow for their full development and expression. The Ali sisters have found that in a society founded by Christians.

Even though opportunities for the development of God’s gifts are most favorable in America and other Western cultures that derive from Christianity, our right to develop and exercise those gifts is under the greatest assault I have seen in my lifetime. From every side we are being told that bureaucrats and

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Winners of the BSA Scholarship Essay Contest for 2007 are

First Place: Megan Elaine O'Rourke of Arrowsmith, Illinois (Church of God, affiliated with Christian Educational Ministries)

Second Place: James Ross Hodson of Lancaster, Massachusetts (Seventh-Day Adventist)

Third Place: Rene Octavio Valenzuela of Chinle, Arizona (Church of God 7th Day)

The Mysteries of Passover

by *Kenneth Westby*



Many Christians honor Christ during Passover season by taking communion (the Lord's Supper) on the night of the Lord's "Last Supper." There are many ironies recorded in Scripture. The Passover, Christ's Passion, is one of them.

Mark's Gospel, the earliest and the one likely used as a base reference by the other Gospel writers, uses three principal christological titles, Christ, Son of God, and son of Mary. The Son of God title is the address to Jesus not only by God (1:11; 9:7) but also by demons (1:24; 3:11; 5:7). Furthermore, this title is issued in private and not to be disclosed until a future appointed time (9:9) and is stamped with the seal of secrecy (3:12). It is not until his confession before the High Priest (14:62) that Jesus gives personal affirmation to his status as Christ and Son of God. He confirms these two titles by means of the third one, Son of Man, which carried prophetic impact from the Book of Daniel.

All these lead up to another title given him at the time of his crucifixion, King. His confession provokes and indeed caused the death sentence (14:63-64), and he is hung up to die like the common criminals hanging beside him. A sign is placed over him on the cross saying that he is "King of the Jews." The irony, the paradoxical nature of Mark's royal christology, is that as Jesus is crucified with two robbers "one on his right and one on his left" (15:27), he is being enthroned as King. What dramatically appeared to be humiliating failure was, in truth, the last act of Jesus which finished his Father's purposes and sealed his destiny as King forever in his Father's eternal kingdom.

A further irony is that at the cross demonic forces reached the height of their power, and Jesus is crushed by those very powers which he himself had come to convulsingly exorcise. Global darkness seizes the land (15:33) symbolizing the triumph of darkness and the demonic seizure of power.

But instead of defeat the Temple curtain is torn in two opening up the Holy of Holies, which symbolized God's presence in heaven. The Gentile centurion witnessing Jesus' death exclaims, "Surely this man was the Son of God!" The Temple, established representation of life, comes to an end, and Jesus' true identity is confirmed in view of his death. The moment of absolute powerlessness generates a "transvaluation" of the symbols of power and weakness, and life and death. Because of his death and subsequent resurrection, the twin enemies of death and the devil are thoroughly and totally defeated. Eternal life has been made manifest and accessible to all mankind, and Jesus is exalted to the Father's side in heaven and made King over all.

There is a beautiful mystery at work here in how God demonstrates his power, his love, and his mercy as he works out his divine plan. Yes, there is irony or paradox, but behind it is the wisdom of God. Our weaknesses and apparent defeats draw out God's mercy and power to redeem his people. Out of Joseph's humiliation and slavery comes the

Lord's elevation of this patriarch to the highest seat in the land of Egypt under Pharaoh. Where sin and evil work, God's grace brings triumph. As Joseph said to his brothers, "You meant it for evil; God meant it for good."

The apostle Paul draws on God's mysterious ironies to make several profound theological points. In 1 Corinthians 1:18-25 the apostle speaks of how "... the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but to us which are saved it is the power of God. ... Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but to them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

Paul makes us understand how the paradox of the weakness of Christ at the cross was the guarantee of strength and victory to those who believe. In 2 Corinthians 12:5-10, the apostle knew that his "strength is made perfect in weakness" (v. 9). He therefore chose to "glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest on me" (v 10).

By becoming obedient even to death, the ultimate weakness, Jesus triumphed over the dark powers (Colossians 2:15). Through God's power the twin evils and enemies, death and the devil, are defeated. The resurrection, glorification, and exaltation of the Jesus becomes the last word on the conflict that began in Eden. The cross, rather than a crushing defeat for God and his plan, is the supreme victory over sin, death, and their sponsor, Satan.

In our personal lives we often lose sight of the big picture of what is happening with us. We focus on the small, immediate picture and see difficulties as defeats. We see temptations and struggles as evidence that we are failing. Yet simple endurance to the end (meaning remaining faithful to God and taking on the divine nature, not quitting) means we win, receive a crown, exaltation, glorification, and a reward. This is the refrain repeated to the seven churches. Follow the path of Jesus in his obedience to the Father and we will share in his glory. (Rom 8:17—suffer with Christ and be glorified with him.)

The irony, the paradox, of God's loving care of his sons and daughters is that all apparent defeats, all suffering, all enemies will dissolve before the power of God. His hand on us will cower all opposition (Rom 8:31). Hold fast. Each Passover gives the people of God the opportunity to taste again the wisdom of God in the ultimate paradox — that death brings life.

Ken Westby is the founder and director of the Association for Christian Development, P.O. Box, 4748 Federal Way, WA 98063 (www.godward.org). Ken is also a director emeritus of the BSA.

Tribute to

Richard Wiedenheft

1946 to 2007

Richard A. Wiedenheft was born April 15, 1946 in Chicago, Illinois and died March 23, 2007 at his home near Lake Winola, Pennsylvania. Raised on a farm and in a strong Lutheran home, he early learned the values of Christian faith and hard work.

He graduated from Ambassador College in Pasadena, California in 1967, and then served the Worldwide Church of God as pastor in New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania. While in New York City, he met Darlene Dietz and married her in 1968; they had two children, Dick (married to Anne)—a pastor near Vancouver, B.C., and Marlene (Mrs. Sam Succaw), and three grandchildren.

In 1974 Richard launched an independent Christian ministry serving scattered brethren across northeast U.S. through Sabbath services in various locations, and through his publication of “Focus on Truth.” As his fellowship broadened, his articles began to appear in the Bible Advocate magazine. During the 1980’s, he served the Bible Sabbath Association as executive secretary and editor of its Sabbath Sentinel magazine. He also earned a Masters of Business Administration degree from the University of Scranton. In addition to serving in gospel ministries, he supported his family through building and home construction.

From 1990-97, Richard served as business manager, director, principal and teacher at Spring Vale Academy near Owosso, Michigan. From there he returned to the Chicago area to be near his aging parents, and was employed at Albany Molecular Research while also preaching and teaching in the area. After both parents died, Richard and Darlene returned to their beloved hilltop acreage and home in northeastern Pennsylvania.

From early 2005 until his death, Richard served as a staff writer for the Bible Advocate Press, as a lead instructor for Ministries Training System, and as Superintendent of the Northeastern District. He and Darlene were away most weekends, visiting the thirty+ congregations and home groups scattered from Michigan to Virginia to Massachusetts. At home, his computer, telephone, and his library were busy in the service of the gospel and his brethren many hours every day.

He was buried near his home, and services for family and nearby friends were held on March 30 with Bruce Chesney and Calvin Burrell officiating. A second memorial with Whaid Rose officiating was held for the regional Church on April 28 in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania—a congregation he had often served.

Elder Wiedenheft’s service in the Church of God (Seventh Day), though short, was greatly appreciated and admired both by colleagues and by those he served. He may have accomplished more in his sixty years than most folks who live much longer.

—Calvin Burrell



Journey of Sin and Grace

by Richard Wiedenheft

During the 1996-97 school year at Spring Vale Academy, I taught Old Testament Survey to freshmen and sophomores. As my students and I completed Genesis and reflected on it, they were amazed that this book displayed so much human nature in the raw. It was as if the Devil were thwarting God at every turn, pulling humanity into the cesspool of selfishness and sin, making it impossible for God to be in loving fellowship with the beings He created in His image.

Even among the heroes in Genesis there were minor and major flaws, sins that underscored the fact proclaimed later by the apostle Paul: "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

Yet just as Genesis demonstrates the sinfulness of humanity, so it displays the inexorable power of God's grace, before which all human beings must bow in reverence or be crushed in judgment. Nothing thwarts the redemptive plan of God!

Sinfulness of humanity

We don't get through the third chapter of Genesis before we read about the rebellion of our first parents. Tempted by the Devil, they broke the one command God gave them. This is followed in chapter 4 by the murder of Abel by his brother Cain, a heinous crime that must have stuck a knife of disappointment and grief into the hearts of their parents and Creator. The wickedness and corruption of human beings became so terrible that God sent the Flood to destroy them (6:5, 11-13). Then the egotism and pride of the people in building the tower of Babel (11:1-4) and the homosexuality and wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah, cities destroyed by fire from heaven (19:5-10).

Even among those who recognized Yahweh as their God, there was sin: the deceit of Abraham and, later, Isaac about their wives being sisters (12:10-13; 20:1, 2; 26:7); the doubting of Abraham (15:2, 8; 16:1-4; 17:18) and Sarah (16:1-4; 18:12-15); Lot's willingness to give his daughters to the Sodomites (19:5-10) and their subsequent incest (vv. 30-35); the favoritism of Isaac and Rebecca for Esau and Jacob, respectively (25:28); the deceptive, selfish scheming of Jacob (vv. 20-34; 27:5-29); the deceit of Laban (29:23); the rivalry of Jacob's wives (29:31-30:24); the

idols and lies of Rachel (31:34, 35); the treachery of Dinah's brothers against the Shechemites (34:14, 25-29); the treachery of Joseph's brothers in selling him into slavery and lying to their father (37:28-35); and the adultery of Judah with Tamar (38:15-18).

In sum, Genesis lays out just about every type of sin that has been part of the human experience down to our day. It also demonstrates that despite sin and all the Devil's efforts to turn people from God, the redemptive plan of God moves forward — because God's grace is at work.

Active grace

Because of the utter sinfulness of humanity, "The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain" (6:6). He determined to wipe out the human race, reducing the world to a watery chaos not unlike the one out of which He made the habitable earth in the first place. But God's grace was also at work as He preserved the life and family of Noah, a man who "found favor [grace, KJV] in the eyes of the Lord" (v. 8). Noah was the new Adam, the progenitor of a new race through which the earth would have an obedient, worthy regent and God would redeem fallen humanity.

The vast majority of Noah's descendants rejected God, but God's grace was at work in the life of Abraham - perhaps not the firstborn son of Terah, but the one God chose and called to leave the pagan world of Haran to live in Canaan. With a heart inclined to serve God, Abraham demonstrated willingness to obey Him. And God revealed His promise to make of Abraham a great nation in the new land of promise to be an example to the world of a people whose God is Yahweh. It is said of this man of faith, "Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness" (15:6).

Thus is introduced one of the great themes of the redemptive story of Scripture: that imperfect, sinful humans can be counted as righteous in God's sight because they believe Him. Four times in the New Testament, Paul and James directly refer to this statement about Abram as they flesh out the meaning of God's grace in making the righteousness of faith through God in Christ available to sinful humanity (Romans 4:3, 22; Galatians 3:6; James 2:23).

What had Abraham done to deserve all this? Nothing. Although Abraham responded to God with consistent obedience, God's grace was at work from the start in calling and leading him and overlooking his flaws. And it was certainly God's grace that, after twenty-five long years, brought him and Sarah a child of their own - Isaac, a son born of promise to those incapable of having children. He was a miracle baby, a prefigurement of Jesus, who was also born contrary to the laws of nature. And Isaac was called over Ishmael, Abraham's firstborn and natural offspring, to play a leading role in God's plan.

God's grace is evident in Isaac serving as a type of the Redeemer by being an obedient son, carrying the wood that was to be the instrument of his death, allowing himself to be placed on the altar to die at the point of his father's knife. And even more grace is evident as God provided a ram as a substitute for Isaac (Genesis 22:13). All this prefigures the great sacrifice of Christ, who would bear the wood of His death instrument to Calvary and willingly give Himself to pay for humanity's sins.

God's grace was at work in sending Joseph to Egypt years in advance so he could preserve his brothers who wanted to kill him (50:20). But far beyond preserving their lives, Joseph was transplanting the descendants of Israel in Egypt, where they would be tried and tested through generations of oppressive slavery without any human hope of escape.

God's grace was at work in Egypt in miraculously preserving a baby boy named Moses. And grace gave him forty years of the best education the world could offer as an Egyptian prince (Exodus 2:10; Acts 7:22). Grace drove him out of Egypt into Midian for forty years of the best training the wilderness could offer, then called him back to Egypt to lead God's people from slavery to the Promised Land.

In all this history, God's grace worked at choosing whom He wanted to accomplish His purposes, regardless of their sins and flaws and regardless of most human beings' rejection of Him. Nothing thwarts the plan of God!

Continuing story

Despite humans' sinfulness and frailty, God's plan of redemption moves forward. And Satan's best efforts to destroy that plan serve only to further it.

The great themes of Scripture, the elements of God's plan for humankind, can be seen from the very beginning. The preeminence of God's grace, justification by faith, payment for sins by the sacrifice of another, the judgment on evil: These all come alive in the pages of Genesis. They are evident in the lives of the patriarchs, whose faith in God is commended in Hebrews 11.

As we move through Scripture, the story soon focuses on one nation: Israel. Although the players and circumstances are different, the central themes are the same: God wants a relationship with people who are inclined to serve Him. And through His grace, He will have that relationship. The wicked will be brought to justice, even when those wicked are God's chosen people.

Today we are part of the continuing story of God's plan for humanity. We find ourselves part of the people of God who, like the patriarchs of old, are imperfect, frail, susceptible to temptation. But God's plan moves forward because of His grace in shedding the blood of His dear Son. Through His grace, the righteousness of faith is available to all who believe. And through belief, Christians are counted as righteous before God. They enjoy an intimate, personal relationship with Him and are seated, in Christ, in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6).

His will is being accomplished; His plan marches on! God will have a people who are truly His own, a people who can walk in sweet fellowship with Him for all eternity the way Adam and Eve did before their sin in the garden.

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Sabbath History

"It seems to have been customary in the Celtic churches of early times, in Ireland as well as Scotland, to keep Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, as a day of rest from labor. They obeyed the fourth commandment literally upon the seventh day of the week." (James C. Moffatt, D. D., *The Church in Scotland*, Philadelphia: 1882, p.140)

Pope Gregory had sent delegates to the Christians Celts: "Acknowledge the authority of the Bishop of Rome." These are the first words of the Papacy to the ancient Christians of Britain. They meekly replied: "The only submission we can render him is that which we owe to every Christian." (Merle D' Aubigne, *History of the Reformation*, Book XVII, chap. 2.) "But as for further obedience, we know of none that he, whom you term the Pope, or Bishop of Bishops, can claim or demand." (Early British History, G. H. Whalley, Esq., M. P., p.17 London: 1860; see also *Variation of Popery*, Rev. Samuel Edger, D. D., pp. 180-183. New York: 1849)

The History of Jamestown and the Huegenots

400th Anniversary of Jamestown

Reviewing the Historical Record

Beginning the weekend of April 29 and continuing through the weeks ahead, America will celebrate the 400th Anniversary of the first landing of the English at Jamestown, Virginia: April 29, 1607. On that date, kneeling in humility, Pastor Robert Hunt prayed to



dedicate the New World to God. Today, Christians across the nation will commemorate that date by joining in prayer, and by signing a covenant to re-dedicate this land back to our Lord. Praise God!

Reviewing the historical record of the American nation's founding, we present a few other facts for your prayerful consideration. We do so that we might all be aligned in the fullness of the truth of the history of Christianity in America. We do this, too, knowing that there were indeed others who explored this continent throughout the 1500's, some of whom also dedicated the land to their own faith — especially Jesuit priests and explorers from Spain. But for today, we turn to the French:

1. While the landing at Jamestown was the first one cited by the English, it was not the first landing by Christian men and women on our soil. The first landing took place 42 years earlier, when 300 Christian (Huguenot) colonists from France in northern Florida (now Jacksonville) came here in order to freely practice the faith and teachings of John Calvin, and others.

2. Hence, the first landing by Christians on our land did not take place on April 29, 1607, but instead on June 30, 1564; this was accomplished after an ex-

ploratory scouting by the French on May 1, 1562 (when the land was also dedicated to our Lord).

3. Like the English, the French came here for religious freedom, fleeing the sword of the Inquisition at that time. And like the English, the French — upon landing -- dedicated their lives and this land to the Lord Jesus Christ.

4. Like the English, the French founded a settlement in present-day Jacksonville called Fort Caroline, where they worshipped the God of Jacob, and ceased all labor daily at noon to pray, to worship, and to study the Word of God.

5. The Spanish also came here in 1565, on orders of King Philip II, to "take care of the French problem." In so doing, they established the city of St. Augustine, Florida on September 8, 1565.

6. Unlike the Jamestown settlement, which eventually disappeared, St. Augustine can still be visited today — the oldest and the "first city" in our nation.

7. And finally, unlike the English, who lived out their lives in Virginia, the French did meet the Sword of the Inquisition on the sandy shores of northern Florida in three episodes in the fall of 1565. At issue were questions of land rights and religion; in the end, almost all who came died by the sword, in defense of our faith.

Therefore, the French Huguenots who settled in northern Florida in 1564 and who met their deaths in 1565, were the first Christian martyrs on our continent. Their blood was shed quietly on those sands; and their memories have been forgotten by most.

So, while we certainly honor the great contribution of the English of Jamestown to our history, we wish to also honor the memory of those martyrs who preceded them. We believe that, because that blood was shed for the Cross of Christ in 1565, the heavens over the Atlantic Ocean were "ripped open" one generation later and the way was made straight for others to carry the seeds of the gospel to this continent in 1607, because it is written: "They overcame him through the Blood of the Lamb, through the Word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives unto death" (Revelation 12:11).

And so, one generation later, they came ... from England ... and the rest of our great historical record began to be written on our land.

(For more information on the hidden French chapter of our American history, please go to: <http://www.christfellowship-lc.org/matanzas.htm> Thank you!)

Sara Ballenger, Founder and President, Capitol Hill Prayer Partners

The Faith and the Prayers of the Huguenots of Florida

First Landing in Florida by Jean Ribault, May 1, 1562

The first expedition by the French Huguenots to America was exploratory in nature, and was led by two men: Captain Jean Ribault and Rene de Laudonniere. Here is the story of that landing, taken from the book, *Our Country*, Volume I, available online at: http://www.publicbookshelf.com/public_html/Our_Country_Vol_1.

Jean Ribault was an experienced mariner of Dieppe and an earnest Protestant. Ribault sailed from Havre de Grace on the 18th of February, 1562, with sailors and soldiers, and a few gentlemen of fortune who were prompted by curiosity, the love of adventure, or the prospect of gain, to accompany him. They arrived off the coast of Anastacia Island (it is supposed) below the site of St. Augustine, at the close of April. Sailing along the "sweet-smelling coast" northward, the two vessels entered the broad mouth of the River St. John, where the company landed and were most kindly received by the natives. The Frenchmen were delighted with everything — the soft climate; the sweetest blossoms; the magnificent trees festooned from root to top with grape-vines; birds of gay plumage and sweetest notes; and mulberry trees, on "the boughs of which were silkworms in marvelous numbers," and with people of finest forms and kindest natures. They seemed to have entered a paradise. "It is a thing unspeakable," wrote Captain Ribault, "to consider the things that be seen there, and shall be found more and more in this incomparable land, which, never yet broken with plough irons, bringeth forth all things according to its first nature, where-with the eternal God endowed it."

Under the shadow of a wide-spreading magnolia tree laden with blossoms at the edge of a green savannah, with half-naked men, women and children, painted and decorated with gold and pearls — wondering sun-worshippers — standing a little way off, the Christians knelt upon the soft sward and poured forth thanksgiving to God for his mercy in giving them a safe voyage to such a delightful land. It was a bright May-day. At twilight they returned to their ships, and early the next morning the whole company



went ashore again, in small boats, carrying a column of hard stone upon which was carved the arms of the French king. They set it up on a broad grassy knoll surrounded by tall cypress and spreading palmetto trees and sweet flowering shrubs; and with the usual ceremonies, they took possession of the country in the name of Charles the Ninth.

Prayers upon Landing to Establish the French Colony in Florida

Upon landing on June 30, 1564, Rene de Laudonniere led his group in expressing the following prayer of thanksgiving to God for their safe passage:

"On the morrow about the break of day, I commanded a trumpet to be sounded, that being assembled we might give God thanks for our favourable and happie arrival. Then wee sang a Psalme of thanksgiving unto God, beseeching him that it would please him of his grace to continue his accustomed goodnesse toward his poore servants, and ayde us in all our enterprises, that all might turne to his glory and the advancement of our King." The prayer ended, and every man began to take courage.

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The First Christian Canon

by **Brian Knowles**

The early Apostolic Church had no "New Testament" and only part of what is now called "The Old Testament." Yet, it did possess "the faith once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). This period of church history is known as the "primitive" era – the time largely prior to the formation of the Christian Bible. Some define "primitive" as the era of the apostles – approx. 30-100 AD.

When Paul wrote to Timothy: "...from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus," (II Timothy 3:15), he was referring to the Scriptures Timothy had heard read in the synagogue from childhood. The term "holy Scriptures" did not, during the time of Timothy's childhood, officially include at least five of the books that are now a part of the Old Testament (TaNaKh): Ezekiel, Proverbs, Esther, Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon. Together, these megillot (Heb., scrolls) were referred to as antilegomenoi (Greek, lit., spoken against). They existed of course, and they were read; but the Jewish religious leadership was still debating their legitimacy as official components of the TaNaKh.

Following the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., the leaders of the Jews were forced to rethink their religious practices. This process included reexamining the objections to accepting the canonicity of the above five books. These discussions allegedly took place at Jamnia (also known as Yavneh or Jabneh) around 90 A.D. The leader of the Jewish scholars assembled at Yavneh was R. Johanan ben Zakkai, who had received special permission from the Romans to settle there. Yavneh was located on the coast just below Joppa. According to Paul D. Wegner, "Even though the canonicity of these books was questioned, it is doubtful that the scholars at Jamnia had the authority to modify the canon of Scripture; either way the Old Testament canon remained the same," (The Journey from Texts to Translation, p. 116).

When Paul wrote to Timothy, the documents that later came to constitute "The New Testament" had not yet been written or assembled into a collection. The first person to attempt to create a Christian canon was Marcion. Note Wegner's comments on him:

"Some people have argued that the Old Testament has been superseded by the New Testament and is thereby rendered unnecessary. One of the earliest to do so was Marcion, a native of Sinope in Asia Minor,

who came to Rome about A.D. 140 and founded a sect contending that the Old Testament had been made obsolete by the New Testament. He argued that the Creator God, who manifested himself as Yahweh in the Old Testament, was inferior to the good and loving God in the New Testament, who revealed himself as a Father. Marcion further argued that the Old Testament ought not to be regarded as part of the Christian canon," (ibid. p. 33).

When we consider that the New Testament, as we have it today, includes 176 quotations from the Old Testament (14 in John and 162 from Acts 15:36 to the end of the NT), this is a remarkable assertion. Jesus, in his teaching and in his living, often referred or alluded to the TaNaKh. Without access to it, many of his teachings would make little sense. Put simply, the New Testament is founded upon the Old. It is part of a literary continuum that hangs together. To cherry pick within it is to do editorial violence to its fundamental fabric.

Marcion was wrong in rejecting the Old Testament. Jesus himself quoted it and lived by it. He pointed out to his own disciples that he did not come to do away with the TaNaKh (through misinterpretation or otherwise), but rather to fulfill it. Jesus was a living Torah. He personified its precepts. He never once violated, and consistently exemplified, its correct interpretation and application for Jews. He did not, as some have asserted, violate the Sabbath Day – he simply observed it correctly. Some religious leaders of his time begged to differ, but that was their problem, not his. They had built their "fence around Torah" too far out.

Marcion broke down any "fences" and did away with much of the Bible. According to Church historian Philip Schaff, "Marcion formed a canon of his own, which consisted only of eleven books, an abridged and mutilated Gospel of Luke, and ten of Paul's epistles." (History of the Christian Church, Vol. II, p. 486). Marcion placed Galatians first in order and labeled Ephesians "the epistle to the Laodiceans." He rejected entirely the Pastoral epistles, Hebrews, Matthew, Mark, John and Acts, along with the seven general (so-called "catholic") epistles and Revelation.

A sect of pseudo-Christianity formed around Marcion and his teachings, many of which were quite bizarre. It spread within Italy, Egypt, North Africa, Cyprus and Syria. After that, it fragmented into many pieces, according to Schaff. "Remains of them are found as late as the tenth century. Some of their principles revived

among the Paulicians, who took refuge in Bulgaria, and the Cathari in the West" (Schaff, *ibid.*, p. 487).

Marcion and his followers, despite their antinomianism (the view that there is no need for the law of God in Christian life), abstained from marriage, refused to eat flesh (except for fish) or drink wine, and experienced persecution. "He admitted married persons to baptism only on a vow of abstinence from all sexual intercourse," (Schaff, *ibid.*, p. 486).

Put in modern terms, the man who first attempted to form a Christian canon was an odd duck, a Gnostic, a heretic, an antinomian, and a pseudo-Christian. Had his views prevailed, the Church today would look quite different than it does. The Lord's supper would not include wine and newly baptized members would be given milk & honey at baptism. Some Marcionites practiced what is now a Mormon practice: vicarious baptism for the dead. Converts would be consigned to sexless marriages. Jews, and all things Jewish, would be hated by the Church (of course some Christians today do just that by embracing Replacement Theology). The God of the Old Testament would be viewed as unrelated to the God of the New. For Marcion, the God of the Old Testament was as "harsh, severe and unmerciful as his law..." (Schaff, p. 485).

Fortunately for all of us Marcion's canon was never adopted by the winners of early ecclesiastical battles, nor were his strange teachings. Yet, even today we can detect odiferous whiffs of his doctrines in various parts of the larger Church. We still see vicarious baptism for the dead in the cults. We see virulent anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism in various parts of the Body. Some churches do not permit their members to drink alcohol. Some hold celibacy as a higher state than marriage, even though the New Testament says, "Marriage is honorable in all and the bed undefiled..." (Hebrews 13:4).

Many Christians proudly carry around a "New Testament & Psalms" as if the rest of the Scriptures had little or no significance for today. Those who do editorial violence to whole blocks of Scripture in this manner might justifiably be labeled "Neo-Marcionites." Writes Schaff of Marcion: "Marcion was the most earnest, the most practical, and the most dangerous among the Gnostics, full of energy and zeal for reforming, but restless, rough and eccentric. He has a remote connection with modern questions of biblical criticism and the canon," (Schaff, p. 483).

Marcion's bastardized canon is no more – thank God. But some of his more toxic ideas live on. They must be recognized for what they are: aberrations. Meanwhile, we have the 27 books of the New Testament to add to the 39 of the Old giving us a 66-book Canon that serves us well.

This article is reprinted from the Web site of the Association for Christian Development where Brian Knowles is a regular contributor (www.godward.org).

Power to Do All Things

I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. Phil. 4:13.

Paul was not making a vainglorious boast when he wrote these words. We can more fully appreciate the spiritual significance of his statement when we remember that it was written by a helpless prisoner in the Mamertine dungeon in Rome. Chained to the prison wall, with only a small opening covered by an iron grill through which a few rays of daylight illuminated the darkness, there was little that Paul could do in a physical way but await the day of his trial and execution. It is evident, therefore, that the "all things" he referred to were the all things that God requires of a Christian. If this meant escaping miraculously from his cell, he could do it by the same power that delivered Peter from prison; if it meant enduring suffering and privation with patience, then he could also do this by the power of Christ.

In the verses that precede this statement, Paul declared: "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need" (Phil. 4:11, 12). Paul had learned that every circumstance in life, whether seemingly fortunate or unfortunate, could be the means of instructing him in the development of a Christ-like character. Learning this lesson did not come suddenly or easily. But as he daily renewed his total surrender to Christ, Christ's mighty strengthening power enabled him to meet any circumstance of life.

God's power is available to all who are willing to receive it. The trouble is that few of us are willing to meet the conditions for receiving it. During His earthly ministry Christ demonstrated that it is possible for one to receive divine power without measure (John 3:34) for carrying out the will of God. The same power in the same measure is available to you and me today.

To believe in the power of God, to take Him at His word – this is the faith that Jesus had, this was the faith that Paul had, and this is the faith that you and I must have to meet successfully every circumstance in life, whether it is favorable or unfavorable. Christ "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" (Eph. 3:20). When we fail to experience this strengthening power, the fault lies not with God but with us. It is not God's unwillingness to impart it, but our unwillingness to receive it. But even here God can help. He can make us willing, if we will let Him.

Donald Mansell, New Every Morning, page 351. Review & Herald Publishing Association. 1981.

“Your argument is with the Bible, not us”

Bob Jones University declines meeting with pro-'gay' advocates

A team of homosexual activists whose goal is to "dialogue" with Christian colleges about changing their beliefs regarding the "gay" lifestyle is coming to Bob Jones University, but campus officials already have made plans to, very politely, disinvite them from campus.

The "Soulforce Equality Riders" several weeks ago launched teams in two buses with directions to head to several dozen Christian colleges and "address discriminatory" policies on those campuses.

However, officials at Bob Jones University, a leader in Christian education as well as publishing and ministry, say there's no point in meeting with the group, scheduled to arrive tomorrow.

"As Bible-believing Christians, our faith and practice is based on Scripture which speaks consistently on the subject of sexual expression in many passages through both the Old and New Testaments. Therefore, Soulforce's ultimate disagreement is not with BJU or any other institution that holds to the Scriptural position, but with Scripture itself," BJU said in a position statement on the pending visit.

"BJU does not single out homosexuals in its policies, but follows the Bible's teaching on the whole matter of sexual expression. Scripture specifically prohibits lewdness, fornication, adultery, homosexuality and any other sexual expression outside of marriage between one man and one woman. BJU's desire is to develop Christlikeness in our students and to teach them to base life's choices on God's Word. Achieving those goals requires that BJU policies align with Scriptural teaching. Therefore, BJU policies prohibit any form of sexual activity outside of Scripture's boundaries (or marriage between one man and one woman). Each year our students voluntarily sign a statement that they will conform with these policies," the school said.

A reader who contacted WND about the pro-homosexual campaign being staged by the bus teams said the lack of news coverage on the first few visits, at various Christian colleges in Iowa, California and other locations, is part of the problem.

"I'm sure most of the media would be okay with Soulforce wanting to visit and push their agenda on

the school, but if it was a group of Christians going onto campuses pushing Christ on people that would be viewed as harassment," he wrote.

Officials with Soulforce's Equality Ride said during an earlier visit to Pepperdine that its "discriminatory doctrines and policies" actually "harm LGBT individuals on campus."

Organizers claim that although their goal is to "end religion-based discrimination against LGBT students on Christian campuses," they have "endured" police escorts, bus vandalisms and "being held in jail for over 24 hours" – "all for attempting peaceful dialogue regarding the wellbeing of LGBT students on these campuses."

But BJU said, that there is no point in such "discussion."

"Given our belief that the teaching of the Scripture on this subject is clear and our sense of responsibility to our students and their parents, we could not participate in any such discussions or allow any access to our campus or student body," the school said.

"Parents entrust their young people to BJU with the expectation that they will be taught God's Word and a Bible-based lifestyle. We cannot allow a group antithetical to the expectations of parents or to the clear teaching of Scripture to come onto our campus with the expressed purpose of undermining Scripture.

"BJU's desire is to strengthen students' belief in the Word of God, not to undermine their faith. BJU does not back away from discussing controversial ideas; however, we do not treat every idea as equally valid. We teach our students to evaluate all ideas by God's Word," the school said.

BJU said Soulforce is arriving without invitation under the "pretense" of wanting dialogue. "However, their stated objectives in correspondence and on their website center only on acceptance of the GLBT lifestyle and on changing policies at targeted schools... It is clear their goal is not dialogue, but one-sided arguments aimed at changing our policies."

"BJU did not initiate this encounter with Soulforce. However, the Soulforce visit gives us the opportunity to present what Scripture teaches on the issue of sexual expression, to demonstrate a Christlike spirit in our response, and to state again the good news of the gospel of Christ. Our approach will be a clear and dignified statement of our position without inflammatory words or tone. Our student body has prayed for these individual riders by name, and if opportunity presents itself, we are prepared to tangibly demonstrate the love of Christ," the school said.

"Scriptural teaching on homosexuality is consistent in the Old and New Testaments," said Stephen Jones, BJU president, "The track record and stated goals of this group demonstrate that their objective is not to conduct two-way dialogue, but to pressure us to compromise our Biblical stand and change our policies."

There have been several arrests at previous protests staged by Soulforce, while some schools have scheduled meetings with the pro-homosexual advocates.

Soulforce was founded in 1998 by Mel White and has targeted religious groups holding biblical policies on the issue of homosexuality with its protests over the years.

Soulforce said three of its protesters were arrested during a recent visit to University of the Cumberland, where they were told they would not be allowed on campus.

Another 12 were arrested when they went to the office of Albert Mohler, president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, demanded that he apologize for his beliefs, and refused to leave.

"We are gathered here as straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people to demand that Albert Mohler openly recognize our right to life, love, and liberty," the group said in a statement. "His voice is terribly misguided in believing that God does not affirm the identities of gay and transgender people. So, we call on him to take responsibility for his bigotry and the hurtful effects of his statements, and ask that he issue a public apology for having said them."

The 12 protesters refused to leave when requested, and then refused to leave on instructions from police, so they were arrested.

Several also were arrested during last year's campaign, on a visit to Liberty University.

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Listen to Your Enemies

I have been called some unsavory things in my life, but nothing as overt as this. In a recent on-line essay (which we will henceforth call the White Paper) I was accused of:

1. Being an extremist Christian fascist
2. A huge threat
3. A member of the Christian Mafia
4. A threat to freedom and democracy
5. Desirous of abolishing Constitutional law
6. Wanting to outlaw all faiths other than Christianity

And that was just in the first few paragraphs! I admit the author of the White Paper wasn't speaking of me in particular, but only generally about those of us who might be considered "Conservative Christians." The diatribe is one of many making the rounds, and one must wonder whether such purveyors of hate really believe what they say or are willingly deceptive.

Whatever the case may be, non-believers today are of a different stripe than the agnostics and skeptics of generations past. While they proclaim their convictions of tolerance and freedom, they try to deny the public square to people of faith, and particularly Christian people of faith. Says Phillip Johnson, professor of philosophy at the University of California at Berkeley, "The new Atheists will not let us off the hook.... They condemn not just belief in God. Religion is not only wrong; it is evil."

That is why we see hints from the far edge that people of faith should have no place in public life, with the phrase "separation of church and state" used as the mantra. One well-known celebrity has even lamented on national television that five Supreme Court Justices are Roman Catholics, claiming that this is somehow unconstitutional. One wonders what John F. Kennedy would have to say about that, who understood that the Constitution specifically forbids any religious test for public office.

Still, operating on the principal that even Balaam's ass was capable of communicating a bit of wisdom from time to time, the White Paper spotlighted something that Christians need to consider.

Quoting, "They preach a false gospel of prosperity and well-being, preying on the gullible." Have there not been numerous charlatans whose favorite hymn should be "Bringing in the Fleece?" or promising that health and wealth come from obedience, while sickness and poverty are proof of God's curse? Haven't one-time godly preachers succumbed to the pulls of greed and the flesh? The names of such are legion, and they come to your mind and mine. Do these people not bring reproach to Christ? Jesus himself warned of hirelings and wolves in sheep's clothing.

For all its faults the White Paper on this point hit its target. Too often clergy come to do good and end up doing very well. Scoffers and anti-Christian zealots will find reason to scoff and condemn even if there is nothing to scoff and condemn. If they are to do so, let it be from ignorance or arrogance, not from fact.

—Lenny Cacchio

Lenny Cacchio lives in Lees Summit, Missouri, and is very active in the Truckers' Bible Study in the Kansas City, Missouri, area. The "Sabbath Morning Companion" is now available as a devotional and journal through the Website of the Church of God, Kansas City (www.kccog.org/literature.htm).

Rest unto the Soul

by Daniel Botkin



“Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith Yahweh; and I will heal him. But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked” (Isaiah 57:19-21).

In Matthew chapter 11, Yeshua pronounced woes upon the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. After that, He extended this invitation to His listeners: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light" (Matt. 11:28ff).

To provide the proper context for this passage, we have to go all the way back to the beginning of Yeshua's ministry and message. The very first recorded words of Yeshua's preaching are written in Matthew 4:17: "From that time Yeshua began to preach, and to say, 'Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'"

Repentance is a 180 degree turning of the heart. A sinner makes a decision to stop walking in sin. He turns around and walks away from his sin. He aims the inclination of his heart toward God and righteousness. Trusting in the grace of God through Yeshua for his salvation, He then begins walking in obedience to his heavenly Father's commandments.

Repentance is the first necessary step on the sinner's quest to find rest unto his soul. This is the reason Yeshua preached repentance at the very beginning of His ministry. He preached repentance even before He preached the Sermon on the Mount. He knew that the high and lofty teachings of the Sermon on the Mount can only be received and fully appreciated by people with repentant hearts.

So in Matthew chapter 4 Yeshua preached "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Then in chapters 5 through 7 He preached the Sermon on the Mount, which serves as a sort of manifesto or constitution for the coming Messianic Kingdom. The Sermon starts out with a Preamble (The Beatitudes) to describe what sort of people will be the subjects of His Kingdom: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit... they that mourn... the meek... they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness... the merciful... the pure

in heart... the peacemakers... they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake" (Matt. 5:3-16).

After this preamble, Yeshua introduces the Meat or Main Body of His Messianic Manifesto with a clear declaration of the continuing validity and value of the Old Testament Torah ("law") and Prophets: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets," He states. "I am not come to destroy but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:17-19).

He knows beforehand that some people will misunderstand Him and twist His teachings and say that He abolished the Old Testament Torah. So before He teaches anything about the commandments of the Torah, He first clarifies what He is not going to teach about the Torah. In effect, He is stating something like this: "Regardless of what anyone else says about My teachings, you must understand from the very start that I have not come to abolish the Torah. Before you can hear and understand the teachings I am about to give you in this Sermon on the Mount, you must first understand that I have not come to do away with the Torah. Don't even think that I have come to abolish the Torah. Get that idea completely out of your head. If you don't, you'll misunderstand what I'm about to say."

After establishing the ongoing validity and value of the Torah, Yeshua describes how the subjects of the Kingdom will be governed by Torah law. The Torah will not consist of mere external obedience only, though. External obedience will certainly be expected, but it will spring out of hearts that have been renewed. Yeshua does not terminate the Torah; rather, He transfers it from cold, dead, graven tablets of stone to the fleshly tablets of the heart. From His remarks, we can conclude that if you have the Torah written on your heart, then you will not just

grudgingly abstain from murder, you will not even be angry with your brother without a cause. You will not just grudgingly abstain from adultery, you will not even look on a woman to lust after her. You will not even need to take oaths, because people will know that your word is good. The Main Body of the Sermon basically expounds Torah and shows how external obedience must spring out of hearts that have been renewed by repentance.

Yeshua ends the Main Body of the Sermon by summing up the Torah and the Prophets with the words which are now called The Golden Rule: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets" (Matt. 7:12). Or, as some translations put it, "This sums up the Law and the Prophets."

The remaining verses of the Sermon on the Mount serve as a conclusion. In these concluding verses, Yeshua gives a somber warning about the wide gate that leads to destruction, about false prophets, about calling Him "Lord, Lord" but not doing the will of the Father, about being cast out of the kingdom because of a religious but lawless life, and about building on a foundation of sand.

Immediately after the Sermon, He comes down from the Mount and straightaway begins to demonstrate His power and authority as King of the Kingdom which He has just proclaimed. He cleanses a leper, heals a Roman centurion's servant, heals Peter's mother-in-law, casts out devils, and heals "all that were sick" (Matt. 8:16). He even commands the wind and the waves of the sea, and sends a legion of devils into a herd of swine. All this in chapter 8. Then in chapter 9 He does more teaching and more miraculous healings. At the end of chapter 9 He sees the needy multitudes as sheep without a shepherd. Then in chapter 10 He authorizes and sends the twelve disciples to go and preach - but only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, not to the Gentiles or Samaritans. The reason for this is because the Kingdom (and the King) must first be offered to Israel. At this point, the disciples are not yet preaching the good news of salvation through the Messiah's atoning death. That good news will not be preached until after the Crucifixion and Resurrection. The good news being preached at this time is "the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The Messianic Kingdom is being offered "to the Jew first."

In chapter 11 Yeshua talks to the multitudes about John the Baptist. He explains that John was more than just another prophet. John was the prophesied forerunner of the Messiah, spoken of by Malachi. Yeshua says, "And if ye will receive it, this is Elijah, which was for to come. He that hath ears to hear, let

him hear" (Matt. 11:14f). Whether or not John the Baptist was Elijah hinges on the conditional "if." If the Jewish people had received John as the forerunner of the Messiah, then they would have believed John's testimony that Yeshua was the Messiah. But the religious leaders rejected John the Baptist and the Messiah of whom John testified. They said that John had a devil because he fasted and did not drink wine. They said that Yeshua was a glutton and wine-bibber because He ate and drank. The religious leaders rejected both John the Baptist and Yeshua, and most of the people followed these leaders and refused to repent. This refusal to repent brings us to the statements cited at the beginning of this article. Lack of repentance was the very reason Yeshua pronounced woes on the cities in Matthew chapter 11. "Then [after pointing out the sin of rejecting both John and Yeshua] began He to upbraid the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done, because they repented not" (Matt. 11:20).

The Messianic Kingdom had been offered, but the religious leaders rejected it, bringing woes upon themselves and upon those who followed them. It was in this context that Yeshua then extended His invitation to the masses to find rest unto their souls: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light" (Matt. 11:29ff).

This invitation to the masses to find rest unto their souls is given by the Messianic King after He has been rejected. The Messianic Kingdom was (potentially) "at hand," but the Messianic King was rejected. Therefore the setting up of the Messianic Kingdom in a physical sense is postponed until a later date. It will be many more years before the world will know permanent peace and will rest from warfare. In the meantime, though, any individual who wishes to find inward rest unto his soul may do so. The Messianic Kingdom is not yet set up on earth, but the Messianic Kingdom can be set up in individual earthen vessels. Yeshua will someday return as the Prince of Peace and establish peace on earth. Until then, He will take up residence in the hearts of those who come unto Him, take up His yoke, and learn of Him. These are the people who find rest unto their souls.

Sabbath-keepers should especially appreciate what Yeshua says in this invitation, because it is in effect an invitation to experience Sabbath in the soul. Keeping the Sabbath outwardly is certainly important, but it is equally important to keep the Sabbath inwardly by experiencing rest unto your soul. Rest unto your soul is the rest and relief of knowing that your sins are forgiven. It is the cessation of laboring

and struggling under a heavy load of sin and guilt. And it is the joy of being yoked to and learning from the One who has provided this Sabbath rest unto your soul.

It is significant that Yeshua's invitation to find rest unto the soul was given on the Sabbath, and was immediately followed by a controversy related to the Sabbath. The day that Yeshua gave His invitation to find rest unto the soul happened to be that Sabbath day when the disciples plucked some grains to munch on to relieve their hunger as they walked through a field. The Pharisees accused them of breaking the Sabbath. "Behold!" they said to Yeshua. "Thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day" (Matt. 12:2).

Yeshua had just spoken about finding inward Sabbath rest unto the soul. Now the situation requires Him to give some teaching on the outward keeping of the Sabbath, in response to the Pharisees' accusation that the disciples were breaking the Sabbath. God did indeed command that the Sabbath be kept even in harvest time, implying that grain should not be harvested on the Sabbath (Ex. 34:21). Were the disciples guilty of breaking this commandment?

Yeshua replied to the Pharisees' accusation with a question: "Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungered, and they that were with him; how he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests?" (Matt. 12:3f).

Yeshua was not saying that God's laws can be ignored for any trivial reason. (Remember, He said to not even think that He had come to abolish the Torah.) What He was teaching was that when unforeseen difficulties arise, it may be okay to make a temporary exception to the rule, if the difficulty is serious enough. And Yeshua considered hunger a serious enough difficulty for David to eat the normally-forbidden shewbread, and for His disciples to harvest enough grain to feed themselves on that Sabbath day.

I love to tell a story that was related to us years ago by the pastor at our Messianic Jewish congregation in New York. The pastor had been speaking to an elderly Jewish mother. She was not yet a believer, but she was interested in learning about Yeshua. The pastor was going through the Gospel of Matthew with her. When they read about the Pharisees accusing the hungry disciples of Sabbath-breaking, this Jewish mother stopped the pastor.

"Wait a minute," she said. "Are you telling me that these were hungry Jewish boys, with no place to eat on Shabbat? Why didn't those Pharisees invite them

to their homes and feed them, instead of scolding them?"

Sometimes it takes a Jewish mother to explain the theology of this passage!

Keeping the Sabbath is important, but so is satisfying one's hunger on the Sabbath. Sometimes extenuating circumstances may justify cooking or buying (or harvesting) food to eat on the Sabbath. However, I recommend planning ahead to avoid this need if at all possible. If I know I am going to be in a hotel room on the Sabbath, I take a cooler and buy enough food for the Sabbath ahead of time.

God's laws, including Sabbath laws, should always be obeyed under normal circumstances. Under abnormal circumstances, there might sometimes be an exception to the rule. Make sure it's a genuine exception, though. Don't use the "exception to the rule" principle as an excuse to habitually break God's laws. If you miss your local Sabbath assembly three or four weeks in a row because "the ox fell in the ditch," then it's probably time to get rid of the ox.

Sabbath-keeping should begin in the soul, when you come unto Yeshua, take up His yoke, and find rest unto your soul. The inward Sabbath of the soul will cause you to delight in the outward keeping of the Sabbath, because this is what gives the Sabbath meaning. If you do not delight in the outward keeping of the Sabbath, perhaps you need to ask yourself some questions: Have I really come unto Yeshua on His terms? Have I really let Him lift my heavy burden of sin, or do I still feel weighed down with guilt? Have I really taken His yoke upon myself to learn of Him, or do I resist the yoke which would require me to submit to Him? Have I really found rest unto my soul, or is my soul still in turmoil?

Augustine said that our souls are restless till they find rest in God. If you are resisting Yeshua's yoke out of fear, remember that His yoke is not like the unbearable yoke of the Pharisees. "For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders," Yeshua said (Matt. 23:4). Unlike the Pharisees' yoke, His yoke is easy and His burden is light. But you will never know the ease and lightness of His yoke until you come to Him on His terms, take up His yoke, and learn of Him. Then you will find rest unto your soul.

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government officials know best what we are supposed to do with our talents, and that we should abandon all notions of God. The sad part is that most Christians either have not noticed or do not care that their neighbors and their own children are choosing Caesar over God. Once we have transferred authority over our choices and the use of our talents to the control of a secular state, we have chosen sides against God and have made His enemies the custodians of our God-given talents.

God will never stop pouring out His blessings of incredible talent upon the people of this world, whether they acknowledge Him or not. There will continue to be great artists, poets, and mathematicians. We will never run out of Einsteins, Mozarts, and MacArthurs. However, when evil, godless men are in control of the mechanisms of government, they can force the use of their talented citizens to serve their selfish ambitions. Talented people with strong consciences will be forced to dig ditches or will be eliminated as was done in Cambodia, Communist Viet Nam, and Hitler's Germany. Those of weaker consciences subordinate their talents to the will of the secular state in order to survive. Others of no conscience will become the next Joseph Mengele, Pol Pot, or Joseph Stalin.

There is one set of circumstances, however, that we are seeing much more often in free, Western societies. That is the case of talent subverted by moral debauchery. As the influence of Christian values is weakened and subverted throughout society, people with great talent are directing their skills in less productive, more wasteful, and perverse ways. Musicians are producing music with vile, evil lyrics. Teens are spending hundreds of millions of dollars each year on Gangsta Rap, Hip Hop, and Death Metal music. Anti-Christian art is often celebrated with awards and high selling prices. Sexual perversion and death on television and in the movies are honored with the entertainment industry's highest awards.

One of today's news items is about three football players who are hoping be drafted to play professionally. In private interviews leaked to the press all three admitted to using marijuana in the past. Undoubtedly there are others who have also used marijuana and were not exposed by the press. The tragic thing about this news is the treatment the press is giving these three football players. They are celebrating the "honesty" of these players. These athletes have become celebrities for being "truthful." Hardly anyone is pointing out the fact that these players were breaking the law, not to mention some of the most fundamental rules of physical training for their sport. In the meantime the truly honest athletes

who are obeying the law and rigorously training for their sport are completely ignored.

Freedom alone cannot guarantee the useful and free exercise of God's gifts to us. That can only be sustained in a highly moral and honorable society. In other words, within a societal climate of disobedience to the laws of God, skills and talents are quickly channeled into vain and unproductive uses. They become a source of destruction rather than a source of blessing and prosperity. Debauchery breeds poverty, and it also leads to autocracy. In a society without a set of overarching moral values, which Christianity has traditionally provided to Western democracies, men and groups are set against each other, and advantage is gained by force. As order deteriorates, freedom is sacrificed for the sake of order, and one man or one group of men will begin to impose their will upon all others for the purpose of restoring order. At that point the will of God has become totally lost to society, and the will of the most powerful is imposed by force.

It cannot be overstated that our freedom to develop and perfect the talents that God has given us depends on morality. While we have the freedom, every Christian should take stock of his talents and seek to advance them to perfection for the purpose of glorifying our Creator and Provider. We should never be satisfied with anything less than excellence so long as we have breath to pursue it. Laziness and half-hearted effort can never bring honor to God, and they will prevent us from achieving a life that truly satisfies the soul.

One of the great legacies of the Protestant Reformation is the understanding that achieving individual excellence brings glory to our Creator. We see that borne out in the creation of great art, unparalleled musical compositions, democratic governments, great advances in mathematics, and development of the rules and methods of modern science. We often lament that the Reformation did not go far enough. I would contend that we have failed to follow in their footsteps and have rested on their sacrifices instead of building on their legacy and advancing the cause of Christ. It is never up to the past to satisfy the wants of the future. It is up to our present Christian generation hold on to the truth that has been handed down to us and lead this generation forward to a more profound commitment to God. There is a Proverb that reads, "Do you see a man skillful in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before obscure men" (RSV). To use the talents we have to draw attention to the Giver of every good gift is to be about our Father's business.

—Kenneth Ryland

Cooperation or Competition: Symbiosis vs. Evolution

According to the theory of evolution, all animal life on earth has evolved from a common ancestor. This process has supposedly occurred over an immense time and followed a step-by-step sequence from primitive to advanced forms of life. This would mean plant life first appeared and developed, followed much later by the appearance of animal life.

This idea is contradicted by the fossil record, which shows complex plant and animal life first appearing together in the geologic column during the Cambrian era.

Another obstacle to this theory is the interdependent relationships between living things, called symbiosis, in which completely different forms of life depend on each other to exist.

Darwin's theory of biological change was based on competition, or survival of the fittest, among the individuals making up a species. He admitted: "If it could be proved that any part of the structure of any one species had been formed for the exclusive good of another species, it would annihilate my theory, for such could not have been produced through natural selection" (Darwin, p. 164).

Symbiotic relationships pose such a challenge to Darwin's theory, since they have animals and plants of different species cooperating for the benefit of both. For example, the dodo bird ate the seeds and leaves of a plant called *calvaria major*. The bird benefited from having the plant as a food source, but the plant benefited from the bird's gizzard's scratching its seeds as they passed through its digestive system. When the bird became extinct, the plant nearly disappeared as well, because only if its seeds are scratched can they germinate and then grow into a mature plant.

This type of relationship is found in plants and animals. Evolutionists call it coadaptation, but they have yet to come up with a plausible explanation of how this relationship could have evolved in stages.

How can plants that need certain animals to survive have existed before those animals appeared in the first place? And how do animals that need other animals to survive arrive without the other creature already being there?

Symbiosis among lower forms of life

An example of beneficial symbiosis (called mutualism) is between algae and the fungus of lichens. While fungi provide vital protection and moisture to

algae, the algae nourish the fungi with photosynthetic nutrients that keep them alive. As a biology textbook puts it: "Neither population could exist without the other, and hence the size of each is determined by that of the other" (Mary Clark, *Contemporary Biology*, 1973, p. 519).

So which came first, the alga or the fungus? Since neither could exist without the other, according to evolution for both to survive they had to evolve independently of each other, yet appear at exactly the same time and with precisely the right functions.

How could two completely different species evolve separately from distinct ancestors, yet depend on each other to exist? Frankly, the idea that this relationship evolved stretches the imagination beyond the breaking point.

Symbiosis among animals and plants

Another remarkable form of symbiosis is the relationship between bees and plants.

While collecting the precious nectar that provides their hives with food, bees pollinate dozens of species of flowers and agricultural crops. Without this vital pollination, orchards could produce little if any fruit, and fruit trees would not survive for long. How can these plants exist without first being pollinated by bees? On the other hand, how could bees exist without first being provided with the necessary nectar as food? Clearly, both life forms depend on each other for their existence.

In addition, the bee has to carry out pollination in a precisely specific way for the process to work. If the bee visited other species of flowers at random, pollination could not occur, since the pollen of one species of flower does not fertilize another species. Somehow the bee knows to visit only one plant species at a time and at the right season.

Everything in this symbiotic relationship has to be timed exactly right for it to work, and we can be thankful it does. We can enjoy delicious fruits thanks largely to the untiring work of these tiny creatures that unknowingly carry out exactly the right type of pollination that enables many fruits to develop.

One of the most amazing examples of symbiosis is the relationship between the yucca plant and the yucca moth. Each is dependent on the other for its survival.

The yucca plant is physically incapable of pollinating itself to grow more seeds and perpetuate. The yucca moth (*Pronuba*) pollinates the yucca plant while laying its eggs inside the plant.

This is a three-step process. First the moth lands on the stamens (the male part of a flower, which produces pollen) of one of the yucca's flowers. It then makes a sticky ball of pollen that it carries underneath its neck by a special appendage unique to this moth species.

Second, the moth flies to another yucca flower, lands on the pistil (the female part, which grows the fruit and seed) and inserts one of its eggs inside the base of the pistil, the flower's ovary.

Third, the moth climbs the pistil and carefully places pollen from its ball inside the stigma's tube at its top, thus pollinating this part of the flower. The moth repeats the first and second steps of the process for one flower until each ovule has one moth egg in it and each stigma has had pollen put into it.

After hatching, the moth larvae feed on the seeds of the yucca. Remarkably, the moth carefully calibrates the number of its larvae growing inside each flower so the larvae will not consume all the seeds of the yucca—because if they ate all the seeds the yucca plants would stop reproducing, thus eventually dooming the yucca moths as well!

By pollinating the plant, the moth develops food (yucca seeds) for its larvae while ensuring the plant can continue its own kind as well.

But that's not all. The life cycle of the yucca moth is timed so the adult moths emerge in early summer—exactly when the yucca plants are in flower. How could such a process as the yucca moth-plant symbiotic relationship have developed by gradual steps in an evolutionary process that proceeds by blind chance? What conceivable sequence of minor changes over thousands or millions of years could have possibly produced a perfect, mutually beneficial arrangement between plant and animal species?

Darwinism offers no answers. It is obvious that this remarkable relationship appeared abruptly or it never could have developed at all.

Symbiosis among animals

All animal life is equipped with some sort of survival instinct. Each knows what kind of food it needs and a means to avoid or defend itself against any predators. Yet, because of symbiotic relationships, some creatures allow other species, which normally would serve as a meal, to carry out cleaning and hygiene tasks without threat or harm. Scientists call this phenomenon "cleaning symbiosis."

It is common for large fish such as sharks, after consuming smaller fish, to have food remains and

parasites imbedded around their teeth. Eventually these particles can produce disease or a dangerous build-up of matter that can hinder eating. But certain types of small fish exist that are designed to function as biological toothbrushes and can safely clean the teeth of the larger predators.

The cleaning fish fearlessly swim inside the open mouth of the larger fish and carefully eat the debris and parasites from the teeth. How can a predator fish restrain his instincts of getting a free meal by just closing his mouth and chewing, or avoid lashing out because of the irritating cleaning process? These actions go directly against the self-preservation instincts of both animals, yet they methodically carry out this sanitizing procedure. Some species even set up the equivalent of cleaning stations where the larger fish patiently wait for their turn while others ahead of them have their mouths cleaned.

A feathered crocodile cleaner

Such cleaning symbiosis is also found among a species of bird and a reptile. In Egypt the Egyptian plover hops right into the open mouth of the Nile crocodile to remove parasites. After the job is done, whether the crocodile is hungry or not the bird always leaves unscathed.

How could such diverse animals, which normally have a predator-victim relationship, become partners in a cleanup operation? If these procedures evolved, as evolutionists contend must have happened, how many birds would have been eaten alive before the crocodile decided it was in his interest to let one clean its mouth, then proceed to let it escape? In contrast, how many birds would have continued picking crocodile teeth when they saw some of their feathery cousins eaten alive by crocodiles? They certainly are instinctively aware that better and safer ways of getting a meal are available to them.

Such sophisticated relationships among diverse creatures show an underlying intelligent design and forethought at work. Symbiotic relationships are clearly both a great challenge to Darwinism and a great proof of a great Designer and Creator.

Thousands of years ago, while contemplating the wonders of nature around him, David exclaimed something that is as true today as it was then: "O LORD, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all" (Psalm 104:24).

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Church of the East

Church of the East & Abroad is a Christian denomination claiming its origin during the Second Temple era of Judaism. It describes itself as a Nestorian Orthodox Church, and claims a common history with the Assyrian Church of the East, which is denied by the latter.

This church has used many other aliases, such as Malakara Iberian Orthodox Church, Nazaraean Church of Jerusalem, Universal Bible Church - St. Thomas Christian Church, Universal Bible Society, Mar Thoma Nasrani Church of the East & Abroad, Hebrew Catholic Church, and now The Nestorian Orthodox Church - Church of the East & Abroad.

They presently have several small communities in Syria, Israel, India, Burma, Portugal, Brazil, Turkey and in the USA. In the USA they are not registered as non-profit religious organization, but they do take donations and sell various products. Their membership numbers have never been given, so it can be assumed that they are a very small association of small communities world-wide.

As with many other Christian denominations, the Church of the East & Abroad claims an Apostolic Succession. They believe that its patriarchs are descendants of Desposyni, inheritors of the true belief from direct teaching, lining up to the first Church of Jerusalem and the See of Babylon (said to be founded by Saint Thomas the Apostle). They also believe that its line of patriarchs originates from James the Just and the relatives of the Virgin Mary, making it a blood line directly from Jesus Christ. Other links with the bloodline and teaching of Christ were claimed by asserting that it shared Patriarchs with the Assyrian Church of the East. The church claimed that the Desposyni were leaders of a Jewish community which has moved to Mesopotamia during the second century, while keeping a formal obedience to the Patriarch of Antioch. In the sixteenth century the center of the church became a Burmese community. In the last century, the church sources claim that their see moved to India, then to Portugal, and later to the USA.

Currently its leader, Mar Michai, lives at Mishqana, a private property in Camden, Tennessee. Believers hold that he is above all human judgment and they have to sign a Loyalty Oath to him and his family, under the punishment of excommunication.

The believers state that they depend upon their scriptures, traditions, revelations and the magisterium of the Church for their faith, morals, practices and customs. They assume the Essene belief of the duty to guard over the original faith of Jerusalem, e.g., they observe both Sunday and the Sabbath, the Kosher food and Torah observance. They claim to be the only true church, and call all other churches Klal Kristiani (i.e. all of Pauline Christianity), which is vehemently condemned as corrupted, westernized, paganized and anti-Semitic.

It is said that in 2003 some 1000 Burmese Christians joined the Church of the East & Abroad, and were granted the name Burmese Orthodox Church of the East. Subsequently, on 22 May, 2004, the church's patriarch declared himself king on an area in Burma, "along the border of Thailand extending from Laos to the Adaman Sea," which he calls Nettara and which is under rebel control. The church claims that the area hosts about 25,000 Christian refugees.

It is also said that on 9 November, 2005, the church formed a Sanhedrin of 70 secret rabbis, whose location is not declared.

There is no independent confirmation about any of the previous statements, and the church seems to be small and to have been established in the 20th century.

Submitted by Sidney Davis

The source of this information is from my research on the Internet. The URL for the site is long and complicated.

<http://www.answers.com/main/ntquery;jsessionid=5p5dfctknkom0?dsid=2222&dekey=Church+of+the+East+%26+Abroad&sbid=lc12a&linktext=Church%20of%20the%20East%20and%20Abroad>

The Church in the World

MEXICO: PACT SPARES EVANGELICALS IN CHIAPAS FROM EXPULSION

"Traditionalist Catholics" grudgingly sign accord after state officials quash their demands.

SAN CRISTOBAL DE LAS CASAS, Mexico, April 24, 2007 (Compass Direct News) – Local political bosses who had voted to expel 65 Christians from a small town near here grudgingly signed an agreement on April 24, 2007 to let the evangelicals stay in their homes.

Evangelical pastor and attorney Esdras Alonso Gonzalez told Compass the town bosses (caciques) of Los Pozos, 29 kilometers (18 miles) from San Cristobal, showed up here for the formal signing of the accord armed with demands that put extra conditions on terms they verbally agreed to on February 28.

Alonso said the proposal of the caciques and other "traditionalist Catholics," who practice a mixture of indigenous ritual and Roman Catholicism, called for the Christians to pay for religious festivals plus fines for refusing to contribute in the past. The evangelicals' refusal to help pay for and participate in the festivals, which include drunken revelry and what they regard as idolatrous adoration of saints, was the reason the town officials voted to expel them last Dec. 23.

"The caciques' attitude was that they wanted the brothers to sign another document obligating them to contribute funds for past festivals, and for the next festival on May 3, and pay fines they had supposedly accumulated," Alonso said. "But the state government did not allow it."

The signing of the agreement by the caciques and Los Pozos Catholic leaders, bosses from the municipality of Huistan (to which the Los Pozos community belongs), evangelicals and state officials at 1 p.m. came nine days after traditionalist Catholics and civil authorities destroyed a Pentecostal church building in Ollas, a community of nearby San Juan Chamula municipality, on April 14.

"They destroyed the temple in Chamula, and the government feels very obligated to maintain calm," Alonso said. "The state government is very commit-

ted now, because it's not in their interest that the problem expand further. They left it clear that there would be full religious freedom."



Esdras Alonso Gonzalez

It remains to be seen, he added, whether the Los Pozos town bosses will follow through on the accord's stipulation that they restore water lines and electricity cut off from some evangelical families since January 30.

"The caciques signed it, but we want them to go ahead now and fulfill it," he said. "The state government officials also signed it, we'll see if they honor it. Now they have to respect this document."

The agreement also calls for local authorities to restore firewood-gathering rights and resume distributing federal food aid and fertilizers they have diverted from the Tzotzil Maya Christians.

Alonso said the signing of the accord could prove to be a watershed moment in Mexican human rights in that it sets a precedent for state authority to head off conflicts before they fester into decades-old, major confrontations. He told Compass the accord does not seek religious tolerance – which unduly assumes evangelical faith by nature can only be tolerated – but rather the constitutional guarantee of religious freedom.

"In the agreement," Alonso told Compass, "we're not asking for anything – we're demanding a right that the brothers have by law."

Custom-Busting

Los Pozos and other town officials throughout Mexico force evangelicals to help pay for and participate in the traditionalist Catholic processions and revelry based on a legal argument drawn from the Mexican constitution's protection of indigenous "uses and customs."

The constitutional article is meant to protect indigenous customs from government obliteration, said

Victor Raul Flota, president of the Chiapas Bar of Christian Attorneys.

“The native traditionalist Catholics speak of ‘uses and customs,’ but in a completely different sense,” Flota told Compass. “It is supposed to refer to their language not being lost, or that the government not attack their cultural traditions – the work that they do, the way they do it. But when these caciques speak of ‘uses and customs,’ they’re thinking, ‘Here it’s custom to beat and fight, to rape and to jail people different from us.’”

Flota said the ignorance of local authorities is at the heart of the small town persecution of Christians.

“I remember in 2002, because I worked on a human rights commission, I was surrounded by these political bosses,” he said. “We almost came to exchanging blows. They’re completely ignorant.”

Nor can economic interests be dismissed. Los Pozos Alas de Aguila (Eagle’s Wings) church pastor Reynaldo Gomez Ton said the caciques and traditionalist Catholics benefit from the sales of alcohol and other items used in the festivals.

“They don’t want to lose the funds from the traditional customs, and this is what they want, that everyone have a single faith,” Gomez Ton told Compass. “But if we’ve accepted Christ, we have to continue in that faith. If they love and follow another god, then let them love him, but let’s be free. Let there be love, let there be respect between both faiths.”



Mercedes Gomez Ton

“They threaten us with rape, and they threaten that they want to kill us,” Mercedes Gomez Ton told Compass. “They ridiculed and humiliated my mother, to the point of threatening that they wanted to kill her.”

Gomez Ton said her mother was among 19 people jailed for 24 hours after the traditionalist

Catholics and authorities tore down their church in 2003.

“They don’t want us to change from their customs,” she said. “They jailed us, and when we wanted to clear things up, the authorities and the president of the [Huistan] municipality didn’t want to help us, because they’re on their side and didn’t want to grant us our rights.”

Jamestown and Huegenots—Continued from page 9

(Source: <http://www.plimoth.org/library/Thanksgiving/alternat.htm> “Plimouth-on-the-Web,” Claimants for the First Thanksgiving, pp. 1-2)

The Final Prayer of Jean Ribault: Establishing a Covenant with Zion

When Jean Ribault uttered his last words on the land, as he was being speared through, his words were a prayer from Psalm 132: (Personalized) “Lord, remember Jean Ribault, and all his afflictions: How he swear unto the LORD, and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob; Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids, Until I find out a place for the LORD, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob” (Psalm 132:1-5).

Clearly, the heart-cry of this Huguenot leader was to devote his life to establishing “an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.” As Jean Ribault lay dying in the sands of Matanzas inlet that day, 442 years ago, his sacrifice established our land as a permanent “place for the Lord.” May we never forget this legacy, as we remain in covenant relationship today with Zion — the land of the mighty God of Jacob.

Source: Capitol Hill Prayer Partners, April 24, 2007 (chpponline.blogspot.com)

2007 Directory of Sabbath-observing Groups

We are now working on the new directory. If you are a Sabbath-keeping group or organization, send information to BSA at 3316 Alberta Drive, Gillette, WY 82718. We need a good phone number where interested people can contact you easily. If you would like an input form, you may call 1-888-687-5191. One third (1/3) to one half (1/2) of a page is free. You may pay for additional space if you wish to add more information or place an ad for your group.

The Directory is used by hundreds of people to visit churches while traveling, or to find a home church. If you have already sent information but do not hear from us by early spring of 2007, please call the toll free number to make sure you are included.

The BSA office will be moving to the state of Washington in May or June of 2007. Our future address will be announced in an upcoming edition of The Sabbath Sentinel magazine.

Our tentative print date for the upcoming Directory is the fall of 2007.

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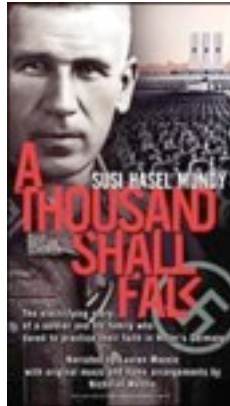
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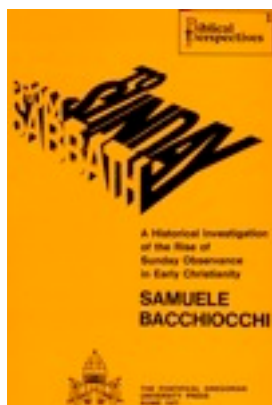
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These books by Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi are indeed a theological treasure (\$15.00 each). Dr. Bacchiocchi is the first non-Catholic to graduate from the Pontifical Gregorian University of Rome. He has authored several best sellers, and during the last few years he has conducted weekend seminars in many parts of the world. He is a huge advocate for the Sabbath, and Christians travel great distances to hear him speak.

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