

The Sabbath Sentinel

September–October 2007



Gamblers move quickly
to win the hand of "Lady Luck."

BSA — The Bible Sabbath Association

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

The Sabbath Sentinel

September-October 2007 Volume 58, No. 5 Issue 527

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Our Cover: All over the world societies are dealing with addicted gamblers. These games of chance steal their resources, rob their productivity, and enslave their patrons. (Source: iStockphoto.com)

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Subscriptions: Call (888) 687-5191 or write to: The Bible Sabbath Association, 802 N. W. 21st Ave., Battleground, WA 98604 or contact us at the office nearest you (see international addresses below). *The Sabbath Sentinel* is sent free of charge to all who request it. Your subscription is provided by the voluntary contributions of the membership of the The Bible Sabbath Association.

Donations are gratefully accepted and are tax deductible in the United States. Those who choose to voluntarily support this international work to promote the Sabbath and proclaim gospel of the kingdom of God are welcomed as contributors.

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BSA Board Elections and The CoG7 Conference

BSA Board Elections

In a few weeks we will be mailing out ballots to all BSA members (members only) to elect new board members to serve on our board of directors. Our board consists of 12 members who serve four-year terms. If you are a BSA member and would like to be considered for a position on our board of directors, please contact Shirley Nickels, our office manager and a BSA board member, at our Battleground, Washington, office, and indicate your desire to be considered as a candidate for election to the board. (Please see the inside front cover or the back cover of the magazine for our address.)

A nominating committee of current board members will compile a slate of nominees. These nominees will then be placed on a ballot, which will be sent to all current BSA members. Each member will mark the 12 board nominees that he or she thinks should be on our board and mail the ballot back to our office. We will tally the scores and the 12 nominees with the most votes will become our board of directors for the next four-year term (2007 to 2011).

The CoG7 Conference

I would like to thank Whaid Rose, president of the General Conference of the Church of God (Seventh Day) for inviting me and my wife to the Church's biennial North American Conference, held during the first week of this past July in Overland Park, Kansas. It was truly a delight for us to spend time at the conference and to get to know some of the church's members.

There was a lot to learn with presentations on such subjects as personal money management, church history, dealing with abuse, mentoring and discipleship. There were several sessions given in Spanish for those who traveled to the Conference from Mexico and other Spanish-speaking areas. Meeting attendance reached as high as 1,400.

One of the things that impressed us was the spirit of unity that pervaded the Conference atmosphere. When there is bickering and discontent, it tends to poison the atmosphere, and my wife and I happily encountered none of that.



Church of God 7th Day North American Conference, held in Overland Park, Kansas, during the first week of July.

Our Obsession with Gambling

by *Kenneth Ryland*

In a few short days we will be voting on whether to allow casino-style gaming in our county. I plan to vote "no." How would you vote?

There is a lot of ambivalence among Christians about gambling. Some say that gambling "in moderation" is fine while others declare that gambling in any form is a sin. I do not intend to present a lengthy theological argument against gambling, but I will make the case that Christians should think twice before plunking down their money on the craps table or at the roulette wheel.

The National Gambling Impact Study Commission Report

In June of 1999 the Federal Government issued a report on the effects of legalized gambling in the United States. The final report had some startling conclusions. In summarizing these conclusions, the Missouri Synod of the Lutheran Church released the following report:

Americans now wager about \$600 billion a year, which is more than is spent on groceries! In 1992, it was \$329 billion a year. In 1974, it was just \$17 billion. That is a staggering increase of 3,500 percent over 25 years! And the gambling commission noted in its report that "with little stretch of the imagination, it is conceivable that, some day, gambling enterprises may be franchised and, at least, in parts of the country, become as common as fast food outlets are today." Gambling today is not simply harmless family entertainment, as advertising for commercial and state-sponsored gambling seems to indicate. Millions of people have become addicted to gambling and have brought untold suffering on themselves and their families.

We now know some very real and troubling facts about gambling and addiction. According to the gambling commission report: "In 1997 ... the Harvard Medical School Division on Addictions ... estimated at that time that there were 7.5 million American adult problem and pathological gamblers and 7.9 million American adolescent problem and pathological gamblers."

That is more than 15 million people having difficulty with gambling and more than half of them are children. This means that our nation's youth is disproportionately impacted by gambling.

Or, to put it another way, there are currently more adult and adolescent problem and patho-

logical gamblers in America than people residing in New York City. There are six times as many adolescent problem or pathological gamblers in America than men and women actively serving in our combined armed forces—the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines and Coast Guard.

Even though the National Report is several years old, it is indicative of what we can expect as gambling proliferates and politicians sell government-sponsored gaming to the public as an alternative to raising taxes. The simple fact is that as gambling increases, so do crime, prostitution, addiction, divorce, and domestic abuse. For example, in Atlantic City, New Jersey, where promoters and politicians sold the citizens on converting Atlantic City into the "Las Vegas of the East," crime rose 258% in the first 10 years.

Gambling in the News

Recently a lot of professional football fans in the U.S. have been riveted to the news of Michael Vick, a famous quarterback, who was indicted by a federal grand jury for housing and actively participating in a big-stakes dog fighting operation at his home. Mr. Vick has since pleaded guilty to the charges and will be spending time in jail for these illegal activities. Americans were stunned and outraged by the callous cruelty to the dogs. Those that lost or didn't perform well were strangled, beaten to death, electrocuted, or drowned. Most Americans cannot even fathom such cruelty, but there is an entire subculture that thrives on activities such as these. Even though the public has been fixated on the horrifying cruelty committed against these dogs, the underlying theme of this subculture is high-stakes gambling. If there were no money on the line in these dog fights, this inhuman subculture would vanish overnight.

Then there is the case of the professional basketball referee. Recently it came to light that the FBI has been investigating organized crime's involvement in illegal betting on sports. In the course of their investigation they discovered that one referee had gambled and lost large sums of money to the crime syndicate and, according to news accounts, had been making calls during games that changed the betting odds. This, of course, greatly increased the profits of the people controlling the betting. The referee has since resigned from professional basketball and pled guilty to the charges against him.

Continued on page 16

The Greatest Wonder

by Kenneth Westby



The great Christian thinker and apologist of the last century, G. K. Chesterton, observed: "The world will never starve for want of wonders, but only for want of wonder."

The world is jam packed with wonders of nature everywhere you look—including your own backyard. Every summer millions will visit our national parks—Great Smoky Mountain, North Cascades, Bryce Canyon, King's Canyon, Yosemite, Grand Canyon, etc.—and marvel at the natural beauty. The wonder of the creation will move some to praise God for his imagination, creative brilliance, and artistry. Others will just see a pretty scene not appreciating it as a wonder of the God-created order. Such ambivalent people are starved of wonder and their attitude borders on blasphemy, at least in my opinion.

Then there are the wonders of man's creation. The Seven Wonders of the ancient world have been long eclipsed by the works of modern man—his millions and millions of inventions and products, his roads, skyscrapers, machines, water, land and sea vehicles, electronics, science and software. The human brain is a marvel and to realize that it (we) takes our design from the Image of God. Now that is a wonder!

The wonders recorded in Scripture, however, are of another kind from those observed in nature, or at the gifted hand of man. Wonders figure quite prominently in the Old and New Testaments and represent special displays of a supernatural sort: the plagues upon Egypt; the parting of the Red Sea; a non-consumed burning bush; fire from heaven; healings, raising of the dead; manna, feeding thousands from a few loaves of bread, etc. The New Testament does not use the normal Greek word for "miracles" (*thauma*), but other Greek words are used which in modern translations are usually rendered "signs," or "wonders." They are also called the "mighty works of God," or in Latin, "*Magnalia Dei*" — the magnificent wonders of God.

There are some in the Christian community who are always seeking after "signs and wonders" which to them might be speaking in "unknown tongues" or some churchy, charismatic, often highly emotional, ecstasy. I find most of these weak imitations of what we find in Scripture. In fact, seeking after "signs," according to Jesus, is the opposite of what the righteous should be doing.

But please note: There is a wonder of the first magnitude taking place daily in the lives of millions. Most on earth are either ignorant of it or choose to ignore it. I speak of the transformation of the human spirit into the Image of God, or as Paul put it, the Mind of Christ. Jesus was in the perfect image of Yahweh, the Heavenly Father. His mind was thoroughly converted from man's normally selfish, fleshly mind into a spiritual mind like unto His Father's. To have the Mind of Christ is to have God's virtues of character—love, kindness, mercy, and justice. It is to share God's purposes, to want what he wants for us and for the world. It is to have God's world view instead of that offered by a darkened society whose ignorance masquerades as enlightenment and wisdom.

This process of transformation is a wonder beyond the power of words to describe. It is what God has been working at from eternity and for Him it is Job One. God transforming man, with man's willing consent and wholehearted cooperation, into His mental and spiritual image is a wonder beyond wonders! How can it be? I know not. The power of God—God's Holy Spirit—is required and active at every stage of this transformational wonder.

This great wonder of conversion is not something that can be put on a church reader-board to boost Sunday attendance. It is a wonder quietly taking place in the daily lives of millions. It is taking place in your life if you have yielded it to God. Only when this transformation becomes universal will we have a new world of happiness and peace. It happens individual by individual—changing selfish humans into people pure in spirit. Think about it. Be in wonder of it. It is more spectacular than Niagara Falls, the Aurora Borealis, the innumerable galaxies, or any of the marvelous creatures that fill our earth.

Of this mightiest of God's mighty works, let us not be, as G. K. Chesterton wrote, "want of wonder."

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.



The Failed Promises of Legalized Gambling

by John Paul Howell

Forty-two of the fifty United States, and the city of Washington, D.C., all have a lottery. But, for many of these states, their lottery does not produce the amount of revenue the politicians expected, so many of them have banded together to sponsor lotteries with even higher-valued prizes. However, for some of these states, it still is not enough. These states now allow other games of chance such as slot machines and video poker machines. But guess what? For some state officials it still is not enough, so they have even allowed Las Vegas style casinos to operate within their jurisdictions.

Many reasons are put forth as to why a state needs to sponsor various forms of gambling. The most popular reason seems to be the funding of public education. Another popular reason, typically used for slots machine parlors and casinos, is to spur economic development in the area. Yet another popular reason is that it is “taxation by choice,” meaning that only those who choose to play are also choosing to pay this extra “tax.”

Although these are compelling arguments, the Bible states that, “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Proverbs 14:12). Furthermore, the Bible indicates that there are only four morally legitimate ways for money to exchange hands — and gambling is not one of them:

1. Through legitimate work as shown in 1 Timothy 5:18, Luke 10:7, and 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12.
2. By purchasing goods and services at fair prices as shown in Genesis 23:1-18, 33:18-19, Proverbs 31:16, and John 4:8.
3. By receiving an inheritance or a return on godly investments as shown in Proverbs 6:6-8 and 13:22, Mt 25:14-30, and in 2 Corinthians 9:6.
4. By giving it to others as shown in Acts 20:35, Ephesians 4:28, and 2 Corinthians 9:7. Since gambling is not a godly means for monetary exchange, “the end thereof are the ways of death.” Just what are the “ways of death” caused by gambling?

Corruption within Government

There is much more to gambling than just selling lottery tickets or operating a casino. Running a gambling operation incurs significant costs to the state that are seldom, if ever, fully covered by the “proceeds paid to the state.” Studies^[1] have shown that casinos’ costs exceed their economic benefits. There are costs to the states in bidding and awarding contracts for the administration of the games.

There are “lottery agents” or “gaming agents” to manage. (These are the retail outlets that sell lottery tickets or manage video poker or slot machines.) There are state gaming licenses and permits to manage in order for slots parlors or casinos to operate. And every behind-the-scenes aspect of a gambling operation provides an opportunity for illegal activities to occur either among private individuals or elected officials. How many state tax dollars are spent each year, above and beyond the “proceeds paid to the state,” to cover these costs of regulation, oversight, and law enforcement directly related to the gambling operations? And just how trustworthy are those whose job it is to provide the needed oversight — especially when dealing with the excessive amounts of money involved?

An Ungodly Redistribution of Wealth

Gambling is nothing more than throwing your money away. It hurts all who participate. But according to statistics produced by the industry itself, it seems to hurt those who are the most vulnerable in society. This can be readily seen by examining the statistics published by the Maryland State Lottery^[2].

In 2006 the Maryland Lottery reported sales of over \$1.5 billion dollars. This means that every man, woman, and child living in the state during 2006^[3] spent \$278 on lottery products. For a family of four, that is \$1112 or almost the average value of a Maryland property tax bill. Since this is a “taxation by choice,” not everybody participates. This means that the average cost per participating family is much higher. According to the Maryland Lottery, the typical player has a household income of less than \$75,000. This income, according to the Maryland Association



In Tennessee gamblers at this casino-on-wheels play the slot machines. (Source: iStockPhotos)

of Realtors, is just less than what is required to purchase a median priced home (\$250,000). So by their own admission, almost half of the households who choose to play the Maryland Lottery don't earn enough to purchase their own home!

But the Maryland Lottery is quick to point out that over \$900 million worth of prizes (57.8% of sales) was paid out. This, of course, was only to the winners. Although the Maryland Lottery does not list the total number of "winners," based on the press releases that were available on their web site when this article was written, 238 people (1 out of 23,600 state residents) won a prize of \$10,000 or more in the past year. So for every single "winner" of \$10,000, 23,599 "losers" spent over \$6.5 million on worthless lottery tickets — \$6.5 million that they probably could not afford to lose in the first place.

Also, the Maryland Lottery is also quick to point out that they returned a little over \$500 million to the state. This equates to a payment of \$89 per citizen or \$356 per family of four. In other words, if Maryland would raise the property tax rate by 1/7 of 1%, more than enough revenue would be generated to cover all the money generated by the lottery.

A Huge Loss to the Economy

All forms of gambling do nothing to improve the economy. Using the numbers from the Maryland Lottery, just think about this.

First, the Maryland Lottery sucked \$1.9 billion out of the economy with no goods or services produced in return. No cars, furniture, white goods, clothing, or food — nothing — was purchased with this money.

Second, the Maryland Lottery "returned to the state" \$500 million, but let's be honest; the state would have received that money anyway through higher taxes, so the lottery is not really providing a new revenue stream to the state. Even though the Maryland Lottery returned \$900 million in the form of "prizes," this is really not adding anything to the economy because this money would have been spent anyway if the lottery were not in existence. In actuality, the Maryland Lottery is an economy drain on the Maryland economy of at least \$500 million each year. I say "at least" because of all the hidden costs associated with running the lottery, taking care of those with gambling addictions caused by the lottery, fighting the crime that is indirectly caused by the lottery, etc.

Everything that has been said about the ill effects of the Maryland Lottery can easily be shown to be true about the other 42 government sponsored lotteries in the United States. It can also be shown to be true about the other forms of legalized gambling across the nation. Legalized gambling is not the goose that laid the golden egg that many people think it is ("for the ends thereof are the ways of death"), and the states that sponsor gambling know the high price that has to be paid to maintain this form of state sponsored "entertainment."

End Notes

- [1] "Casino's costs far outweigh their economic benefits, economist says," October 1, 2001, News Bureau, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, <http://www.news.uiuc.edu/biztips/01/10gamble.html>.
- [2] "Maryland State Lottery Agency Comprehensive Annual Financial Report, for the Years Ended June 30, 2006, and 2005," Accounting Department of the Maryland State Lottery Agency, http://www.mdlottery.com/resources/CAFR_06.pdf
- [3] *2006 Maryland Statistical Handbook*, Maryland Department of Planning, May 2007, http://www.mdp.state.md.us/msdc/md_statistical_handbook06.pdf

John Paul Howell lives in the Baltimore, Maryland, area with his wife and two children. John Paul is a member of the BSA board of directors. By profession John Paul is an electrical engineer and software developer, specializing in telecommunications and computer networks.

The Torah-Friendly Reformation

"It's a whole new paradigm"

by Daniel Botkin



paradigm ('par-a-dim) example, pattern; esp. an outstandingly clear or typical example or archetype (Webster's)

"My project is a whole new paradigm," says one of the cubicle drones at a staff meeting in a *Dilbert* cartoon. "What's a paradigm?" asks Dilbert.

"Heh-heh... What's a paradigm... Funny."

"Seriously," Dilbert responds, "what is it?"

"You know," Dilbert's co-worker answers. "Paradigm, paradigmish. As in 'This project is a paradigm.' But enough about my project. Tell us about your project."

"It's a paradigm," Dilbert says.

As another worker at the table announces "My project is a paradigm too," Dilbert whispers to the first worker, "They bought it."

The word paradigm has been around for centuries, but it seems to have become something of a buzzword in the world of academics and corporate business in just the last two decades or so. I think the first time I ever heard the word was in 1985 when I was in a linguistics course at a university.

As the above dialog from the *Dilbert* cartoon illustrates, paradigm is one of those words that a lot of people use without really knowing exactly what it means. Often it is used in the phrase "a paradigm shift," which has become a buzz-phrase in its own right. A few years ago I was at an art gallery and saw a piece of art titled Paradigm Shift. It was a ceramic piece, a plain, smooth lump of clay that had been glazed and fired. On top of the lump of clay were two dimes, glued at the ends of two parallel grooves, which made it appear that the two dimes had shifted their position when the clay was still wet – thus, "a pair o' dimes shift." I suspect the artist was being sarcastic and poking fun at people's over-use of the buzz-phrase.

People often use buzz-words and buzz-phrases in an effort to impress others. Technical terms like paradigm, synergy, and proactive sound like very meaningful and important words to laymen who aren't really sure exactly what the words mean. (Never mind the fact that half of the people who use

the words aren't really sure of their meaning either.) Those who utter such important-sounding words must be very important people. After all, if someone uses contemporary, cutting-edge vocabulary, he must be a contemporary, cutting-edge expert in his field of labor, right?

In spite of my aversion to the use of buzz-words, I find the phrase "paradigm shift" to be useful when describing major theological changes. The Reformation of the 16th century was a completely new paradigm. The current Messianic/ Hebrew Roots/ philo-Jewish/ Torah-friendly movement (or whatever you prefer to call it) is also a whole new paradigm. There was a major theological paradigm shift in the 16th century, and there is a major theological paradigm shift occurring in this present generation.

As the Webster's definition above states, a paradigm is an example or pattern, an outstandingly dear or typical example or archetype of something. In the realm of theology, we might describe a paradigm as the theological foundation from which the Scriptures are viewed. This foundation is based upon a thesis which is known or believed or assumed to be true. Regardless of whether the thesis is true or false, it provides the foundation for the paradigm.

In the pre-Reformation world, the theological foundation for most Christians was the Roman Catholic Church. The individual Christian's understanding of the Scriptures was filtered through Roman Catholicism. The Scriptures meant whatever the Roman Catholic Church said they meant, and that was the end of the discussion, because that was the paradigm. But then the Reformers stood up and challenged that paradigm. When the Reformers said, "Sola scriptura," the Scriptures then became the paradigm from which to view the Church. Now instead of the Scriptures being viewed through the lenses of the Church, the Church was being viewed through the lenses of the Scriptures. And through the lenses of the Scriptures, the Roman Catholic Church was weighed and found wanting. A theological paradigm shift had occurred, and it brought great and wonderful changes into the lives of those who loved the Lord.

The theological paradigm shift which is taking place in our generation is very similar to the one which took place during the Reformation. In today's Protestant Christian world, the theological paradigm for most Christians is Protestant theology and doctrines. The individual's understanding of the Scriptures is filtered through whichever denominational (or non-denominational) teaching he is exposed to. To the typical Protestant, the Scriptures mean whatever his denomination or his pastor says they mean, and that is the end of the discussion, because that is the paradigm. But in recent decades, Torah-friendly Reformers have been standing up and challenging that paradigm. We are really saying the same thing that the 16th century Reformers said, namely, "Sola scriptura"—only the Scriptures have the final authority in determining how God's people should live and worship. We are telling our beloved Christian brothers and sisters to stop viewing the Scriptures through the lenses of the Church (Catholic or Protestant), and start viewing the Church through the lenses of the Scriptures—not to condemn the Church, but that the Church might be saved from its erroneous anti-Torah paradigm.

I experienced my personal paradigm shift in the late 1980s. I had been reading and studying the Bible intently for over 17 years. I was very familiar with the content of the Scriptures, Old Testament as well as New Testament. I could read the Hebrew Scriptures in Hebrew, and I had taken a course in New Testament Greek and had done independent Greek study as well. My Christian friends thought that I had a marvelous knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures and that I was theologically and doctrinally sound. I did have a good understanding of a lot of things, and I was theologically and doctrinally sound in many areas. But the one important area where I was theologically and doctrinally deficient was in my view of the Torah, God's Law.

Like most Protestants, I had been taught to view the commandments of the Old Testament from an antinomian (anti-Law) paradigm. My view of the Torah was based on the mistaken idea that Jesus did away with the Old Testament Law, because the Law was just external legalism and bondage, in opposition to internal grace and liberty in Christ. So anything that I read in the Bible about the Law was filtered through this paradigm.

As I continued to study the Scriptures and seek the Lord, I eventually noticed that my paradigm – my theological foundation – was beginning to shift like sand where the Torah was concerned. I was

puzzled and concerned when I realized that Matthew 5:17-19 could not possibly fit anywhere in my paradigm ("Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets... 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").

I noticed many other verses that could not fit any place in my anti-Torah paradigm – verses like Romans 2:13 ("the doers of the law shall be justified"); Romans 3:31 ("Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish [NIV, 'up-hold'] the law"); Romans 7:12 ("therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good"); Romans 7:22 ("For I delight in the law of God after the inward man"); Romans 8:7 ("the carnal mind... is not subject to the law of God"); 1 John 3:9 & 4 ("Whosoever is born of God doth not

Like most Protestants, I had been taught to view the commandments of the Old Testament from an antinomian (anti-Law) paradigm.

commit sin"... "Sin is the transgression of the law"); 1 John 5:3 ("this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments"); 1 John 2:4 ("He that saith, 'I know Him,' and keepeth not His command-

ments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him"); Isaiah 8:20 ("To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them"); and many other passages, including Psalm 19 and Psalm 119, the longest chapter in the Bible.

I realized that these verses and many others were totally incompatible with my paradigm. These verses could not fit into my paradigm – not unless I wanted to be dishonest and deliberately twist the meaning of the words and force them to conform to my faulty paradigm. I did not want to be dishonest and deliberately twist the Scriptures. Therefore I had to either hold onto my paradigm and ignore and reject the dear, simple statements in all these verses, or admit that my paradigm was faulty, and undergo a personal paradigm shift in regards to the Torah. To put it in simple terms, I needed a paradigm that would accommodate both law and grace, without excluding or diminishing either one.

The way in which I underwent my paradigm shift was by re-examining the Scriptures from a different point of view, a Torah-friendly view. I was not yet convinced that new covenant disciples were actually supposed to do those Torah commandments which

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Gambling: Harmless Fun or Addictive Trap?



by June Narber

In the churches at large, both Protestant and Sabbath-keeping, gambling has been labeled as a sin. Is it really sin or is it something more damaging in terms of human behavior and addiction?

While sin is clearly defined as the breaking of God's eternal law as summarized in the Ten Commandments, there is a correlation between some behaviors associated with addictive gambling that include coveting, lying, and having an idol in place of God. On the other hand, random gambling, such as buying an occasional lottery ticket just for the fun of it can hardly be put into the same category as addictive gambling. So how do we approach this subject?

Coveting is the desire to possess something that is not ours. When a person sees another's money and belongings and yearns to have them, that is sin. When a person gambles on a regular basis for the purpose of obtaining money to gain what that person is coveting, by biblical standards this is certainly sin. On the other hand, if a person hopes to win the lottery and buys a lottery ticket on rare occasions, is this really covetousness or just a random act that is more for amusement or entertainment?

Idolatry or bowing down to an icon can be a by-product of a gambling addiction when this is the obsession of the addict above all else, even family and God. When an individual literally digs in the sofa looking for a dollar to spend on a lottery ticket or blows an entire pay check on the lottery or some other game of chance, this is a form of idolatry which puts the game of chance above God and His laws.

Scripture gives us guidelines about work and responsibility. God commanded man to work by the sweat of his brow; we are told to observe the way of the ant to learn his work habits; and the person who refuses to work should not be given food to compensate for his laziness. For those individuals who live to gamble and gamble to live and who rely on it for their survival, this is a deadly habit that can destroy their lives and the lives of their loved ones. When any human activity dominates a person's life above all else, it is just plain unhealthy. When a woman or man puts his entire paycheck on the line at the craps table or a poker game instead of paying bills or buying

food for their families, how can anyone say that this person is a responsible adult? Scripture also says that if a man will not provide for his family, he is worse than an unbeliever. This type of irresponsible behavior must be censured for pastor and layman alike. Those with addictive behaviors should go out of their way to avoid all forms of gambling. However, those who pay their bills and never would consider spending more than a dollar or so occasionally on a game of chance strictly for entertainment cannot be judged in the same category as the compulsive gambler.

As for churches desiring to preach the word of truth, it would certainly be a good idea to teach about gambling addiction and how church members can avoid it. However, if a brother or sister happens to be witnessed buying a lottery ticket at a gas station, they should not be ostracized for this. Each of us has to answer to God for our choices in life, and sometimes we need to back off from our tendency to judge others—especially for something that might be insignificant in the end. As a Christian we have an obligation to help a brother or sister in trouble, but sometimes we see “trouble” where there is none, where we have no evidence that anything serious is going on.

The Church today is grappling with a host of serious issues: alcohol and drug addiction, adultery and rampant premarital sex among Christian youths, and divorce and remarriage often among members of the same church—just to name a few. Gambling addiction is serious and needs to be dealt with, but it is only symptomatic of the weakness of our faith in Christ and our lack of commitment to live out our faith in obedience to our Creator. We want our own way and are willing to live in sin in order to satisfy our own will and gratify our desires. Until Christians are willing to renew their commitment to live in obedience to the will of God and follow the example of Christ, gambling addiction and all these other sins will continue to plague the Church.

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Why Theology?

by Brian Knowles

Let's face it: formal theology can be a byzantine pain in the rear end. It is a seemingly endless process that never seems to resolve anything with certainty. Why then, does it exist? What's the point of "doing" theology? Solomon, who was a studious type, concluded after a lifetime of study: "Of making many books there is no end, and much study wears the body" (Ecclesiastes 12:12b).

Most of us bookworms can attest to the truth of that statement. Of course many Christians, in our action-oriented society, are not bookworms. To be bookish is to be boring. Study is drudgery. Who has time to "wade through" dull, dense books written in academic jargon that drive one to a theological dictionary with every other sentence? How can you get anything done if you're "wasting your time" reading? Ready, fire, aim! That's the American way.

Theology is something that belongs in the brackish backwaters of some academic swamp on the outskirts of some Bible belt seminary town — right? Much of the time — yes! Much of theology is majoring in the minors, nitpicking over minutia, and trying to say something, no matter how nuanced, that hasn't been said before. Many academics are simply showing off their ability to tweak the details one more time. That said however, there is a legitimate place in the Church for formal theology.

Defining Theology

The word "theology" is made up from two Greek words: *theos* (God) and *logos* (word or reason). Theology is simply reasoned discourse about God. What's wrong with that? Nothing at all.

But how is it possible to reason about a God whom many deny exists? To atheists, theology has no subject matter. As Maurice Wiles writes: "...the elusiveness of its essential subject-matter gives to theology a highly problematic character," (*What is Theology*, p. 2). It is possible for a geologist to have a reasoned discussion about

his subject-matter because he's standing on it. But God is, by definition, a Spirit who is invisible (John 4:24; Colossians 1:15).

Unless God manifests himself in some concrete or visible way — that is, creates a "theophany" — we cannot see, feel or touch him. The word "theophany" is derived, like "theology" from two Greek words: *theos*, "God" and *phainesthai*, "to appear." An example of a theophany is found in Exodus 33:17-23.

Furthermore, God has revealed himself in nature (Psalm 19:1) and in the Bible, which contains revelation of him given through prophets and inspired writers. According to the biblical record, God has acted and appeared in history and some who were there to witness it have recorded it. Consequently, we have an abundance of source material for conducting "a reasoned discourse about God."

Another popular way to define theology is "faith seeking understanding."

The Place of Apologetics

That said, the issue becomes precisely, what has God revealed of himself and of his will for mankind? What does the natural world teach us about God, and what can we learn of him through the study of Scripture? If both Scripture and nature are revelations of God, they cannot

contradict each other. Demonstrating that they do not is one of the tasks of theology. This intellectual chore falls within the realm of "apologetics" — the defense of the faith. This term does not mean "apologizing" for Christianity, but rather offering a reasoned explanation of the grounds for believing in the Christian faith. Again, the word comes from the Greek, in this case *apologetikos*, meaning "suitable for defense." Apologetics is one of the more difficult branches of theology because it examines closely the epistemology of faith — that is, the grounds upon which we as Christians claim to know anything about God or Christ.

At a time when the Christian faith — in fact all religious faiths — are under vigorous intellectual attack, both

Useful Bible Helps

Many of the Bible helps Christians use are obsolete. They do not include the information gleaned from the archaeological findings of the last century. Many of them, like *Clarke's Commentary*, were written in the 1800's. James Strong, the creator of *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, lived from 1822 to 1894 — long before the Dead Sea Scrolls were found. Consequently, word meanings found in these works are not always accurate.

Two books that will aid you in locating suitable, up-to-date Bible helps are the following:

- For Jewish sources: *Back to the Sources* edited by Barry Holtz, Simon & Schuster, Inc.
- For general Bible helps: *Multipurpose Tools for Bible Study* by Frederick W. Danker, Fortress Press, Minneapolis.

from within and without the Church, the field of apologetics has become increasingly important. Scripture itself provides us with a basis for apologetics: "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect," (1 Peter 3:15).

Here are a few book titles that you might want to check out if the field of apologetics interests you:

- *The Case for Faith* by Lee Strobel
- *Christian Apologetics in the Postmodern World* edited by Timothy R. Phillips & Dennis L. Okholm
- *Religion in an Age of Science* by Ian Barbour
- *Belief in God in an Age of Science* by John Polkinghorne
- *Dawkin's God* by Alister McGrath

The Bible Itself

Once we have encountered God at a personal level through the preaching of the Gospel, and have entered into a relationship with him through his indwelling Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ, we have a need to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen," (2 Peter 3:18).

To grow in knowledge of Christ we have to study his life and teachings. The "New Testament" is a collection of writings from the apostolic (original) era of the Church, some of which specifically address these issues. The most important are the three "synoptic" Gospels – Matthew, Mark & Luke. The word "synoptic" is derived from the Greek *synoptikos* meaning "a seeing together." Each of these "Gospel" accounts contains material in common with the others, along with some unique material. They draw on common sources. John, on the other hand, tells the story in a very different fashion. His Gospel is not "synoptic" – that is, similar to the others.

The scholars who specialize in studying the three synoptic Gospels have run into a difficulty known commonly as "the Synoptic problem." The issues here involve what sources they had in common and what is unique to the particular writings. Theological literature on the synoptic problem is voluminous. There are several schools of thought. My particular preference is for the approach taken by the Jerusalem School. Those who wish to learn more about this approach will find a gold mine of information at www.JerusalemPerspective.com. Recommended reading includes:

- *Jesus* by David Flusser
- *Jesus the Jewish Theologian* by Brad H. Young
- *New Light on the Difficult Words of Jesus* by David Bivin

In addition, check out many of the books listed in the Recommended Reading List in the Hebrew Roots studies section of the Association for Christian Development (ACD) website: www.godward.org.

New Testament Scholars

New Testament scholars are concerned with the document collection known as the New Testament (NT). The nature of their discipline is determined by the character of the materials they study.

First of all, these documents are historical in nature. Without them, we would have no access to the events involved in the founding of the Christian faith. Secondly, the NT documents have been designated "Scripture" by the Church. They are, therefore, the primary source materials for faith and practice. That is, they are "canon"—meaning the norm or yardstick for the Christian life.

New Testament theologians tend to focus on one of two approaches. Either they are descriptive or they are prescriptive. The goal of the former type is simply to "... describe the theologies of the New Testament writers, what was believed, thought, taught, hoped, required and striven for in the earliest period of Christianity," *New Testament Theology in Dialogue* by James D.G. Dunn & James P. Mackey, p. 2.

To accomplish these tasks, NT scholars must be intimately familiar with the documents of the NT in their original language, Greek. Additionally, synoptic NT scholars must also be familiar with the Hebrew words and thought behind the Greek texts. This latter path is a road less travelled in theological circles. The Jerusalem School, mentioned earlier, provides an abundance of excellent material on it, however.

Other NT scholars focus their attention on prescription – that is, the text's effect on Christian theology. As Dunn & Mackey write: "The fact is that the New Testament writings have served as a crucial determinant for the whole of Christian theology," (*ibid.* p. 3).

In this article, we have seen only a brief sketch of why theology is a legitimate and important component of the Christian faith. We have barely scratched the surface. Describing all of the theological specialties that are practiced would be encyclopedic. Theology isn't for every Christian. But those of us who teach or write should at least be familiar with the theologies that bear on our chosen subject-matter.

Sadly, many Christians in our time are anti-intellectual, and therefore, opposed to any form of scholarship or theological work. They believe that all they need is the Holy Spirit to understand Scripture. While it is true that God, through His Spirit, can and does perform mighty works, the Lord still expected us to be "studious workmen" when it comes to the use of Scripture (cf. 2 Timothy 2:15). Even the inspired prophet Daniel learned by reading books (Daniel 9:2). Jesus' whole method of teaching, in which he alluded to passages of Scripture by quoting them only in part (*remez*) was predicated upon the premise that his audience was familiar with the words of Scripture. The fact that reading books can make us weary doesn't mean we shouldn't study them. As I once heard the late Louis Armstrong say some 45 years ago, "It's a great life if you don't weaken. But it's still a great life if you do. It all depends on what you get weak doing."

If we expend some effort in studying Scriptures, the rewards will be great and our bodies will recover. Don't be critical of theology. It has a rightful place in the life of Christians – but don't swallow every hook that's cast your way. Theology, as much as anything, includes its phonies, charlatans, and faith-busters. Learn to recognize them, and avoid them like the plague.

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August 27, 2007

Valedictorian Sues School District That Forced Apology for Religious Graduation Message

Denver, CO — Today, Liberty Counsel filed suit against Lewis Palmer School District on behalf of Erica Corder, a high school valedictorian who was forced to publicly apologize for sharing her Christian faith at graduation. Erica was one of fifteen valedictorians from the Lewis-Palmer High School class of 2006. For the past year, she has been the subject of criticism because the school continues to portray her as a student who engaged in improper conduct because she mentioned Jesus Christ during her speech.

Before graduation in May 2006, Principal Mark Brewer informed the valedictorians that they could choose one student to speak, or that all of them could deliver a 30-second graduation message. The students chose to have all fifteen valedictorians participate and chose a general topic for each speaker. Erica and one other student were chosen to give concluding messages. Each valedictorian orally presented a proposed speech to the principal before graduation.

During her 30-second message Erica spoke about her faith in Jesus Christ. Afterwards, she was escorted to see the assistant principal, who said she would not receive her diploma because of the speech she had given. Principal Brewer later indicated that her comments were "immature." He said that she could only receive her diploma if she apologized to the school community. Erica prepared a statement saying the message was her own and was not endorsed by the principal. Brewer insisted that she include the words: "I realize that, had I asked ahead of time, I would not have been allowed to say what I did." Erica complied because she feared the school would withhold her diploma. She was also afraid that the school would put disciplinary notes in her file and would generate negative publicity, which could prevent her from becoming a school teacher. Principal Brewer sent out Erica's message in an e-mail to the entire high school community. Soon after, Erica received her diploma.

Liberty Counsel sent a letter on behalf of Erica to the Lewis Palmer School District Board of Education, explaining that her First Amendment rights had been

violated, and requested that the district apologize for the e-mail that Erica was forced to write and institute a written policy to ensure that no future constitutional violations occur. The school board has thus far taken no remedial steps. Meanwhile, Erica continues to be the subject of public criticism from school officials.

Mathew Staver, Founder of Liberty Counsel and Dean of Liberty University School of Law, commented: "Valedictorians have the right to express their religious viewpoints while at the graduation podium. School officials have no right to threaten young graduates that their diplomas will be withheld. The school district's action in forcing Erica Corder to write an e-mail apologizing to the community for exercising her right to free speech is shocking."

New Jersey Second Grader Barred from Singing "Awesome God"

In another case of apparent school censorship, a judge will decide whether a New Jersey elementary school violated a student's free speech rights when it barred her from singing a Christian song at a school talent show. The Frenchtown School District described the lyrics of the second-grader's selected music — the Rich Mullins anthem "Awesome God" — as too violent and graphic for the elementary school presentation.

The Alliance Defense Fund (ADF) has filed a lawsuit on behalf of Olivia Turton. ADF attorney Demetrios Stratis says, contrary to the school's claims, allowing Olivia to sing the song would not have violated the First Amendment. In fact, he asserts, "It's preposterous. It really, really is, to think that an eight-year-old, a second grader, is singing songs or lyrics that are violent and that in some way violate the establishment clause."

Stratis feels the school's defense is particularly ludicrous in light of some of the acts the school did not choose to censor. He says far more questionable performances were allowed at the talent show. For instance, he notes, "Someone was dancing to Shakira, I think," referring to the Colombian Latin pop performer known as much for her provocative dance style as for her at times suggestive lyrics.

Also, someone in the talent show performed a song by the rock band Bon Jovi, and someone else acted out "a scene from MacBeth regarding witches," the ADF lawyer recalls. With all the things that were allowed in show, Stratis contends it is beyond the pale for the Frenchtown School District officials "to suggest that the song 'Awesome God' is violent" and, he adds, "it just goes to show you the 'logic' behind them refusing to let Olivia sing her song."

Both sides in the case have filed motions for summary judgment. Judge Stanley Chesler received the papers on July 3 and will then decide whether to issue a ruling or have the case go to trial. (Source: *Agapepress*)

The Sabbatarian “Good Men” of Medieval Southern France

By *Blaine Neumann*

“Albi, in southern France, was the center of the Cathari, Petrobrussians, Henricians—all of whom were included in one name Albigensis, or Albigenses.”¹ They themselves were simply known as “Good Men.” What did these “Good Men” believe? At the Council of Lombers in 1176, they confessed as follows: “We believe in one God, three and one; the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Also we believe: that the Son of God took our flesh upon him; was baptized in Jordan; fasted in the wilderness; preached our salvation; suffered and died, and was buried ... rose again on the third day; ascended to heaven; sent, on the day of Pentecost, the Spirit of the Paraclete; and will come again, in the day of judgment, to judge the quick and the dead, when all will rise again... We believe: that he, who eateth not the body of Christ is not in a state of salvation ... Also we believe: that a person is not in a state of salvation, unless he has been baptized... We believe likewise: that man and woman are in a state of salvation, though they be carnally joined in marriage...”²

On these points the Catholic Church could have no argument. So what was their crime according to the Catholic Church? For one, the Albigenses taught that the Romish Church was not the holy church, but Babylon. They also taught that the mass was merely a human invention, that transubstantiation “is an invention of men” and “the adoration of the bread, manifest and downright idolatry.” Also they believed “that saints ought not to be invocated,” that purgatory “is a human invention, to serve that avarice of the priests” and “that the prayers of the living are unprofitable to the dead.”³ They also believed “that the soul of no holy person ascends to heaven before the day of judgment; and that souls suffer no punishment, save in hell alone: adding, that they know nothing about the condition of those survivors, whom, while they lived in the body, they loved in this world.”⁴ They also believed that “Hell and eternal fire and eternal judgment are in this world, and not elsewhere.”⁵

They “rejected Confirmation, Orders, and Extreme Unction” and they believed that “it was sufficient for them to confess their sins to God.”⁶

At the Council of Albi they were condemned for observing the Sabbath. In the records of this Council

the following passage occurs: “They savour of Judaism, they practice circumcision, they observe the Jewish Sabbath, but say the Dominical day is no better than other days; let them be accursed.”⁷ (The charge of circumcision was no doubt a false charge, as we shall see in later inquisition records.)

It is evident that these “Good Men” kept close to Biblical teachings and held the tenets of primitive Christianity.

Some of these “Good Men” migrated from Gascony to England and were condemned at Oxford in 1160. It is of particular notice that they were identified as “rustics of the Teutonic Nation and Language.” Perhaps they were remnants of the Goths who controlled Southern France (Toulousia) from 419-507 AD. The Goths were Sabbatarians as Sidonius Appollinaris (431-482) wrote concerning them that: “it is therefore possible for the Goths to have thought, as pupils of the discipline of the Greeks, that they should sanctify the Sabbath after the manner of the Greeks.”⁸

Back in France the Pope Innocent III held a crusade against the Albigenses from 1208-1223. Thousands of Albigenses were massacred. At Beziers alone between 20,000 and 40,000 were killed.

In 1229 in Southern France the Inquisition took over. However as late as 1492 these humble Sabbatarians could still be found at Toulouse in Southern France. In one inquisition account there were thirty people charged with Judaism. Their pastor, Anthony Ferrer, testified that they were not Jews, but Christians, “followers of Jesus.” He also testified that they were not circumcisers as they were charged, but that it was true that they observed the seventh-day Sabbath.⁹ Anthony and his associates were burned to death because of their faith.

Though the fires of the Inquisition extinguished the Sabbatarians of Southern France, one of the documents written by the “Good Men” survived. *The Provençal Ritual of the Albigensis*, translated from the Codex of Lyon states, “Ye must needs keep all the commandments of Christ and of the New Testament according as ye can. And know that he has commanded that a man should not commit adultery nor homicide, nor lie, nor swear any oath,

nor pick nor steal, nor do unto another that which he would not have done to himself; and that a man should pardon him that doeth wrong; and that a man love his enemies, and that a man pray for and bless his calumniators and accusers, and that to him who smites him on one cheek he shall offer the other, and to him who takes away his tunic he shall also leave his mantle; and that one judge not nor condemn, along with many other commandments which are laid by the Lord upon his Church ... [and he] is minded to keep himself from lying and swearing, and from all else forbidden by God, and to keep the customs of the church and the commandments of God...."¹⁰

From such a testimony it is no wonder that they were known as "Good Men." What a contrast with the Church of Rome. The "Good Men" loved their enemies while Rome destroyed their enemies, who were in fact the people of God. The "Good Men" were faithful to the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. May we be worthy to be called faithful as the "Good Men" were in the face of slander and persecution. May the memory and faith of the "Good Men" live on in the hearts and minds of Christ's followers today.

End Notes

1. Alonzo Jones, *Ecclesiastical Empire*, Battle Creek, Mich.: Review and Herald Publishing Co., 1901, at 475
2. George Faber, *An Inquiry into the History and theology of the Ancient Vallenses and Albigenses*, Tennessee: Church History Research and Archives, 1990, at 234, 235
3. Jean Paul Perrin, *History of the Ancient Christians*. Tennessee: Church History Research and Archives, 1991, at 131.
4. Op. Cit. 2, at 87 (Book II, Chapter II)
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7. Tamar Davis, *A General History of The Sabbatarian Churches*, Philadelphia: Lindsay and Blakiston, 1851, at 64.
8. B.G. Wilkinson, *Truth Triumphant*, Brushton, N.Y.: Teach Services, Inc., 1994, at 143, 144.
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"Religion and good morals are the only solid foundation of public liberty and happiness."
Samuel Adams

In the Likeness of His Resurrection

We are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. Rom. 6:4.

In our natural state we are spiritually dead, buried in the prison house of sin. But, thank God, we need not remain in this condition. Christ, the second person of the Godhead, came to this earth and became a man. He took our nature, paid our penalty, and demonstrated that man can, through His indwelling power, live a life of obedience to God.

Christ entered the prison house of sin and death and brought deliverance to its captives. His triumph over the grave gives Him the right to bring us forth in freedom. If we voluntarily enter into His death by baptism, then we accept the promise of His resurrected life to walk in newness of life. We are new creatures in Him.

Our text plainly declares that baptism is a memorial of Christ's death and resurrection. Baptism per se does not save. It is, however, an outward sign of an inward change. By it we visibly and publicly express our resolve to live no longer in sin, pride, or self-indulgence.

In order to fulfill the figure intended, the apostles immersed their converts to Christianity, burying them literally in a watery grave, that they might simulate the state of spiritual death in which Christ found them, and their consent to enter into His resurrected life by faith. So, strictly speaking, baptism does not memorialize Christ's death. It simply represents our condition when we were brought under our Saviour's redeeming influence. As we are raised from the watery grave by a force outside ourselves, so the power of Christ enables "whosoever will" to be free from the shackles of sin. All the power of heaven is at his command as he walks in newness of life.

It is interesting to note that Paul does not use the Greek word *bios*, "life" or "living," when he uses the expression "We also should walk in newness of life," but the word *zoe*, "the principle of life," "the activating force that produces the phenomenon called life." Paul's choice of words is significant. When the believer has been born again of the Holy Spirit he is henceforth animated by a new, vital element that comes from without. His daily conduct reveals the presence and effect of the Spirit of Christ who has come into him since he was resurrected from a condition of death in trespasses and sins. He is henceforth acted upon by a force outside himself.

Donald Mansell, New Every Morning, page 108. Review & Herald Publishing Association. 1981.

Other celebrities that have made the news because of their gambling habits are Pete Rose, the all-time hits leader in professional baseball, Michael Jordan, perhaps the greatest basketball player ever to play the game, and Bill Bennett, former Secretary of Education, talk-show host, and author.

The fact is, gambling can be a serious problem for the rich and famous as well as for the poor and obscure. When gambling is involved, money changes hands, and it's usually your money. The odds are against you.

Here Is How I See It

The Holy Scriptures do not directly address the subject of gambling. There is no "Thou shalt not gamble." However, the Bible does have much to say about issues that relate to gambling, such as our work ethic, covetousness, greed, waste, and using our resources to advance the Kingdom of God.

Gambling is really the attempt to turn someone else's loss into our gain, and to do it against the odds. Gambling's main appeal is our own covetousness. It is our excitement at the possibility of possessing what we have not worked for that makes gambling appeal to us. When we compare the idea of working thirty years to accumulate a million dollars to possessing that same million dollars in 30 seconds by pulling the lever on a slot machine or purchasing the winning lottery ticket, the appeal is obvious.

I have heard many Christians rationalize their trips to Las Vegas or Atlantic City stating that they are simply vacations, and that they place a limit on the amount of money they can spend on gambling. When the money is gone, they are finished. I'm sure that is the case 99% of the time. For most people gambling does not involve compulsion or addiction. They look at it as a form of entertainment, and who knows? They might "hit the big one" as they are entertaining themselves. But, what other reason is there to go to Las Vegas or Atlantic City rather than to, say, Hawaii for a vacation than the desire to "hit the big one"—to return home with more money in their pockets than when they left home. People certainly do not go to Las Vegas because of the natural beauty of the surroundings.

Several years ago when I was trying to decide whether it was all right for a Christian to buy a lottery ticket, I was confronted with one clear question: Was I going to trust God to be my provider, or was I going to trust "time and chance?" When I saw the issue of gambling in that light, the decision was simple. I could trust God, or I could put my trust in chance. I could not do both. Faith in God is the rejection of faith in random chance. If He is my inheritance, then I have to turn my back on all other forms of provision, and gambling is one of the most fickle and least reliable.

Conclusion

I can still hear some readers say, "It's just entertainment. What's the big deal? If I decide to blow 50 or 100 dollars at the local race track, it's my money and I'm not hurting anyone but myself." I cannot tell you that any type of gambling is sin. If you are a person who occasionally gambles and does not think gambling is an issue, please answer this question: What is there in you that makes gambling an attractive form of entertainment?

Kirby Anderson of Probe Ministries (www.probe.org) directly addresses this issue of gambling with this excellent summary.

Even though the Bible does not directly address gambling, we can derive a number of principles from Scripture.

First, gambling breeds a form of covetousness. The Tenth Commandment admonishes us not to covet. Coveting, greed, and selfishness are the base emotions that entice us to gamble. I believe Christians should be concerned about gambling if for no other reason than the effect it has on the weaker brother and how it will affect the compulsive gambler. State-sponsored gambling makes it harder for the compulsive gambler to reform. Legalized gambling becomes an institutionalized form of greed.

Second, gambling destroys the work ethic. Two key biblical passages deal with the work ethic. In Colossians 3:23-24, the Apostle Paul says, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving." And in 2 Thessalonians 3:7,10, he says, "For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example.... For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: If a man will not work, he shall not eat."

The Twentieth Century Fund research group commented, "Gambling's get-rich-quick appeal appears to mock capitalism's core values: disciplined work habits, thrift, prudence, adherence to routine, and the relationship between effort and reward." These core values of the work ethic are all part of the free enterprise system and are part of the Christian life. Gambling corrupts these values and replaces them with greed and selfishness. Rather than depending upon hard work, gamblers depend instead upon luck and chance.

Third, gambling destroys families. Gambling is a major cause of family neglect. Many of the social costs associated with gambling come from its mindset. As people get caught up in a gambling frenzy, they begin to neglect their families. Money spent on lottery tickets or at horse tracks is frequently not risk capital but is income that should be spent on family needs.

In 1 Timothy 5:8, Paul says that a person who refuses to care for his family is worse than an infidel. Parents must provide for their children (2 Corinthians 12:14) and eat the bread of their labors (2 Thessalonians 3:12). When gambling is legalized it tempts people to neglect their God-mandated responsibility to care for their families, and these families often end up on welfare.

Fourth, gambling is a form of state-sponsored greed. We read in Romans 13 that government is to be a minister of God. Government should provide order in society and promote public virtue. Legalized gambling undercuts government's role and subverts the moral fabric of society through greed and selfishness promoted by a state-sponsored vice.

Gambling is bad social policy; it is bad economic policy; and it is bad governmental policy. Moreover, it undermines the moral foundations of society and invites corruption in government. As Christians, I believe we must stand against society's attempts to legalize gambling.

Recently I heard an interview with a former IRS crime investigator. He was asked whether there was any possibility that having casino gambling in our area would bring in organized crime. He chuckled at the question. His answer was, "Of course. If you have casino-style gambling, organized crime will be involved with it at some level, no matter whether the gambling is controlled by the state government or by private business." He also stated, "It's a one-to-one ratio. If you have gambling, you will have organized crime."

If you are facing a vote on gambling in your state, county, or community, I hope you will give serious consideration to the issues presented in this article. You may not gamble, and you may not care personally whether someone else gambles, but you should care about the social atmosphere that your children and grandchildren will grow up in. You have to ask yourself, what would Jesus say to me about the way I use the money that He has placed in my hands? There is certainly a place for entertainment in God's Kingdom, but is there any redeeming value in gambling as a source of entertainment?

Scriptures to Ponder

Proverbs 21:5, "The plans of the diligent lead to profit as surely as haste leads to poverty."

Proverbs 3:13-15, "Blessed is the one who finds wisdom, and the one who gets understanding, for the gain from her is better than gain from silver and her profit better than gold. She is more precious than jewels, and nothing you desire can compare with her."

Luke 16:10, "He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in

Botkin: New Paradigm—continued from page 9

Christians typically ignore – things like Sabbath, dietary laws, tzitzit, etc. Nonetheless, I decided to re-read the New Testament Scriptures from the perspective of a person who **does** believe that Christians are still supposed to follow these neglected Torah commands. I re-read the New Testament from a "What if?" perspective. "What if these Torah commandments are still supposed to be followed (not to justify ourselves, but out of a love for God), would the New Testament make any sense?"

I focused especially on Paul's epistles, since most anti-Torah rhetoric is based on Paul's writings. "If these commandments of the Torah are still supposed to be followed, would Paul's negative statements about the law make any sense?" I put myself in the shoes of a person who believes in doing the Torah, and re-read Paul's letters, comparing translations and looking at the Greek text. At each "problem verse," each verse that appeared to be a negative statement about the Law, I asked myself, "How would a Torah-keeping Christian understand this verse? Is it really saying something negative about God's perfect Law per se, or is it something else that Paul is criticizing here? Is there a Torah-friendly way to understand this verse, some way that this verse can be compatible with the Law without twisting the meaning or ignoring the context?"

I soon discovered to my pleasant surprise that Paul's writings made a lot more sense to me than they ever had before. In many places, I saw that the context made the verse pro-Torah. Now Paul's writings harmonized with the rest of the Bible instead of contradicting it. The Torah-friendly view made Paul a Torah-friendly Jew!

In closing, let me modify and paraphrase Romans 10:1-4 to express my desire and prayer for my Christian brothers and sisters: Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Christians is that they might all undergo a personal paradigm shift in regards to the Torah. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's Torah, and going about to establish their own torah, have not submitted themselves unto the Torah of God. For Christ is the goal at which the Torah aims. He is the model of the perfect Torah-keeper, whose example we should joyfully strive to follow. Amen.

Reprinted from "Gates of Eden," July–August 2007, p. 8. "Gates of Eden" is a bimonthly newsletter produced by Gates of Eden, a messianic Jewish ministry. Write to Gates of Eden, P.O. Box 2257, East Peoria, IL, 61611-0257. Gates of Eden is on the Internet at www.gatesofeden.org.

Polycarp: Play the Man!

The 86-year old bishop of Smyrna, Polycarp, stood praying while the men who had come to take him to his certain death waited in wonder. He was so filled with God's grace that he prayed for two hours, after which his captors "were amazed and ... repented that they had come after so venerable an old man."¹ If greatness is measured not only by the way in which men live but by the way they die, then Polycarp must rank in the Hall of Fame. His martyrdom (c. 155-6 A.D.)² presents a compelling challenge to pastors of all eras to be faithful unto death, and so receive God's crown of life Rev. 2:10-11.

The early Church's gospel threatened established religions such as Judaism and paganism. As a result, it led to opposition that was, on the whole, localized and financially motivated, as in Philippi and Ephesus (Acts 16 and 19). Official persecution began "largely by accident"³ and was prompted by scapegoating and popular accusations.⁴ The tide of official policy ebbed and flowed with successive Roman Emperors.

During a period of renewed persecution, a number of Christians were forced to fight wild beasts in the Smyrna amphitheatre. The bloodthirsty crowd's appetite was not satisfied with butchering everyday Christians; they were after an episcopal scalp and demanded that a search be made for Polycarp. After torturing one of his servants, the Roman police traced Polycarp to a small estate where he was passing the time in prayer. The bishop did not flee for his life. Having been convinced by a dream that he must be burned alive, he determined to ensure God's will was done. He arranged for a meal to be prepared for his captors, and then requested time to pray before he was taken.

After his prayers, Polycarp was taken to the stadium. As he entered, he and others heard a voice from heaven urging him to stand firm: "Be strong, Polycarp, and play the man." And what a man! He refused to deny Christ despite the best efforts of the Roman proconsul and the baying crowd. The proconsul exhorted him to renounce Christ and Christians: "Have respect to thine age ... Swear by the genius of Caesar ... Repent ... Say, 'Away with the atheists!'"⁵ However, the 86-year old bishop looked around at the sea of heathen faces in the vast crowd, waved his hand at them and, looking up into heaven, groaned, "Away with the atheists." The proconsul persisted, "Swear, and I will release thee; curse the Christ." Polycarp's reply was both courageous and clear, "Eighty and six years have I served him, and he hath done me no wrong; how then can I blaspheme my king who saved me?"⁶

In the face of Polycarp's resolve, even when threatened with wild beasts and fire, the vast crowd demanded that he be burned alive, and gathered wood for the fire. After he prayed, the fire was lit, but, far from consuming him, it became like a wall of fire around his body. Enraged, the crowd persuaded a soldier to plunge a sword into the old man, but, even then, the blood that poured out extinguished the flames. Finally, the soldiers took his corpse, placed it into a fire and burned it to ashes.⁷

Polycarp's orthodoxy was evident throughout his life, but his courage and true greatness was most evident at the point of his death. Persecution today may come in many forms: physical brutality, intellectual contempt, and financial loss. Pastors will only be prepared to face and endure such suffering for the gospel if, like Polycarp, their attention is fixed on their King and Saviour who has pioneered the way of suffering to glory. Today, Polycarp's example is urging pastors, "Be strong, and play the man!"

Footnotes :

1. "The Martyrdom of Polycarp," c.VII, cited in Henry Bettenson, *Documents of the Christian Church*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 13.
2. There is some dispute about the date of his death; Eusebius of Caesarea places the year at 167 or 168, meaning it would have fallen in the reign of Marcus Aurelius.
3. Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church* (London: Penguin, 1967), 25.
4. For example, Nero blaming the Christians for the fire of Rome in A.D. 64, and, in addition to trade disputes, people confused Christianity with Montanism, a heresy that rejected all forms of involvement with the state; See, for example, Pliny's Letter to the Emperor Trajan, Letters 10.96-97; Robin Lane-Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (London: Penguin, 1988), 423; Marta Sordi, *The Christians and the Roman Empire* (London: Routledge, 1994), 73, 194-203.
5. Christians were known as "atheists" during the periods of persecution because they did not believe in the gods of the established religions.
6. "The Martyrdom of Polycarp," c.IX, 14.
7. While these events may seem extraordinary to modern readers, this narrative follows the only extant account of Polycarp's death.

Reprinted from *Kairos Journal* (www.kairosjournal.org).

Evolving into Quite an Attraction:

Highly Anticipated Creation Museum Sees Strong First-Month Attendance

*By Dan Wooding
Founder of ASSIST Ministries*

PETERSBURG, KY (ANS) — The newly opened Creation Museum near Cincinnati is enjoying tremendous success with more than 40,000 guests having toured the exhibits since the facility formally opened exactly one month ago, officials announced today, Thursday, June 28, 2007.

Another 9,000 visitors came through during pre-grand opening events, making the grand total just over 49,000. Because museum officials are hoping for at least 250,000 guests the first year, the total is better than expected now that one-fifth of the yearly goal has been achieved.

“We’re very thankful that so many people are coming out,” said Ken A. Ham, the co-founder and president of Answers in Genesis, the ministry that built the high-tech “walk through history” museum. He added: “The feedback we’ve been getting is very positive. I’m grateful to observe that people are seeing that solid science backs the Bible.”

Well-known motivational speaker Zig Ziglar, a longtime supporter of Answers in Genesis, was among the first to tour the new museum. He declared: “I’ve been a Christian for many years, but this museum has strengthened my faith.”

A news release from Giles Hudson of A Larry Ross Communications, said, “As a testament to the museum’s growing profile, on just one day earlier this month, traffic to the museum Web site and the general AiG site drew over 95,000 visitors (about 300,000 “page views”), an extraordinary number for a religious site.

“In addition, tour group attendance has been robust. The museum is booked solid for groups on Saturdays through the entire summer, and group capacity has been met on many other days. This trend should be maintained through the fall as Christian schools and home school groups schedule visits, and as the tour bus industry continues to supply visitors.”

AiG is a biblical apologetics ministry, which conducts more than 300 teaching meetings each year, hosts an award-winning Web site (www.AnswersInGenesis.org), and produces the “Answers” radio program heard on 860 stations across America.

More information is available in their online newsroom: www.CreationMuseumNews.com

Dan Wooding is an award winning British journalist now living in Southern California with his wife Norma. He is the founder and international director of ASSIST (Aid to Special Saints in Strategic Times) and the ASSIST News Service (ANS). He was, for ten years, a commentator, on the UPI Radio Network in Washington, DC. Wooding is the author of some 42 books, the latest of which is his autobiography, "From Tabloid to Truth", which is published by Theatron Books. To order a copy, go to www.fromtabloidtotruth.com. danjuma1@aol.com.



*Ken A. Ham, President/CEO of
Answers in Genesis*

Seeing God's Face in Yours

by Loren Seibold

We humans are not “little gods;” we are His children, and even in our brokenness, we reflect His image.

A depression-era house on an abandoned Kentucky mountain farmstead.

We'd found our way there by accident (a wrong but serendipitous turn) and, needing to stretch our legs, stopped to explore. The door was off its hinges, window glass littered the floor, fallen plaster revealed rough lathing beneath, and spider webs spanned corners. Yet beneath the dirt were signs of a time when this had been a home, a place where people worked and played, laughed and cried and lived.

Beneath our feet were the worn remnants of colorful linoleum, chosen by a wife to make her kitchen pretty. A chimney where decades back a family had gathered around a warm fire at Christmas. Scraps of once-charming wallpaper in what had been a bedroom, tatters of matching curtains at a window. Against one wall stood an old iron-tube bedstead, mattressless now, but in an earlier time a place of rest, love, and possibly even birth and death.

Underneath a fallen cabinet door, scattered in the dirt, I found stuck together picture postcards, yellowed receipts from the 1930s, nearly disintegrated newspaper clippings, a picture of a kitten cut from a calendar. Beneath all that, remnants of a cheap frame, and in it a small, sepia-tone photograph.

I lifted away the glass fragments. The photograph was so damaged I could scarcely make out the picture, but after wiping across it with my thumb, I could discern a couple (she standing, he seated), apparently young, certainly not wealthy. Perhaps her long, plain dress and carefully lifted hair showed this to be a wedding picture, though the gentleman (his hair center-parted like his full mustache) wore no collar or tie, only a rumpled jacket, vest, and black boots. These were real people, I thought, who may once have lived in this house. Once happy, energetic, anticipating a new life on a new farm; now, barely discernible figures on a mildewed cardboard photo.

The Marred Image

When we human beings were first made, we were a very good and remarkably clear picture of God. We were, after all, designed to be quite like him. According to Genesis, God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness” (Genesis 1:26), and so He did.

Some people claim that this means we humans are little gods, but that's not what the Bible means. We sometimes say of a baby, “He's a spittin' image of his daddy!” but we're in no danger of mistaking one for the other. Similarly, Adam and Eve were not gods themselves, but in some important ways they—and we—are very much like God. We have consciousness, free choice, and creativity. Had a stranger have met the first humans, he or she would have said, “I see the family resemblance to their Creator.”

Unfortunately, the resemblance has been marred. The story is an unhappy one, involving a tempter, deception, and a delusive freedom. We have no reason to believe that the fruit Adam and Eve ate was unusual, as fruit goes, except in this: God had asked them not to eat it. When they did, they took upon themselves the awful consequences of defying their own Creator. From that moment, the life-giving connection between Creator and creation was damaged, and the once clear image of God in humankind began to fade.

A number of years ago I visited a museum in one of the ancient cities of the Mediterranean, and I noticed several statues that had broken faces.

My guide explained that when a conqueror took over a country, the new ruler would kill the old ruler and also deface all of the statues of him and his family and friends.

So it was with God's enemy, Satan. Because he hated God, he hated God's creation. Under his influence, God's handiwork began to decay and that included human beings. Adam's and Eve's bodies aged. For the first time, they realized that they would die.

Satan especially encouraged their moral corruption, and one of the very first crises he incited was the murder of their son Cain by his brother Abel. Jealousy, hatred, war, lust, greed—all promoted by Satan, and eventually participated in by folks like you and me by means of the choices we make each day of our lives.

The disintegration of the image of God in us has continued for thousands of years. You might think it impossible that the Creator's image could still be discerned in the face or the character of a homicidal dictator, a drug-addicted prostitute, a child abuser, a terrorist. But it's there. Beneath the shards, underneath the grime, we see the image of God. The image is marred, but it isn't obliterated.

Restoration

In another museum, I stood before a centuries-old painting by a great European master. A sign near it said, "Until recently, only faint outlines could be seen on this canvas. When art restorers painstakingly cleaned off centuries of accumulated dirt and smoke, this bright and beautiful picture emerged."

Marred and broken, stained with their sin, Adam and Eve and all of their billions of descendants were in need of restoration. They couldn't repair themselves. They needed a restorer who could lift from them the accumulated centuries of failure, pain, unhappiness, and physical and mental decline. But who could help them?

An acquaintance of mine had in younger days been an engineer for the team that built the legendary 1965 Shelby Cobra Mustang automobile. Years after he'd retired, he got a call from a car collector who'd located one of my friend's original handmade concept cars, though now in dismal condition. "Will you help me?" he asked the engineer. "I want to restore it precisely as it was. Who better to ask than the man who built it in the first place?"

And who better to restore the image of God in humankind than the One who created us in the first place?

As horrible as is the story of our first parents' disobedience, just as beautiful is the story of our restoration. It begins with a baby born into a family so poor that He spent his first night in a cow trough! Yet that Babe was none other than God in a human body!

He grew into a man of perfect character, teaching truths that astound all who heard them. He healed the sick, fed the poor, and made corpses come alive. Even His tragic, youthful martyrdom glows with the beauty of perfect unselfishness and transcendent love for those who hated Him.

Best of all, his death was not the end, for three days later God gave him life again; as one Bible para-

phrase puts it, His resurrection was "the first in a long legacy of those who are going to leave the cemeteries" (1 Corinthians 15:20, *The Message*).


The moment you accept Jesus Christ into your life, your restoration begins. Because, you see, no matter how damaged you are, no matter how broken, the indelible image of God remains. When you let Him, He'll painstakingly clean away your pain and sadness, erasing bad habits and character flaws. Once again, his loveliness will shine through you!

I left the photograph lying on the floor of the old Kentucky house. It was too damaged to bother with; nothing I could do would make it beautiful again. Surprisingly, what is true of the photograph is not true of its subjects! Though their bones may now lie in a Kentucky graveyard, God has the power to restore them to life. The apostle Paul wrote, "By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also" (1 Corinthians 6:14).

And I'm delighted to say that it will be a better life than this one, because we will be restored to just what God originally created humankind to be. "We will all be changed-in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet," says Paul. "For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable" (1 Corinthians 15:51).

Our restoration will be complete!

Reprinted from Signs of the Times, June 2007, p.33. Loren Seibold writes from Worthington, Ohio. Loren is the Senior Pastor of the Worthington Seventh-day Adventist Church. Loren has served congregations in the Dakotas (SDA) and as Pastor in Palo Alto, California. He was the Vice-president and founding member of the Samaritan Community Counseling Center in Palo Alto, a member of the Central California Conference Executive Board (SDA), member of the dissertation review committee of the San Francisco Theological Seminary, volunteer with Amistad Foundation, member of the Human Rights Committee of the US Veterans Administration. He currently serves as associate editor for Ministry magazine.



The Great Falling Away
By Don Esposito

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The Church in the World

PAKISTAN: Missing Christian Girls Married off to Muslims Police stall efforts to recover children.

August 24, 2007 (Compass Direct News) — Two Pakistani Christian children have converted to Islam and married Muslim men after they went missing earlier this month in Faisalabad, according to apparently falsified marriage certificates delivered to their families.

The certificate for the missing 16-year-old girl indicates that the marriage took place 12 days before her disappearance, and the other certificate puts the missing 11-year-old's age at 18.

Police seem to be stalling efforts to recover the minors, prompting the girls' lawyer to bring a case against officers in the Punjab city of Faisalabad this week.

"This type of incident is increasing in Faisalabad," a representative of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan told Compass from Faisalabad today.

When Zunaira Rasheed, 11, disappeared from her home in Faisalabad's Warispura neighborhood on August 5, her mother was at first reluctant to go to the police, she said. Abida Parveen said she was worried that news of the disappearance might ruin her daughter's "honor" and with it her chance of marrying.

Kidnapping Accusation

In a second incident last week, Shamaila Tabassum, 16, disappeared after telling relatives she was on her way to the hospital with several Muslim neighbors (one named Mazhar) to visit her father, whom she said had suffered a serious accident.

The Christian girl's family became worried after her supposedly hospitalized father arrived home from work in perfect health.

On August 18, Tabassum's father registered a case with police at Faisalabad's Sadar police station, accusing Mazhar of kidnapping his daughter. He indicated in the police report that he was worried Mazhar would attempt to force his daughter to convert, said lawyer Tahir.

On Wednesday evening (August 22), a former head of the Elahiabad union council visited Tabassum's home to deliver a certificate of her marriage to Mazhar.

"Now your daughter has converted to Islam, so there is no need to go to court," Rana Javed told the girl's father.

According to the certificate, Tabassum and Mazhar were married by a Muslim sheikh in the city of Sargodha, 60 kilometers (37 miles) north of Faisalabad. But the document was dated August 4, fully 12 days before Tabassum's disappearance.

"This is obviously a falsified document, because on August 4 she was at home," Tahir said.

The document also carried a new Muslim name for Tabassum, indicating her conversion to Islam.

Though Pakistanis under the age of 18 cannot carry out legal transactions – including conversion and marriage – without the consent of their guardian, prejudiced lower court judges often turn a blind eye to the law in order to favor Muslims in cases against Christians, Tahir said.

The Christian lawyer said he had agreed to take both cases *pro bono* because both families are extremely poor.



Shamaila Tabassum

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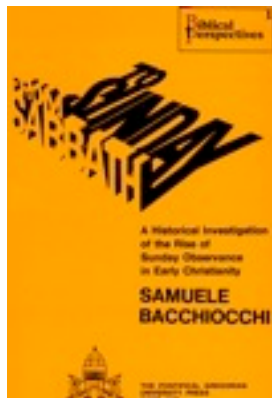
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These books by Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi are indeed a theological treasure (\$15.00 each). Dr. Bacchiocchi is the first non-Catholic to graduate from the Pontifical Gregorian University of Rome. He has authored several best sellers, and during the last 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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The Sabbath Sentinel

A Bi-monthly Publication of

The Bible Sabbath Association

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