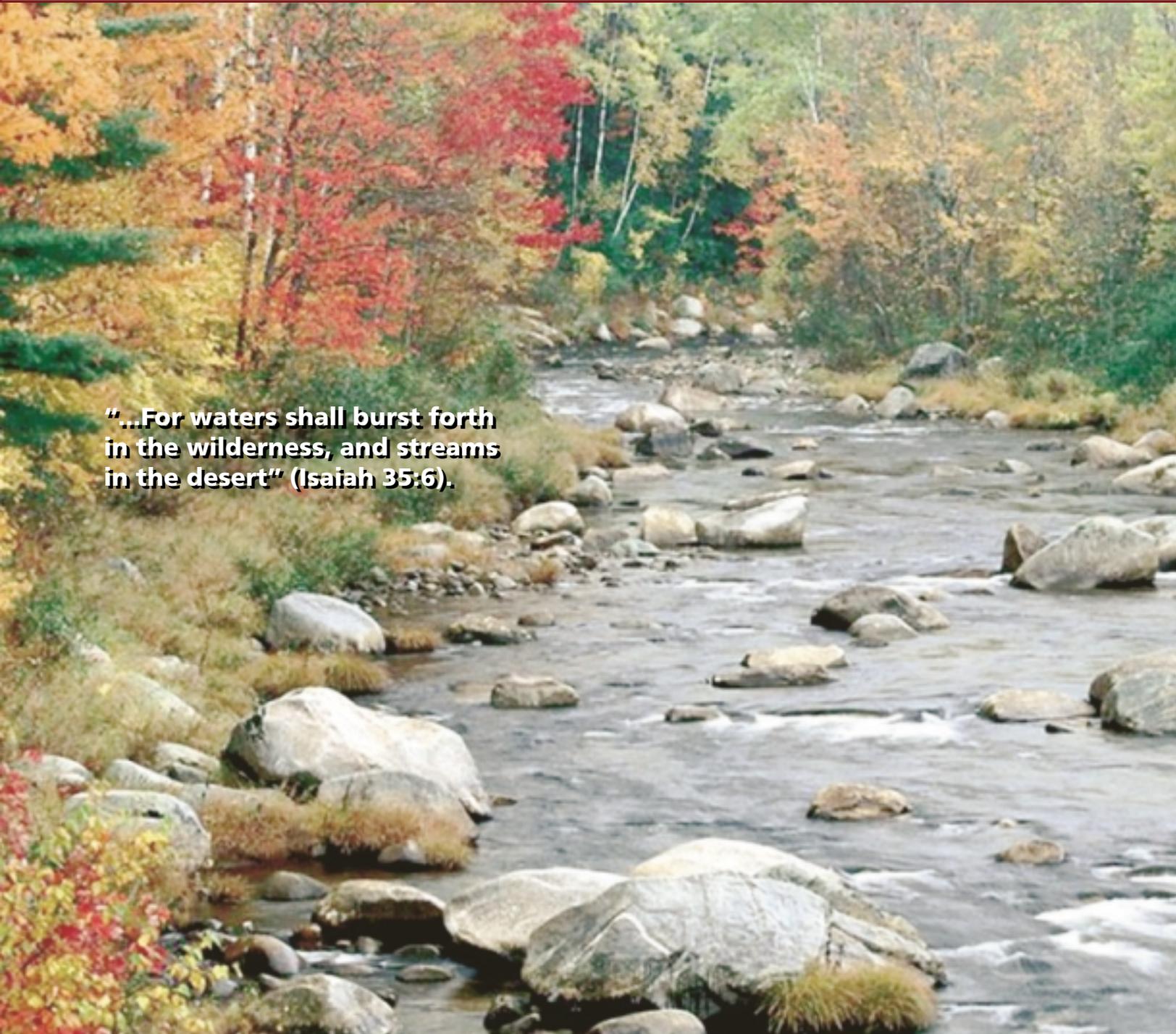


THE Sabbath Sentinel

September–October 2005



**"...For waters shall burst forth
in the wilderness, and streams
in the desert" (Isaiah 35:6).**

BSA — The Bible Sabbath Association

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

The Sabbath Sentinel

November–December 2005 Volume 57, No. 6 Issue 516

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Our Cover: *"Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert"* (Isaiah 35:6). (Photo courtesy of Philip Greenspun at <http://philip.greenspun.com>)

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Editor: Kenneth Ryland, tss_editor@biblesabbath.org

Associate Editors: June Narber & Shirley Nickels

BSA's Board of Directors for 2004-2007:

President: Richard Nickels, rich_nickels@biblesabbath.org

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Secretary: John Paul Howell, john_howell@biblesabbath.org

Webmaster: John Paul Howell, john_howell@biblesabbath.org

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BSA Worldwide Web Site: <http://www.biblesabbath.org>

Correspondence and manuscript submissions: Address all inquiries to: Kenneth Ryland, c/o *The Sabbath Sentinel*, 3316 Alberta Drive, Gillette, WY 82718. Phone: (307) 686-5191, E-mail: tss_editor@biblesabbath.org

International addresses:

Australia: Bible Sabbath Associates, Jim & Lyn Carnochan, 7 Sunny Ridge Rd., Arcadia NSW 2159. E-mail: lyn_carnochan@hotmail.com

United Kingdom: Robert Taylor, BSA United Kingdom, PO Box 2086, Abbeydale, Gloucester, GL4 4WD, United Kingdom. Telephone: 01452 417116. Website: www.biblesabbath.org.uk. E-mail: robert@biblesabbath.org.uk

Nigeria: Bassey Akpan, Nigeria BSA, P. O. Box 1277, Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria. E-mail: ycog1@yahoo.com

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Compassion ... So-called



Through two recent hurricanes we have witnessed once again the incredible generosity and compassion of Americans in general and Christians in particular. People from all over the U.S. streamed into the American Gulf coast to pull people they have never met from rooftops and minister to the hurting and the hungry. Without regard for themselves, they came to feed, clothe, and shelter the homeless. Many have stayed to help rebuild the lives and dreams of strangers. Churches from 2,000 miles away quickly organized disaster relief teams to provide food, water, and clothing. Some have taken leaves of absence from their jobs to rebuild houses, clean away debris, and restore electricity, water, and sewerage. This is the best we have to offer as a country, and it was very much in evidence in the aftermath of hurricanes Katrina and Rita. These heartwarming scenes of heroism, restoration, and self-sacrifice were, thankfully, the norm in these disasters just as in the times past.

We also got a glimpse of a very ugly side of American life. In retrospect, it is true that the American press grossly exaggerated the problems in New Orleans. There were preliminary estimates of 10,000 deaths, as well as reports of rapes and murders inside the city's domed stadium where many of Hurricane Katrina's refugees fled for safety. Although it was bad enough, there were really only about 1,000 who died in all the states affected by Katrina, and the stories of rapes and murders inside the stadium were fabricated to gain the attention of the press. It seems that the press was more than willing to believe such exaggerations without proof.

In contrast to what we all witnessed in New Orleans, those who prepared themselves by heeding the warnings and either leaving the impact area or making extensive preparations fared much better. These people were prepared to take care of themselves and to help others in need — all with no desire for personal recognition. They demanded little in assistance, and, as a result, were quickly overlooked by media types and politicians. After all, who is interested in the self-reliant and independent? They offer no op-

portunity to display a politician's or news anchor's compassion on every TV screen in America.

What has become evident is that we have two distinct definitions of compassion. Most Americans will do whatever is necessary to help others in times of need. We continue to live on the legacy of our Christian past where the Golden Rule was the standard of conduct that most citizens considered to be the norm. Unfortunately, because of the institutionalization of "compassion" through our welfare system, we have created an entire class of people who are perpetually dependent on the tax dollars (compassion?) of other citizens, and have little regard for the burden they place on hard-working and independent citizens. I am not talking about those who have genuine need and are not capable of taking care of themselves. I am talking about people who make a living by living off the hard work of others. These are the people who harassed police, looted stores, and threatened those who managed to maintain a supply of food and water. It was these people who horrified America and the world.

Is this a problem of government or the Church? Some may say the government has created this problem. However, I think that many churches have been more than willing to surrender to the government their God-given responsibility of taking care of the poor and needy. This is particularly true of liberal denominations. They seem to see government welfare as an extension of the Church's obligation toward the needy. If there is a problem concerning the separation of Church and State, this is where it lies.

On the other hand, Bible-believing churches not only accept as one's individual responsibility the Bible's mandate to care for the needy, they also believe the words of the apostle Paul, "If anyone will not work let him not eat," (2 Thessalonians 3:10). The apostle also states in Ephesians 4:28, "Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor doing honest work with his hands, so that he may be able to give to those who are in need."

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Was Hurricane Katrina a Judgment from God?

by Richard C. Nickels



Some have wondered if the devastating Hurricane Katrina was a judgment from God. The answer is: probably not. When the merciful Almighty punishes, He precedes His divine judgment with prophets whom He sends to warn the people to repent. "Surely the Lord will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets," Amos 3:7. Verse 6 shows this is referring to evil (disaster) in the city done by the Lord. So, in the case of the August 2005 disastrous hurricane and flood which struck New Orleans and the Gulf coast, there was no prophet of God which thundered a warning message of repentance upon these wicked cities.

And there is much for a Godly prophet to denounce. New Orleans, according to the Catholic publication, *Our Sunday Visitor*, of October 15, 1995 is "the most Catholic city in America." Unlike other states in America, Louisiana has parishes rather than counties, and its state law is based on Roman law (from Catholic Europe). New Orleans is known throughout America as the Sin City of the South. If Catholics had the truth of God, you would see the Catholic Church denounce the wickedness of New Orleans, rather than participate in its wickedness. During the onslaught of Hurricane Katrina, the New Orleans Mayor said the citizens are strong because they "party hard."

And "partying hard" is the major feature of New Orleans. Drunken and sinful celebrations fill their calendars. We all know about Mardi Gras, the Catholic Celebration, which Rome adopted from devil worshiping pagans. During Mardi Gras, the Catholics are allowed to act like the very devil in public, before they have to "fast" for the 40 days of pagan Lent. Mardi Gras is one of the most sinful and decadent celebrations in the world. One of the young people who attended last year's Mardi Gras, summed up the celebration and the spirit of those who attend when he said: "It is sin and degradation, and we love it!"

On the calendar for Labor Day (the weekend after Katrina made landfall) was scheduled the annual "Gay Mardi Gras," (Southern Decadence) where sodomites from all over converge in New Orleans. Just like the February Mardi Gras, their satanic acts were to be on display for the public.

Following Labor Day, the City of New Orleans was planning on celebrating "Gay Halloween." The traditional Halloween celebration is again a Satanic holiday, adopted by the apostate Roman Church, but in New Orleans a traditional sin has to become even more sinful. Read Romans 1:18-32 to see what the Eternal God thinks of the sodomite city of the southern United States.

Katrina curtailed this year's plans for New Orleans' Gay Halloween and Gay Mardi Gras. That's good news.

And, turning to the Mississippi coast, there are Gulfport, Biloxi, and other smaller towns, which formerly were delightful beach areas, but in recent years have been taken over by gambling casinos on barges. Hypocritical "Bible Belt" professing Christians have to this point not allowed gambling on shore. Plans to rebuild the casinos are underway, this time on land. Such dens of iniquity are not routinely condemned by Sabbatarian ministers, because either they, their flocks, or both, are often avid gamblers. Some Mississippians would rather have jobs at casinos than eliminate the evil of gambling. Please see our free article, BS098, "Is Gambling a Sin?" (available from Giving & Sharing, PO

Scholarship Contest Notice

We ask all our BSA Scholarship Essay Contest entrants to be patient. We will have the results posted on our Web site (www.biblesabbath.org) as soon as possible, so please check our site regularly. In the meantime, be assured that our judges are hard at work sorting through an unusually large number of contestants.

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Story of Samson

Story of Hope

by *Kenneth Westby*



The life of Samson has always made good Hollywood copy, and colorful stories for Sunday School classes. Some see a shaggy, longhaired Samson chasing after bad women. They see a wild man slaying a thousand men with the jawbone of an ass in hand. They see a blinded, bitter Samson ending his life in a last fit of vengeance, but few have seen the lesson of Samson's life, the reason God had these accounts recorded in His Holy Book.

What we were never told on the screen or on our Sunday School flannel boards is that Samson is going to be in the first resurrection with Abraham and David and a host of Christians. Samson is counted among the righteous, and he is going to rule with Christ on this earth!

While listing the faithful righteous, the writer of the Book of Hebrews included Samson with such men as Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David, Samuel and the prophets (Heb. 11:32). The Bible affirms that these righteous men endured many trials through faith, “that they might obtain a *better resurrection*” (verse 35), the resurrection to rulership with Jesus Christ (Rev. 20:6). And Samson is one of them!

Let's take a closer look at the life of Samson and discover there is much more to the story than the fall of an ancient muscleman; Samson provides one of the most powerful lessons of hope recorded in God's Word.

Samson's Birth and Destiny

The historical account of Samson is found in the book of Judges, chapters 13-16. The setting is the land of Israel, in the 12th century B.C.

Samson's birth was a miracle. His mother was not able to have children, but that was no problem for God. Since Samson's parents were still loyal to God at a time of spiritual decadence in Israel, God answered their prayer and chose them to have a son.

A messenger was sent by God to give the blessed parents the news concerning their son (chapter 13). They were told their son was to deliver Israel from the hand of the Philistines who were occupying the land and oppressing Israel. They were given instructions on how to rear and care for the child.

God ordered Samson put under a special consecration governed by the Nazirite (meaning *separated* or *dedicated*) vow. This was a unique vow, applicable during the Old Covenant of national Israel, whereby a non-Levite (Samson was a Danite) could dedicate his life to the full-time service of God. This vow required that the hair not be cut—a sign of subjection—nor could any alcoholic beverages be consumed (Judges 13:5; Num. 6).

Super-Man

God had apparently planned to provide Samson with unbelievable superhuman strength to be used against the Philistines, providing Samson's vow of submission was faithfully kept. As a boy Samson was obedient to his vow and loyal to God. His friends undoubtedly came to have a healthy respect for his physical strength. Not many fellows would have braved picking a fight with him.

But once he was grown, Samson seemed to lack concern about the Philistines' oppressive occupation of his land. He wasn't revolted at the sight of the foul pagan practices of these evil Gentile overlords. He didn't share God's hatred of evil, and he lacked a compelling zeal to see Israel freed of Philistine domination.

Samson didn't think the Philistines were all that bad. He even made an attempt to blend into their lustful and perverted society. In fact, his first girlfriend was a Philistine from Timnath (chapter 14). He became so infatuated with this Philistine babe he put pressure on his parents to approve their marriage.

On one of Samson's trips to Timnath to see his girl he was attacked by an Asian lion. Bare-handed he grabbed the poor lion and tore him in two! He threw the back-bone and attached rib cage along the road and went his way! Like swatting a fly—nothing to it.

Samson finally prevailed against his disapproving parents and the marriage was arranged. Using his strength to *fulfill* God's plan for Israel was far from his mind at this point. Since he was more interested in serving *himself* than serving God, he would, like a lot of us, have to learn the hard way. The only way Samson would fight against the Philistines, it seems, was if he *personally* were hurt or wronged. And this is precisely what God allowed to happen.

How much easier it would have been for Samson and better for Israel had he shared God's hatred of sin and willingly allowed himself to be used by God. What misery and heartache he would have avoided.

The Riddle

The marriage didn't last a week! The Philistines didn't trust Samson and they surrounded him with thirty bodyguards during the week-long wedding festival. To get rid of them, Samson composed a clever riddle and promised them each a complete wardrobe if they could come up with the correct answer.

They got busy on it, but weren't smart enough. So they put pressure on Samson's wife with violent threats to burn her and her family if she didn't find out the answer for them. Unsavory "friends" to do business with! He picked fine family to marry into.

She then started a "crying jag" to get the answer out of Samson—and she succeeded, as women usually do with this tactic. Samson had his weaknesses. He gave in to her, again looking for the easy way out rather than the *right way*.

Samson's Anger Kindled

When the Philistines came up with the riddle's solution, Samson immediately knew that they had gotten the answer from his wife. He was mad! He left his wife and went to Ashkelon and slew thirty men and took all their apparel and gave it to the thirty who had answered the riddle. He then went back to live with his parents. He had been betrayed! He was angry and discouraged! But would he learn his lesson?

Samson got lonely and went back to the Philistines to get his wife, only to find she had been given to another man (chapter 15). He was beginning to *personally* hate the Philistines and anger boiled! It was now personal payback time.

Samson devised an attack plan. He caught three hundred foxes and tied their tails together. He must have been a good trapper, or faster than any track star we have today.

It was harvest time for the Philistines and Samson set fire to material tied between the tails of the foxes and turned them loose on the croplands of the Philistines—wreaking great destruction.

The Philistines retaliated by burning Samson's wife and her family. As so happens in betrayal, she received just what she tried to avoid. The girl he loved was now murdered and his miseries increased.

Overflowing with anger, he slaughtered many more Philistines. Later, he arranged to be caught by an army of a thousand Philistines and while they surrounded him, he broke loose and grabbed a fresh jawbone of an ass and killed a thousand men in hand-to-hand combat! Such a super-human feat is hard to imagine. Try picturing Sampson taking on a ring full of the best from the World Federation of Wrestling; Picture him with a football running 100 yards through the entire NFL suited up to stop him. When it came to power, he was not normal.

Sex is the bane of many a man and Sampson did not resist its pull. He frequented harlots and seemed bent on following the destructive pulls of his flesh. It was not that he could not have had a fine wife and a wonderful marriage. His parents had told him: "Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that you go to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines?" (14:3). Had Samson followed the advice of his parents and of God he could have had a beautifully happy life and avoided a load of pain. But Sampson was still too full of himself.

One mistake after another—one loose woman to the next—that was the path Samson took during his twenty-year judgeship in Israel. He had been largely faithful to his Nazirite vow and at times made an effort to serve God, but his desire for Philistine women was his undoing.

Enter Delilah

His selfish lust finally brought him to his last harlot—Delilah (16:4), and here is where Hollywood comes on strong. It was a craving, wanton, treacherous affair. Samson wanted love and happiness—but they are elusive apart from the Law of God. As for Delilah, she was in love with herself and money, not Samson.

The rulers and generals of the Philistines offered her a large sum of cash to find out the secret to Samson's strength. After being "nagged to death" by this wicked, unprincipled woman, he finally told her the key to his strength. If his hair were cut, the vow would be broken and he would lose the strength God supplied him; he would become as any other man.

Samson's First Haircut

Samson's hair wasn't hanging down to the ground hippie-fashion, looking like a male lion's mane after a rain! It was neatly arranged in seven locks or braids

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EVOLUTION IMPOSSIBLE TO EMBARRASS ITS BELIEVERS

by Henry M. Morris*

Creationists have often pointed out that evolution is unscientific because it can never be *proved* by science to be true. It is not happening at present and without a time machine, they can never be *sure* that it happened in the past.

Regardless of how much an organism looks like *it* had been intelligently designed, evolutionists (without even sounding embarrassed) will insist that natural selection has the power to make it *look like* it was designed, even though it wasn't. Furthermore, no matter what fossil they find out of its accepted place in the evolutionary "record," the evolutionists can "explain" how it got there.

The recent discovery of the intact flesh of a *Tyrannosaurus rex* with its "blood vessels-still flexible and elastic after 68 million years-and apparently intact cells" is a case in point. It would seem impossible for such soft structures to be preserved intact even for 6800 years, but evolutionists accept it on faith.

Similarly, Silurian fossil ostracodes supposedly 425 million years old have been found recently in England virtually identical to their modern-day counterparts and containing "a jaw-dropping amount of detail,"² but this discovery does not phase evolutionists. They still believe it was buried 425 million years ago!

On another front, one would think that geophysicists would be embarrassed by their repeated failure to find the so-called Mohorovicic Discontinuity (except by inference from seismic waves) at the boundary between the earth's "crust" and "mantle." Since the supposed evolutionary history of the earth is theoretically related to this "Moho," scientists have been trying to confirm its existence, along with the assumed nature of the mantle, by drilling deep holes in the crust. This has been going on since the early sixties without success, the latest such attempt having failed earlier this year.

The Bible long ago prophesied that it was not possible that the "heaven above be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath" (Jeremiah 31:37). Nevertheless: "Undaunted, oceanographers are ready to try again."³

On the heavenly front, the same unembarrassed evolutionary cosmologists will evidently continue trying to "explain" the evolutionary history of the cosmos. Theo-

ries abound, and change frequently, the rising favorite being "string theory," involving multiple dimensions of space and even multiple universes of space/time. However, as one evolutionary astrophysicist admits:

.. the universe unveiled by the hellishly complex mathematics of super-string theory is not even remotely close to what string theorists anticipated."⁴

Another cosmologist insists, however, that "string theory possesses a virtue for which many physicists are willing to accept these seeming absurdities: It can reconcile quantum mechanics and Einstein's theory of gravity."⁵ But then he admits that "the theory itself continues to grow more complicated and mysterious."⁶

Its main virtue is that it can explain the cosmos without God. As Gardner insists, "... the fundamental credo of science is that deep mysteries like these will someday, if only in the distant future, succumb to rational explanation."⁷

And what about human evolution? A recent statistical study of the genetics of human populations revealed, the most recent common ancestor (MRCA) for a randomly mating population would have lived in the very recent past.... In particular, the MRCA of all present-day humans lived just a few thousand years ago in these models.

The writer avoids mentioning the "Adam and Eve" explanation, of course. Nevertheless, he also notes that: "And a few thousand years before that.... the ancestors of everyone on the earth today were exactly the same."⁹

One would think that analyses such as this, made by evolutionists on the real data of genetics and human populations would be embarrassing to evolutionists who commonly postulate an approximately million-year history of human existence on earth. But even if there were people living all during the past million years, how come they all kept the same genetic makeup until just a few thousand years ago? The Biblical record would seem at least relevant to the discussion!

Then there are the recent research findings by ICR scientists and others working on the RATE project that have uncovered many new evidences that the earth is young, including the ubiquitous presence of radiocarbon in coal beds and even in diamonds. For years, of course, creationists have been pointing out that no real

evolution has taken place during the several thousand years of human history and also that there are no legitimate series of transitional forms in the fossil beds of the past, plus the negative effects of mutations and the testimony of the laws of thermodynamics—all of which seem to make any macroevolution extremely unlikely, if not impossible.

Yet evolutionists continue to control the scientific and education establishments, insisting that total evolution is a scientific fact and creation is religion, so only evolution can be allowed to be taught in public schools and colleges. They gloat over the alleged fact that “an unprecedented 14 percent of Americans tell pollsters that they are atheists, agnostics, secular humanists, or simply disinterested in religion.”¹⁰ Even if this figure is assumed to be correct, it still leaves 86% of the population who believe in God.

And they express surprise that so many people have somehow come to believe in creation despite all the brainwashing in schools. The editor-in-chief of the premier magazine *Science*, recently moaned in a lead editorial that:

Alternatives to the teaching of biological evolution are now being debated in no fewer than 40 states. Worse, evolution is not the only science under such challenge. In several school districts, geology materials are being rewritten because their dates for Earth’s age are inconsistent with scripture (too old).“

A few evolutionists do seem to have at least a glimpse of why we object to their insistence that evolution be considered a scientifically proven fact. The following commentary on evolutionary science was in a recent issue of *Geotimes*.

Evolutionists have “Physics Envy”. They tell the public that the science behind evolution is the same science that sent people to the moon and cures diseases. It’s not. The science behind evolution is not empirical, but forensic. Because evolution took place in history, its scientific investigations are after the fact—no testing, no observations, no repeatability, no falsification, nothing at all like physics.... I think this is what the public discerns—that evolution is just a bunch of just-so stories disguised as legitimate science.

Another evolutionist makes an interesting admission. He says: “Contrary to their public image, scientists are normal, flawed human beings.” They are as capable of prejudice, covetousness, pride, deceitfulness, etc., as anyone.

Evolutionists can’t seem to comprehend why most Americans still believe in God, creation, and the Bible, despite having the “fact” of evolution dogmatically taught to them throughout their school years. The fact is that there is an abundance of objective evidence that the Bible really is the Word of God. It is not just a book of religion as they argue, but a book of factual history. Jesus Christ really did rise from the dead and Jesus

Christ really did confirm the truth of the Biblical account of origins. Creationists do not believe in the Bible just because they are ignorant of science.

Peter says that “we have not followed cunningly devised fables.... We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed ...” (II Peter 1:16,19). And the apostle Paul, prophesying of the humanists of “the last days” said that they would be “Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Timothy 3:1, 7) because “they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Timothy 4:4).

A creationist scientist justifiably might think of the Psalmist’s caustic commentary on the ancient idol-making pantheistic evolutionists:

Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men’s hands. They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not:.... They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them (Psalm 115:4, 5, 8).

Endnotes

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Laying Hold of Destiny

by Dr. Daniel Botkin



The failure to lay hold of destiny is the tragedy of every generation. Ask people in this present generation to define a successful life, and the majority of them will describe a life marked by little more than self-preservation, adequate comfort, and a sufficient amount of fun and pleasure. Most people see no deeper purpose for their lives beyond the fulfillment of these temporal desires. As a result, they live shallow, trivial lives and never attempt to live up to their full potential. They die without ever releasing the treasures which are stored in their souls, and humanity is thus deprived of untold benefits and blessings.

How does a person lay hold of his destiny and find the determination and faith to fulfill that destiny? As time-bound creatures, we experience life in the present, past, and future. There are three keys needed to unlock the door of destiny, and these three keys relate to the present, the past, and the future. The first key is experiencing the terror and the thrill of existence in the present. The second key is overcoming failures of the past. The third key is breaking the chains of low expectations for the future. Let's consider each of these keys.

The Terror and the Thrill of Existence in the Present

Experiencing the terror and the thrill of existence in the present gives a person a vision of destiny. Allow me to share from my personal experience to demonstrate what I mean by the terror and the thrill of existence in the present. At a family reunion a few years ago, my uncle gave me a copy of our family tree. A relative had done extensive genealogical research and traced some of our ancestry all the way back to the 11th century. I keep my copy of our family history tucked away in a filing cabinet, but occasionally I take it out and glance at the names of my long-dead ancestors. It reminds me that I owe my existence to every one of these individuals. I am obligated to them, as well as to God, to fulfill the purpose of my existence in this present generation.

The terror and the thrill of my existence come when I consider the great number of events that had to transpire over the centuries to bring me into existence. Every link in the chain of my genealogy was necessary to

produce the unique individual that is me. Any number of things could have happened in the lives of my forefathers to break one of the links in the chain. A different decision about something as mundane as where to live or where to work could have resulted in a different spouse or a premature death for one of my ancestors. My existence could easily have been aborted centuries ago, but it wasn't. Just the fact that I am here in the present fills me with a sense of wonder and godly fear. It thrills my soul, because I realize that my Maker brought me into existence in this generation for a reason.

Mordecai the Jew knew that Esther had been brought into existence in her generation for a reason. When the Jewish people in Persia were in danger of annihilation, Mordecai urged Queen Esther to intervene. Mordecai closed his appeal to Esther with these words: "And who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

We each need to realize that we have been brought into the world "for such a time as this." God put each one of us into this current period of history. He was the One who decided when we would be born. It was His will that we be alive in this present generation, not in a generation of a hundred years ago or a generation of a hundred years from now. He has a destiny for each one of us to fulfill in this generation. We may not see the purpose of our existence in our own lifetime. Ruth, the great grandmother of King David and ancestress of the Messiah, certainly did not see the full picture of her purpose in her own lifetime. Yet when she made the decision to leave Moab and join herself to the God of Israel and to the people of Israel, she set out on a path which led her to the fulfillment of a glorious destiny.

Like Ruth and like Esther, we each have a reason for being here in our generation. Whether we fill a major or a minor role in the big picture is beside the point. The point is that we each have a role to play. Whether we are small or great, we each have a purpose, just as every part of the human body has a purpose. The simple fact of our existence in the present should be all the proof we need to convince us that God truly does have a plan for us in our generation.

Seeing this truth will cause us to experience the terror and the thrill of existence in the present. This is the first key needed to unlock the door of destiny. This key opens the door wide enough to let in the light of revelation concerning destiny. Merely seeing the light is not enough to take us through destiny's door, though. We need to have the courage and the confidence to go forward and walk in the light. To do this, we need the second key, overcoming the failures of our past.

Overcoming the Failures of our Past

We need to overcome the failures of our past and the crippling influence they bring. Some people who see the light have a pensive longing to go forward and lay hold of their destiny, but they find themselves paralyzed by *kakorrhaphiophobia* — the fear of failure. Because they failed so many times in the past, they are afraid to use their talents and abilities to attempt any noble endeavors. Rather than risk the disappointment and humiliation of another failure, they settle for less than God has for them. Like the servant in the Biblical parable who buried his talent, they say, "I was afraid," and these three words become their epitaph.

Overcoming the failures of our past can be difficult. Failure is usually a very depressing experience. Our goals and hopes and dreams do not materialize, and we feel ashamed, inadequate, and humiliated. It is normal to feel disappointed when we fail at something. However, it is not necessary to let ourselves be emotionally crippled or paralyzed by our failures. One failure does not mean that we are doomed to fail at everything we try. We can try again, even if we have to set new goals that are entirely different from the goals we had originally hoped to reach.

Many of the great achievements of history were accomplished by people who had failed many times before they succeeded. Abraham Lincoln experienced many political defeats before he became President. Thomas Edison's perseverance in the face of repeated failures gave the world the electric light. The early sermons of the great evangelist D.L. Moody were so pathetic that a friend told him he would best serve the Lord by keeping quiet. The Bible records the stories of many men who failed and made a comeback. Moses' initial efforts to deliver the Israelites from Egypt resulted in exile for Moses. Forty years later, he returned to Egypt with the power of God. The Apostle Thomas was rebuked for doubting the testimony of the witnesses who had seen the risen Lord, but Thomas later went on to carry the gospel to India, where he died as a martyr. Peter boasted to his Lord, "I will never deny you!" Yet he denied knowing his Master three times. About two months later, though, Peter boldly proclaimed the message of the Resurrection to a large crowd of stunned onlookers, and about

3,000 people were baptized that day as the result of Peter's preaching.

Whether our past has been marked by moral failures, business failures, or political failures, failure can be overcome. The solution to overcoming failure is not some hidden secret. The solution rests in simple things like admission of wrongdoing, acceptance of God's forgiveness, trust in God's guidance, and old-fashioned perseverance. Regardless of the mess we have made of things, our heavenly Father is able and willing to forgive us if we acknowledge our sins and repent. He is able and willing to help us succeed if we are willing to try again. Accepting God's forgiveness for our sins sets us free from the baggage of our past so that we can go forward and trust Him to help us lay hold of our destiny. Before we can walk in the fulness of our destiny, however, we need the third key, breaking the chains of low expectations for the future.

The Chains of Low Expectations

The chains of low expectations are like the chains used to tether elephants by the feet. If an elephant born in captivity gets accustomed to having his foot chained to a stake in the ground, he will continue to be restricted by the chain even after he has grown strong enough to break free. Since the elephant's infancy, the tug of the chain has told him that he has gone as far as he can go. He is programmed to believe that he has reached his limit when he feels the tug of the chain. When he becomes an adult, he does not realize that he has grown powerful enough to break the chain. So he believes the lie of the chain for the rest of his life.

Some people are like chained elephants. They are totally unaware of the increased strength that the maturing process has brought to them. They accept the limitations that past weaknesses had imposed on them. When they try to go forward to lay hold of their destiny, they still feel the tug of the chain. The chain tells them, "No, this is as far as you can go. Forget about doing anything noble. Just be content with your own survival and comfort and a few pleasures in life." This message of the chain is often spoken through the lips of well-meaning people who have low expectations of us.

The strength needed to break the chain of low expectations is a strength that builds up one day at a time. One is a small number, but we need to consider the power of one - one prayer, one step of faith, one day of growth, one ping pong ball. Yes, one ping pong ball. Let me explain with a true story. Years ago a boat sank and was stuck in the mud at the bottom of the sea. The owner of the boat offered a generous reward to anyone who could salvage the boat. Several people tried to raise the boat but failed. Finally, one man came up with an ingenious idea. He ran a flexible tunnel from

the surface to the sea floor and attached the end of the tunnel to the sunken boat's hull. Then from the surface he fed thousands of ping pong balls into the tunnel and forced the ping pong balls into the hull of the sunken boat. Eventually, the accumulation of ping pong balls reached "critical mass," and the boat was lifted out of the mud and rose to the surface. One ping pong ball by itself could not free the boat from the mud, but the power of one ping pong ball, combined with enough other ping pong balls, provided the accumulation of power needed to pull the ship out of the mud.

Maybe one day of spiritual and emotional growth will not give us the strength we need to free ourselves from the weaknesses that have us stuck in the mud. If we continue to mature, though, eventually we can grow strong enough to break free. There will come a day when we are powerful enough to break the chains of low expectations. If we give up and resign ourselves to a lifetime of weakness and defeat, we will never know when that day of potential victory arrives. We will be like the elephant that remained chained to his post because he did not realize he had the power to break free. We must not base our expectations for the future on the weaknesses and limitations of our past. We do not need to limit ourselves to other people's low expectations of us. We can break the chains and prove them wrong.

The past belongs to our ancestors, the future belongs to our descendants, but the present belongs to us. What we do in the present will have eternal consequences. Let's make the most of it while we are here. □

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Psalm 9:8-10

New International Version

"He will judge the world in righteousness; he will govern the peoples with justice. The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. Those who know your name will trust in you, for you, Lord, have never forsaken those who seek you."

King James Version

"And he shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness. The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee."

FORGIVING OTHERS

"If you forgive others when they offend you, your heavenly Father will forgive you too. But if you do not forgive others when they offend you, your heavenly Father will not forgive you for your offenses." Matt. 6:14, 15, Goodspeed.

Have you ever had someone who had injured you deeply in a personal way, perhaps even on purpose, come and ask your forgiveness? How did you react? Can you think of times when you were hurt so deeply that you felt like turning your back on the offender? Or maybe you felt like holding him at arm's length until you were satisfied that he was sincere enough, or humble enough, or repentant enough?

Obviously these are not ways a Christian should act. But how should a Christian act? Should he fall all over himself trying to forgive the person who has wronged him? Perhaps he should. After all, that is what the father in the parable of the prodigal son apparently did. The Bible says that "while he [the prodigal] was still some distance off, his father saw him and his heart went out to him, and he ran and fell on his neck and kissed him" (Luke 15:20, Phillips). *The New English Bible says that the father "flung his arms around him."* This is a picture of God forgiving the penitent sinner. It has been pointed out that this is the only time in the Scriptures in which God is represented as running. More than that. He is portrayed as practically falling over Himself in His eagerness to forgive.

But what about when the same person repeatedly injures us in a personal way and just as frequently asks our forgiveness? Is there not a limit to forgiving? When Peter asked this very question (Matt. 18:21) Jesus left no doubt that there is no limit. It is not for us to determine whether a person is sincere enough, or humble enough, or repentant enough. Leave that with God. Our part is to forgive.

But does not this make us terribly vulnerable? Indeed it does—in the short run. But after all, right and truth have always been vulnerable. When sin originated, God had the power to blot Satan and his followers out of existence, but He could not do this and be true to Himself. And because He could not, He was vulnerable—in the short run. But not in the long run, for truth and righteousness will emerge eternally triumphant at last.

The next time someone wrongs you, forgive him even before he asks to be forgiven, or even if he does not ask to be forgiven, or even if he wrongs you repeatedly. Do this, not because you believe that you will be vindicated at last, but because it is right, and because it is only those who forgive others whom God is able to forgive.

Donald Mansell, New Every Morning, page 309. Review & Herald Publishing Ass'n. 1981.

You Are Extraordinary

In Christ, our human potential is boundless

Everybody knows about fingerprints. Of all earth's billions, no two people have the same pattern. Each of us is unique. But, did you know that no two hearts are alike, or stomachs, eyes, livers, nerves, blood vessels, or brains?

You are, in fact, extraordinary!

On physical examination it is quite apparent that each of us in a very special way is a unique person. Even the shape of the liver differs from one person to another. So, too, its colour, and how it reacts inside its special environment, and its size. The same is true in principle for every organ. This, in part, explains why medicine or surgery is a hit or miss affair, an art form!

Our brains, too, differ. The functions of this crowning and vital organ can be mapped out in rough on the cortex. Yet no neurosurgeon can have an accurate knowledge of a particular brain without careful and detailed pre-investigation using all manner of scans and psychological tests.

As one research neurologist, K.S. Lashley points out, "...individuals start life with brains differing enormously in structure." And, "its diversities within the species are of the same general character as are the differences between related species." As that successful and very human psalmist, King David of ancient Israel, exclaimed, "*You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body, and knit them together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex. It is amazing to think about. Your workmanship is marvelous...*" (Psalms 139:13,14).

But does such uniqueness have any practical significance?

Indeed, it does. Did you ever wonder why your partner feels pain or cold or heat more acutely (or less so) than you do? It's because of the striking variation in the sensitivity of our pain or other receptors. Some have little or no pain sensation—a fact which might influence your choice of occupation!

Of ninety-seven prize fighters tested in New York, all but ten had a low pain sensitivity! And don't we wrapped-up office types marvel at those bare-chested hirsutes working happily in sub-zero cold?

Then there's colour vision. "That curtain is green," you say. But your wife's perception is "blue." Who's right? Well, both, for we each see colours in a special way. Knowing about such differences might lead to more toleration within the family and on the job or golf course!

You are, indeed, extraordinary. But, so what?

Power-up Your Brain

The bottom line is that each of us has a very distinctive mind. We're each a unique "bundle of nerves" (in the Bible it is described as the "spirit in man") that's capable of immense development, and whatever our age. The brain consists of a billion inter-connecting neurons mostly present from birth — the "most complicated machine in the entire universe." But the numbers decrease with age, for millions of cells die daily.

"No hope for me, then" you say? Not so, for your brain can grow whether you are seven or seventy. Whether we're young or old, neurologists now tell us that any learning activity actually increases the size and weight of the brain. And not from eating fish but from mental effort. Said wise King Solomon, "*An intelligent man is always open to new ideas. In fact, he looks for them*" (Proverbs 18:15). The successful human being is one who forever questions his views and looks constantly to improve himself or herself. Such are not stuck in a rut. Nor need you be! All of these factors imply that none of us need feel "a write-off". Simply because during our schooldays we were branded with a particular IQ we needn't feel inferior — not even to our boss. For you are talented in ways that are not inferior to his and are probably complementary. This applies, too, within family relationships!

That old, but ever new, book, the Bible, is a rich vein of practical business wisdom. So, grasp firmly what Paul said in his letter to the Roman Christians: "*God has given us the ability to do certain things well*" (Romans 12:6). Each of us—and that includes you -

has an incredible potential for personal development. The mathematical genius Albert Einstein once reckoned that we use only 0.02% of our capacity! We each have a storehouse of unused talent in a combination that is unique to us. We each have, in business terms, our “unique selling points”.

So, accept yourself for what you are - a special blend of strengths and weaknesses. Like the employee who hid his talent (Matthew 25:25), the only failures are those who die without taking advantage of their inborn capabilities, and those who don't recognize and offset their weaknesses. Said Helen Keller, “I thank God for my handicaps, for through them I have found myself, my work, and my God.”

On the other hand, don't accept yourself as you are! Our present attainments are but a step along the way. Much of what we have learned is transient. Science is temporary, with new discoveries forever throwing out old concepts once held as sacrosanct. What we “knew” as children is probably no longer true. And what we learned about God in Sunday School or at mother's knee is just as likely not to be true! Didn't Jesus warn us about “*tradition*” (Mark 7:6-9)?

Man the Pinnacle

When God created mankind -- yes, He did! -- He noted that everything He had created was “*very good*.” Indeed, mankind was the very pinnacle of that creation. He said, “*Let us make man in our image after our likeness*” (Genesis 1:26). (The speaker, by the way, is the one who became Jesus Christ -- Colossians 1:15-17.) Even though we are “*of dust from the ground*” yet we have the potential - through repentance and the subsequent indwelling of the Holy Spirit of God—to become a part of the divine Family. We can become truly “children of God” (Romans 8: 12-17).

God only has immortality - not man (I Timothy 6:16). We don't have dwelling within us some kind of immortal soul freshly dished out at our birth. We are not, as human beings, god-like. But we can - through Jesus Christ - become in God's image just as He originally planned!

You who were made to become in the image of the divine have an abundant array of undiscovered and unused talent. Use it in the service of God, of your local fellowship, of humanity, and of yourself.

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Faith or Observance of the Law

By Julia Benson

Galatians 3:5 poses this question: Does God give you His Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?

In my experience it is because I believe what I heard, especially in the realm of answered prayer. If I believe, it will be so. *That* is the power of God. Furthermore, it is because I believe that I try to observe the law. (However, I would hate for anyone to see my knees because they are pretty bruised up from all the stumbling that I do!)

It seems to me that as my relationship with God moves from being sporadic, repetitive prayer requests to a more constant *relationship* with Him, He will take my deepest desires and my greatest fears and work miracles.

I have been relating to God outside of a traditional pray-er and answer-er relationship. I want him to permeate my every spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and even physical level. Because of this kind of relationship with him I have seen amazing things happen in my life and in the lives of those around me. I could try to list my answered prayers now, but it would be too arbitrary to measure the infinite goodness that has been showered upon me by my Father in Heaven. His goodness is more than just answered prayer requests. It is in God's full knowledge of me and His love for me that he answers my prayers, eases my worries, anticipates what I need, and totally and completely takes care of me.

Julia Benson is a freelance writer who lives near the town of Farmersburg, Iowa. She attends a Seventh-day Adventist Church in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin.

Father, God, Rock!

By Brian Knowles

Many years ago, at least 30, for a church publication, I wrote an article called "One-on-One with God." There was another line to that title, but I have long ago forgotten it. The point of the article was that our salvation is not dependent upon people, but upon God. In those days, church members were looking to leadership for guidance, and leadership was in chaos. Some members were losing faith; many were bolting the Church. My feeling was that if I could convince church members to build a solid one-on-one relationship with God, they'd be able to weather whatever political storms came along at the level of leadership.

I failed to take my own advice. It turned out that I too had placed too much emphasis on human leadership and not enough on my relationship with God. As a result, when my confidence in leadership vaporized, my relationship with God wasn't well-enough developed to see me through. Spiritually speaking, I lost everything. I became an atheist. I thought like an atheist, lived like one, and generally rejected the whole idea of "God" from my life. I embraced some of the bogus ideas of humanism, feminism and the New Age.

A Recent Example

Not long ago, I was talking to a long-time friend who now defines himself as a Deist. A Deist is a person who accepts the idea of a God, but rejects the notion of supernatural revelation. For the deist, God is ill-defined. At best he may be a "first cause" or the Intelligence behind "intelligent design." But God does not have an expressed will and he has not provided us with reliable revelation of Himself. In other words, the Bible is not his Word, and God is not personally involved with us.

My friend had, like me, moved through atheism and agnosticism to the position of deism. It has been a sort of personal evolutionary process. Also like me, my friend had been a minister in that old church denomination. He too had become disillusioned with leadership. He too threw out *all* religion on the basis of his experience with one particular one.

As I see it now, this is a mistake, no matter who does it, and not matter with which denomination.

Viewing God Anthropomorphically

God is not a man. God is love. God is spirit. God transcends man in every possible way. God cannot be

reduced to a human level. To a great extent, he is beyond all comprehension – he is ineffable. All we can know of God is what he has revealed of himself in the Bible, and what we can personally experience of him. If we anthropomorphize God, we make him all too human. There is far more that we don't know about God than that we do.

When we place church leaders between ourselves and God, we make two mistakes: 1). we replace Jesus Christ as mediator between man and God (I Timothy 2:5); and 2), we cut ourselves off from the sustaining power and life of God.

All human leadership is flawed. We all have feet of clay. There is no perfect model of ideal Christian faith but Jesus Christ himself. He alone lived a wholly exemplary life. When we place faith and trust in human leaders, we are creating for ourselves unrealistic expectations and setting ourselves up for a fall.

Sooner or later, every human church leader is going to fail in one way or another. Church leaders are as flawed as anyone. They have biases, prejudices, subjective opinions, and sometimes absurd ideas. Some are obsessed with money and power. Some are control freaks. Some are so conservative they squeak when they walk. Others are so liberal that getting anything concrete out of them is like nailing butter to a barn door on a hot day in August. Some are just plain intellectually and physically lazy.

Ministers also sin. They get divorced, make financial mistakes, have affairs, lose their tempers, and make errors in judgment, get in auto accidents, get drunk, use drugs and sometimes resort to violence. I've known of ministers who have robbed banks, been jailed for embezzlement, and molested children (i.e. the recent scandals in the Catholic Church).

Many ministers and even scholars are intellectually dishonest. They decide issues politically rather than objectively.

Minister's wives are no better. They too sometimes have emotional meltdowns, create "scenes" in restaurants, have fights with their husbands, have affairs, lose their grip, or say and do dumb things. Some of them even have rebellious teenagers. It's all about being human.

The greater your expectations of leadership, the greater the letdown when you encounter close up its humanity. In his excellent book *Happiness is a Serious*

Problem,” Dennis Prager writes, “...Pain in life comes from unfulfilled desires and expectations” (p. 55). When we expect more of church leaders than they can deliver, we are let down – in some cases, crushed. As the Scripture says, “*Hope deferred makes the heart grow sick*” (Proverbs 13:12).

I have known church members who threw their Christian faith out the window because their minister committed some political inequity in running the church softball team – i.e. he favored his own son over someone else’s for a key position. I have seen others abandon Christ because of perceived unfairnesses in the church choir. For many Christians, it doesn’t take much to overthrow their faith. Given the right excuse, they can abandon Christ in a heartbeat.

Trusting Men leads to Heartache

I know what you’re thinking: if a minister or his wife did all of, or any of, the things listed above, he probably shouldn’t be a minister. Right; but then there’d probably be no ministers. Now I realize this has probably gotten at least some of you in a tizzy. I don’t mean to upset you. I’m fully aware of the qualifications for ministry found in I Timothy 3 and elsewhere. Consider this: How many ministers would you remove from office on grounds that he does not have “*his children in subjection with all gravity*” (I Timothy 3:4b). Those of you who have, or have had, your own “nightmare teens,” will know what I mean. We live in a time when all of society conspires against the authority of parents. Ministers do not live in glass bubbles; they have the same kind of problems with their children that everyone else has.

I’m trying to make what I think is a very important point: “*Thus saith the Lord; Cursed is the man that trusteth in man and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord*” (Jeremiah 17:5). Let’s read it in the Jewish Translation: “*Thus said the Lord: Cursed is he who trusts in man, who makes mere flesh his strength, and turns his thoughts from the Lord.*” Do you see the implications of this verse? The more we place trust in human leaders and human strength, the more we tend to drift away from God!

If we want to be blessed, we need to heed verse 7 of this same chapter: “*Blessed is he who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is in the Lord alone*” (JT).

The deeper our one-on-one relationship with God, the less important human leadership and its manifest weaknesses become to us. Ever wonder why some leaders – especially authoritarian ones – want to make you dependent upon them? Ever wonder why some church members become “ministerial groupies”? They have perhaps become neurotically dependent upon the personality, charisma and charm of a given leader. Yet when that leader sins or takes off his shoes and

shows his feet of clay, they are crushed, mortified, destroyed.

God, unlike man, never lets us down. He is rock solid – the same yesterday, today and forever. God, speaking of his servant David, said, “*He shall cry unto me, Thou art my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation*” (Psalm 89:26). Father, God and Rock! This is how we should view God. God is the perfect father. He loves us as no other. He is ever there for us. He waits with eager anticipation to hear the prayers of his children.

Our Father is God — all powerful, all knowing, all wise. Our Father is our Rock of protection and stability. When all others flake out, God is there for us, consistent, predictable and unmovable. If our faith is founded upon the Rock, then it will endure all storms. David maintained faith in the face of withering adversity because it was founded upon his Father, his God and his Rock. As he is recorded saying: *And David spake unto the Lord the words of this song...The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; The God of my rock; in him will I trust: he is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence...*” (2 Samuel 22:1,2,3). When David was in trouble, God came through for him.

The point of all this is: the key to our salvation is our one-on-one relationship with God in Christ. It does not depend upon the vicissitudes of men. Men come and go. They gain power and lose it. All of them have feet of clay. None is perfect. If we hitch our spiritual wagons to men, we’re doomed. If we hitch them to God, we are assured of success.

Dependency upon Men

The problem with authoritarian churches is that they foster cults of personality and dependence upon human leadership. That’s the whole idea of authoritarianism. That’s undoubtedly why Jesus forbade it in the Church (Matthew 20:25-28). That’s probably why Paul discouraged cults of personality in I Corinthians 1:11 ff. That is surely why Peter wrote: “*Feed the flock of God...neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock*” (I Peter 5:1,3 excerpts).

Now I realize that about this time, if any authoritarian has read this far, he or she will be contemplating Hebrews 13:17: “*Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you.*” The emphasis will be on the words “obey,” “rule” and “submit.” This verse must be balanced by the other three quoted above — and look at the rest of the verse: pastors must be accountable. All too often, authoritarian

Continued on Page 17

Enterprise Academy Students Assist with Katrina Relief

*by John Treolo,
Communication Director*

The date: Monday, August 29, 2005.

The event: A Category 5 Hurricane named Katrina destroyed parts of the Gulf Coast.

The results: The worst natural disaster in the history of the United States.

The aftermath: Massive destruction; hundreds are killed; at least one million displaced from their homes.

The decision: Enterprise Academy students and staff from Enterprise, Kansas, traveled to Mississippi and Houston, Texas, to assist with relief efforts, sort materials, and distribute food.



This pontoon boat found a new launching pad. This was a common scene in Pearlington.



Enterprise Academy students work on the home of Esther Sayles' parents. Her parents have owned the home since 1972, and it is the home she was born and raised in. They are determined to rebuild.

For Mickey and Esther Sayles, new pastor-wife team for the Enterprise Church, Hurricane Katrina hit close to home. Esther was raised in Pearlington, Mississippi, population 1,646. Her parents' home, as well as her sister's house, were both severely damaged. The community is in ruins.

Yet for one week, 20 students and staff from Enterprise Academy made a big difference to this community in general, and Esther's family, in particular.

"What this community needed was labor. For these 20 students to come down and help. They have gotten done in a day and a half what it took my family a month to do," said Esther.

What did the experience mean to the students who served in Pearlington? "It was kind of depressing at first. Everything had been destroyed. I feel better now that we are helping people put their houses and lives back in order." Cassie Mast, junior, Wichita South Church.

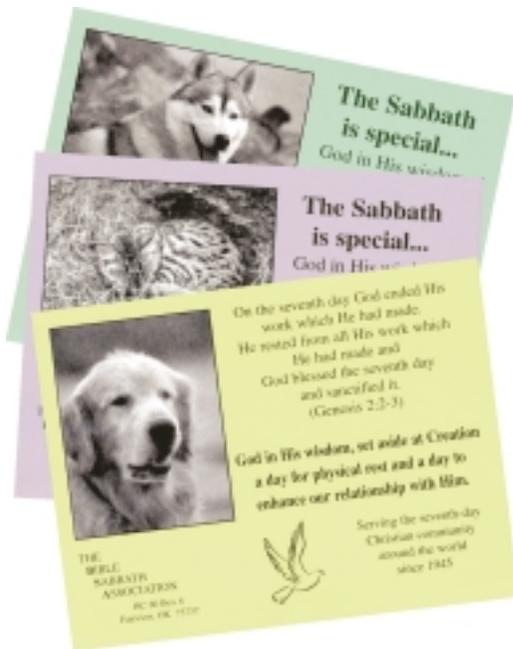
"I'm very glad I came. I've seen lots of devastation but the opportunity to restore things has been very rewarding" — Jeff Barker, senior, Topeka Wanamaker Church.



Removing tree limbs and debris was just one of the tasks performed by Enterprise Academy students and staff in Pearllington, Mississippi.

For Pastor Sayles, this experience reminded him of the great service young people can provide. "We wanted to do something more than just send money. It's been worthwhile for these students to experience a different viewpoint of people who have lost everything, but still have hope. And their hope isn't in their possessions."

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Knowles: "Father, God, Rock" continued from Page 15.

pastors are accountable to no one. That's why they tend to strike out on their own – to escape accountability. They don't want "some board" telling them what to do. If they go astray, they don't want to be "fireable." They want to protect their nest egg.

Let us also consider Hebrews 13:17 in light of the way it might better be translated: "Remember your leaders that related to you the word of God; understand the results of their pathway and walk according to their faith" (Dr. Roy Blizzard translation—see www.biblescholars.org).

Paul said it best when he said, "Follow me as I follow Christ...." We need only follow our pastor to the degree that he imitates our Lord and is yielded to him. We don't need to follow his subjective opinions, his manifested carnality, or his erroneous doctrines and idea. He is only Christ's servant to the extent that he truly follows Christ.

A good pastor, to be a good pastor, must be selfless. His mind cannot be on his power over people, the size of his following, the fullness of his coffers, the extent of his influence or how many people attended his feast site vs. someone else's. His focus must be on the spiritual well-being of the flock over which he has been given charge. He must be motivated by love, care and compassion, not by money and power or personal security. To teach, he must maintain personal intellectual integrity. He cannot compromise the truth in the name of church politics or to curry favor. Most importantly, as Peter suggested, he must be willing to "walk the talk." This is the hardest qualification of all.

I am not here encouraging over-criticism of the ministry. The ministry should be respected, prayed for, and otherwise supported. Neither am I fostering neurotic dependence upon it. I'm saying that our faith cannot depend on men. It must be built primarily on our relationship with God. The best way to do that is through prayer: "intimate communication" with God. That's how David did it, and for our inspiration, God led him to record many of those prayers as psalms.

When we get to the point where we can enthusiastically say with Paul: "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39), then we will know that our faith is not dependent upon man, but upon God.

The Lord is our Father, our God, and our Rock.

"Out of the Box" is a regular feature of the Association for Christian Development Web site (www.godward.org). Brian Knowles is an artist and writer.

By allowing government to assume an increasingly greater role in supplying the needs of our citizens, we have created a permanent class of needy people whose lives never get any better and who see the “compassion” (handouts) from their government as their right. Since government operates as a political force and not as a moral force, there is never a sense of obligation on the part of the recipients of welfare, nor is there accountability for the dollars and services rendered. This kind of government “compassion” is nothing less than pandering for the sake of votes. Moreover, for those who would like to see the government expand and the Church retreat, this is the perfect formula for creating dependence in the people for their favorite politicians and government programs. By its very structure, this kind of welfare dependence makes the people subservient to Caesar, not to God.

Lest anyone think that this writer is condemning the poor who are caught in this welfare bog, I blame politicians who have seized on the misery of the poor, and I blame the Church in general for not standing up on its hind legs and fighting to keep the poor out of the hands of Caesar’s lackeys. Much of government justifies its existence by maintaining people in a state of self-perpetuating dependence. The job of the Church is to free them from their dependence on worldly systems and bring them into a dependence on the only One who can save them, Jesus Christ. One of the most insidious results of keeping the poor on the government welfare rolls is that it robs them of opportunities to make decisions that most people make as a matter of routine. Rather than take the initiative to improve their education, their employment (if any), and their financial circumstances, they are encouraged by overzealous politicians and bureaucrats to keep taking the handouts—all which prevents them from escaping their compassion-imposed prison. This situation also tears families apart and breeds suspicion and resentment toward authorities. They feel trapped in their poverty and helpless to free themselves from it. Any Christian who would support the use of government to control the lives of people in this manner needs to reexamine his values in the light of Scripture.

As a society our sense of compassion appears to be losing its compass because much of the Church is forfeiting its role as a powerful moral force in our culture. The rails that keep this country from falling off the cliff are the moral laws of the Bible, and at this point the Church is not engaged enough in politics, business, or the culture in general to keep our aimless culture from killing itself with “compassion.”

—Ken Ryland

CHEROKEES VOTE TO DISPLAY TEN COMMANDMENTS

If you are nostalgic for the days when the Ten Commandments were posted in public buildings, you might want to consider visiting the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians. The tribal council is making plans to mount a copy of the Ten Commandments in the council house where government meetings are held, and possibly display them throughout other public buildings in Cherokee.

The idea was introduced by Councilwoman Angela Kephart last month. She said the tribe should display the Ten Commandments out of respect and devotion to God. The motion passed unanimously. “We aren’t saying you have to abide by the Ten Commandments,” Kephart said, according to the Smoky Mountain News. “We are simply displaying God’s Ten Commandments. That’s what He expects from each and every individual. If you break that, it is between you and God. It is not between you and the tribal council; it is between you and God.”

There is no First Amendment issue involved, and even if the American Civil Liberties Union wanted to make one, it cannot. The U.S. Constitution does not apply to Cherokee, nor to any other Native American tribe for that matter, according to Cherokee’s Attorney General David Nash. “We are a sovereign nation and we can pretty much post anything we want in our council chambers,” said Kephart. “For once the federal government is not going to tell us what to do. We can feel good about it because we are standing up for God. The more it becomes controversial, the more we need to stand firm.”

Kephart was clear about her desire to promote Christianity. “God has blessed our tribe,” she said. “We have a very rich tribe, per se. We are operating on over a \$200 million budget thanks to our gaming enterprise.” Posting the Ten Commandments does not prevent others from practicing their religion, explained Nash. “Anybody can practice any religion they want to practice,” Nash said. (*World Net Daily*).

• PRAISE GOD FOR THIS GOOD REPORT!! May the example of our Native American friends be used to humble our own “mighty” nation so that, in repentance, we might find our own way back to God and to His law! “But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first” (Matthew 19:30).

(Source: *Capitol Hill Prayer Partners*)

Box 100, Neck City, MO 64849). Gambling is totally contrary to the Christian way of life.

So, there are plenty of reasons why the Almighty could have sent judgment upon New Orleans and the Gulf coast in the form of Hurricane Katrina. But the evidence is, that He did not. You see, God is merciful. "He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust," Matthew 5:45. When God does send judgment, He will send forerunners, His prophets, to plead with the people for repentance. God does not get any pleasure in the death and destruction of the wicked. In Hurricane Katrina, the just and the unjust suffered alike. God warns, and delivers His people from destruction. So, this recent disaster is a natural consequence of man departing from God, and not a specific punishment from the Creator.

So, there are plenty of reasons why the Almighty could have sent judgment upon New Orleans and the Gulf coast in the form of Hurricane Katrina. But the evidence is, that He did not.

Where does that leave us? We should reach out with compassion to help our brethren and others devastated by this terrible calamity. We should continue to denounce sin, and call sinners to repentance. New Orleans and southern Mississippi may rebuild and continue on their sinful decadent ways. It appears that some, led by wicked sodomites, will refuse to repent; "thou hadst a whore's forehead, thou refusedest to be ashamed," Jeremiah 3:3. Those few who do respond in repentance, we should help with open arms, and pray that the Eternal will lead more to repentance. It will take a lot more and worse devastation for many to "get the picture," and see their own sinful depravity, and yield to the sovereignty of God.

Let us continue to proclaim the everlasting Gospel unto all them that dwell on the earth, to every nation, kindred, and tongue, and people, crying out to them to fear God and give glory to Him which created Heaven and earth, for the hour of His judgment is coming (see Revelation 14:6-7). All Christ-rejecting sinners are going to experience the wrath of God. Most will get a taste of it in this life, but all will taste it after judgment day. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," Hebrews 10:31, far worse than a hurricane.

Repenting now is the smart choice. That is the lesson of Hurricane Katrina.

Richard C. Nickels is president of the Bible Sabbath Association and lives in Gillette, Wyoming.

South African AIDS Expert Urges Circumcision

(Sept. 24, 2005) The Associated Press (AP) news service is reporting from Cape Town, South Africa that a South African AIDS expert is advocating male circumcision as the best available "vaccine" against AIDS in a country that has nearly 6 million HIV-infected people, with more than 600 people dying daily of the disease.

Francois Venter told a congress of health activists in the Treatment Action Campaign that a recent survey in the Soweto township indicated that circumcised men were 65 percent less likely to contract AIDS than those who had not been circumcised.

"We dream of a vaccine which has this efficacy," said Venter, clinical director of the Reproductive Health and HIV Research at the University of Witwatersrand. "The results are phenomenal."

The reduction in the risk of HIV infection was first noted in 1987 by Dr. William Cameron of the University of Manitoba in Canada who reported the results of his research in Kenya. It is believed that the cells in the foreskin may be particularly vulnerable to infection.

Venter urged the Treatment Action Campaign, an influential movement of 13,000 activists, to consider promoting circumcision as a vital prevention tool, given that existing methods were failing to slow the spread of the epidemic.

South Africa has the highest number of HIV/AIDS infection in the world. According to South African health officials, nearly 30 percent of pregnant women are infected, a figure that reaches 40% in KwaZuluNatal province. The disease is now one of the main causes of death among young adults and infants.

A study conducted by the U.S. National Health Institute involving 5,000 individuals is now under way in Uganda. □

and probably formed an impressive looking crown to his formidable physical body (16:13).

Delilah got the secret she sought and after deceitfully causing Samson to fall asleep tenderly upon her knees, she called for an aide to come and shave off the seven locks of his head. She then began to hit, punch, and scratch him as she called for the Philistines who were waiting outside her chamber.

The Philistines overpowered him and he quickly realized his special strength from God was gone! The vengeful Philistines then gouged out his eyes and bound him with brass chains and bands, fastened him to a grinding wheel in a dark prison and made him rind grain like an ox.

What a pitiful sight; blind, bald, a dejected hulk of a man grinding like an animal, stepping in his own manure. Day in and day out he walked the same circle amid the continual abuse of his captors.

But now Samson had time to think. Time to think about what a fool he had been. Time to think of the lusting eyes that had led him from one sin to another—with all the bowel twisting anguish those sins brought. Now there were empty sockets where eyes had been! Now he suffered in abject slavery where before no one dared question his freedom and power.

Over the months he had plenty of time to meditate on God's purpose for his life and what a shattered mess he had made of it. He had time to repent before his Creator for all his filth and self-seeking vanity. But was it too late?

Too Late to Repent?

After burning out his life and so utterly spoiling the high calling he had, wasn't God through with Samson? Wasn't God's back turned on Samson? Hadn't God given Samson enough time, enough mercy? Was this the end of the road for Samson?

What about you? Many of you may feel like you are right there with Samson in the prison grinding like a dumb ox. You may feel you have made a total

mess of your life. You too may have broken God's holy laws with little regard and lived only for momentary selfish pleasures. You too may feel it is a little late for God's mercy.

Maybe you feel that God's black book of your sins is full-up or that you have waited too long without submitting to God's will for your life. Do you feel it is too late for you?

The God of Samson has no such black book. Instead, He has open arms and a loving, tender heart full of mercy waiting for you to make the total commitment—to repent and obey Him!

This is the decision Samson finally made. He couldn't see the light of day without his eyes, but he came to see the truth that the way of this world and sin does not pay. He came to see that yielding to his Maker would have spared him a life of suffering. He was still alive and while he yet lived he had the opportunity to serve his God.

Samson's Last Stand

The Philistines were gloating over their capture of Sampson and when a major holiday came a large



crowd gathered. The occasion was to offer sacrifice to their great god Dagon and to celebrate Sampson's imprisonment. According to many scholars, Dagon may have been depicted as a fish-man, head of a man, body of a fish.

In attendance were the royal family of the Philistines, the Philistine General Staff and the whole administration of that powerful nation. They were

seated in a large viewing stand suspended over an arena where games were played.

It was a time of boisterous rejoicing and making merry, thinking that their god—old fish-foot—had delivered Samson into their hand (16:23). So they called for Samson to be brought out to torment and ridicule.

It had been some time since Samson's head had been shaven and his hair was long again, perhaps hidden from view by a head wrap (16:22).

After abusing Samson and having their perverted sport, he was allowed to stand near the two main supporting pillars for the elevated stands from which the dignitaries watched the festivities. Still blind, he asked the young boy who was leading him to guide his hands to touch each of the two pillars. Sampson prayed.

Samson knew God called him to deliver Israel from its oppressors, but instead he had mainly served himself. In his pathetic troubles he experienced a conversion and became totally committed to God and to doing His work...even if it meant his own life. He saw the sorry mess he had made of himself and was willing to let God work his will through him.

He fervently prayed and asked God to hear him. God did. God always hears such heart-felt, humble prayers. Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines." He then bowed himself with all his might against the two pillars. His muscles bulged, quivered, and filled with greater God-given strength than ever before. The pillars began to push apart, and then like a massive earthquake the entire viewing stand collapsed, killing about three thousand including virtually all the leadership of Philistia.

This disaster so disrupted the Philistine nation that Israel was able to throw off its yoke of oppression. In this one act, after yielding himself to God, Samson accomplished more than in his entire life following the way that seemed right to him.

Learn from Samson's Example

God was not only still willing to hear and forgive Samson, but God was still willing to use him in doing His work of deliverance for Israel.

It doesn't matter what kind of mistakes you have made. No matter how bad your past is, if you are willing to submit your life totally to your God in Heaven, there is hope for you, but the clock is running.

We best learn from the mistakes of Samson rather than repeating them. We can draw encouragement by how in the end he turned out. After all, it is not how we start the race that counts—though that's important—it is how we finish. If we have life, we can change.

Samson became a righteous man and will be raised from the dead in a few years at the return of Christ to this earth. We can join him and the faithful of God.

If our *merciful* and patient God could forgive Samson, redeem his life, and use him mightily, will he not do the same for you and me? He will if we let Him.

Ken Westby is a former president of the BSA and is the founder and direction of the Association for Christian Development (ACD), which can be found on the Web at godward.org.

Sabbath Morning Companion

Is There More than One God in Your Life?

It's a curious thing that God would give a king a great victory, only to have him bow down at the altar of the vanquished foes' idol. That's what one ancient king did. In the name of the God of Israel he conquered the enemy of his nation, then gave honor to the gods of the people whose gods could not protect them (2 Chronicles 25:14-15).

Some scholars point out that many in Israel viewed their God as just one of many gods, each of whom had their own little territories where their power was the greatest. The God of Israel, so they thought, had preeminence only in their little corner of the world, whereas Moloch or Chemosh would be the powers in their special neighborhoods. Because they accepted this little deception, it took no big leap in logic to "adopt" other gods in order to have a little insurance policy.

I am not about to go into Moab and bow down to Chemosh, but I must admit that I do have my own personal set of gods that I have accumulated just in case God is off sleeping somewhere when I might need him. Your god is what you look to for your security and support. You might look to the government, or your job, or your investment portfolio, or even yourself. If so, you might have an auxiliary god along with the God of Israel.

Your god is what you think about most of the time. I can profess my faith and trust in the true God, but I might be obsessed with money. I might spend my waking hours worshipping the gods of the National Football League, or maybe I'm busy building a career or a reputation, or maybe I find myself navigating the internet or other places in search of the latest porn star.

Your god is the source of your values. Many people try to decide for themselves their own perception of right and wrong. Others look to "society" as the source of values.

By these measures most of us have more than one god in our lives.

Many years ago a prophet named Elijah challenged the people of Israel to choose between the God of their forefathers and Baal, the god of the Phoenicians. "How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him" (1 Kings 18:21). Our idols today might not be made of wood and stone, but Elijah's advice is still valid.

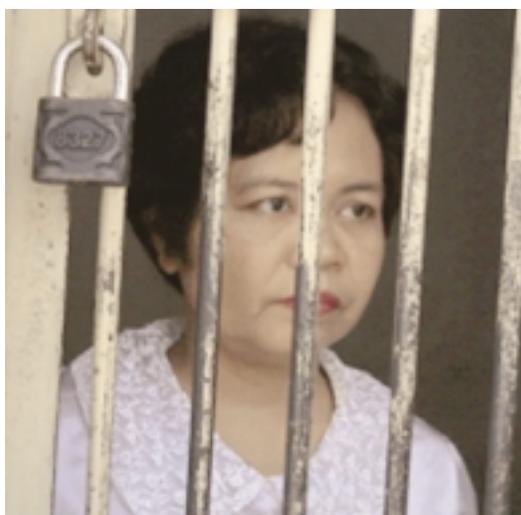
— *Lenny Cacchio*

Lenny Cacchio lives in Lees Summit, Missouri, and is very active in the Truckers' Bible Study in the Kansas City, Kansas City, Missouri, area.

Three Christian Women Found Guilty by Indonesian Court

SANTA ANA, CA (Sept. 1, 2005) – Indonesian judges today sentenced three women to three years in prison for allowing Muslim children to attend a Christian Sunday school program, according to Compass Direct.

Rebekka Zakaria, Eti Pangesti, and Ratna Bangun received the sentence after judges found them guilty



Eti Pangesti looks through prison bars after her September 1 conviction.

of violating the Child Protection Act of 2002, which forbids “deception, lies or enticement” causing a child to convert to another religion. The maximum sentence for violation of the Act is five years in prison and a fine of 100 million rupiah (\$10,226).

The Sunday school teachers had instructed the children to get permission from their parents before attending the program, and those who did not have permission were asked to go home, according to Jeff Hammond of Bless Indonesia Today, a Christian foundation operating out of Jakarta. None of the children had converted to Christianity.

Compass reported that when the verdict was announced at 11 a.m. local time, the courtroom crowd erupted with shouts of “Allahu akbar” (“God is great”). The women plan to appeal the conviction.

A source who spoke with Zakaria by phone as the three women were waiting to be taken into the court-

room for the verdict said she was calm and confident. Zakaria said the situation did not look hopeful but that some day, “in God’s time,” all three women would “walk free from the prison,” according to Compass.

The three women, described by friends as “ordinary housewives,” were relieved that they had not been given the maximum five-year prison sentence. All three, however, were devastated at the prospect of being separated from their children, who range from 6 to 19 years of age.

As they have done throughout the trial, Islamic extremists made murderous threats both inside and outside the courtroom. Hammond said several truckloads of extremists arrived; one brought a coffin to bury the accused if they were found innocent, according to Compass.

“The ladies, witnesses and judges were constantly under the threats of violence from hundreds of Islamic radicals who threatened to kill the three ladies, witnesses, pastors, missionaries and even the judges if the women were acquitted,” Hammond told Compass.

Before a court proceeding on August 25, the Islamic radicals warned the judges that they were willing to shed their own blood if the women were not found guilty.

Paul Marshall, a senior fellow at Freedom House’s Center for Religious Freedom, said the case could establish a dangerous precedent, reports Compass. “It’s especially troubling and worrisome since it occurred in Indonesia, a country long known for its relative religious freedom,” Marshall said. “If it signifies the future direction of the country, the consequences will be terrible.”

Open Doors, an international ministry which supports and strengthens persecuted Christians, has launched a writing campaign for Dr. Rebekka Zakaria, Eti Pangesti and Ratna Bangun to let them know that Christians in the West are praying for them.

“These women need our prayers and letters of support for this travesty of justice,” says Open Doors USA President Dr. Carl Moeller. “That these women were found guilty for simply conducting an approved Christian education program for kids is another example of how Christians suffer for their faith. Join me in praying for their release on appeal.”

(Source: Open Doors, opendoorsusa.org)

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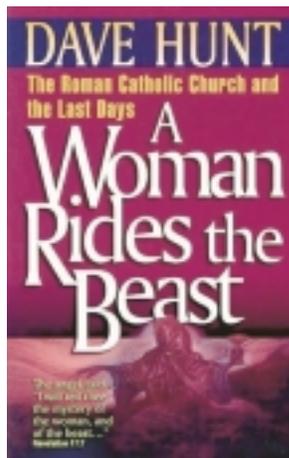
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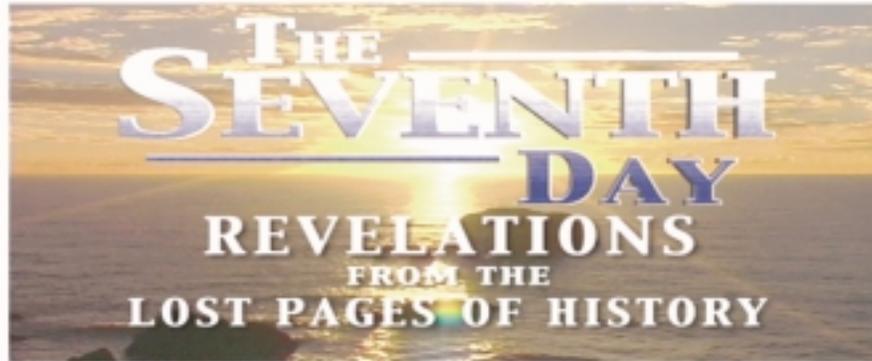
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