

"Holding fast the Faithful Word . . ."



The Word and Work



"Holding forth the Word of Life."

FEBRUARY, 2002

Christianity and Islam

REACH FOREIGNERS Here at Home

Alex Wilson

We have mentioned before that a whole mission field is found in most of our cities. People from many countries have immigrated to the U.S., or else have come here to study. Perhaps American missionaries cannot enter their homelands, but we can share Christ's good news with these folks while there are here. These materials were written specifically with foreigners in mind:

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THE WORD AND WORK

"Declare the whole counsel of God"

Alex V. Wilson, Editor

Dennis L. Allen, Missions

Bennie Hill, News & Notes

The Word and Work (USPS 691-460) is published monthly except December under the auspices of the Portland Ave. Church of Christ, Inc., Louisville, Ky. Subscription: \$11.00 per year, bundles of 10 or more to one address = \$10.00 per subscription. Address correspondence to Word and Work, 2518 Portland Avenue, Louisville, KY 40212. Second class postage paid at Louisville, Ky.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Word and Work, 2518 Portland Ave., Louisville, KY 40212.

Vol. XCVI

FEBRUARY, 2002

No. 2

In This Issue

Theme: Christianity and Islam

Editorial -- Dennis L. Allen	34
The Struggle with Islam -- Sam Schloff	37
Islam and Christian Militarism -- Don McCurry	41
Recent Persecution in Indonesia	45
How Christians Fare in Some Other Muslim Countries.	46
Voices From The Fields	47
"Rise Up and Call Her Blessed	53
Chinese Church Faces Challenges Ahead	54
Teachers in China Learn Powerful Lessons From Their Students ..	55
Forged Diaries and Authentic Scriptures Pt. 2 -- Steven Mosley ...	56
I Saw the Iron Swim -- JOYce Broyles	61
News and Notes -- Bennie Hill	62

Christianity and Islam

Dennis L. Allen

Since September 11 we have all been forced to think about Islam and try to understand what could prompt 19 men to deliberately destroy themselves and several thousand others to achieve their goal. When we realize that there are thousands of others of like mind (many probably still in our midst) it becomes a frightening prospect. Our country's leaders, although at war with terrorists, have been very clear that we are not at war with Muslims as a whole. Islam is presented as a religion of peace and terrorists are only a fringe group who have a distorted view of Islam. Most Muslims in the U. S. have distanced themselves from the terrorists and condemned their atrocities. Even the leaders of most Muslim countries have done the same. However, one cannot but notice that they have not condemned the continuing atrocities against Israel and the persecution of Christians in Muslim countries. And what are we to make of the world-wide rejoicing of Muslim youth when the destruction of the twin towers was first announced? (This news was very quickly suppressed.)

So what is Islam? Is it really a religion of peace? Most of us know very little about its origin, its founder Muhammed and the Qur'an (Koran). This information has been gleaned from a number of different sources, but I have endeavored to ascertain its accuracy.

When Muhammed was born in 570, his father, Abdallah, had already died. His mother died when he was six years old and he went to live with his grandfather and later his uncle. At 23 he began working as a caravan driver for a rich widow called Khadijah. During this period he spent time with a Christian monk and took great interest in the People of the Book (Christians and Jews) in Syria. At 25 he married the rich Khadijah who was around 40 years old. This gained him respectable status in Mecca. He became a religious seeker, spending periods in fasting and meditation. He is supposed to have received his first "revelations" from Gabriel at the age of forty.

At first he doubted the revelations could be from God, but was later convinced by his wife that he was really chosen to be the apostle of God. Muhammed and his teaching met with great resistance in Mecca. He had only a few converts. In 622 Muhammed and a few converts moved to Medina. This event is known as "The Flight." At Medina many received him as a prophet from God. Under Muhammed's leadership they began to carry out plundering expeditions and to advance his influence by force.

After his death in 632 scribes began to write down his sayings. These were gathered together into the Koran. The things which he taught in Mecca are quite different from those taught later in Medina after he took up arms to advance his cause. There are early passages favorable to Christians and Jews. Later, Jews are swine to be rejected, and Muslims are to slay both Jews and Christians wherever you find them. The following are some quotations from the Koran.

Sura 5:33. "For those who do not submit to Allah their punishment is execution or crucifixion, or the cutting off of hands and feet from the opposite sides, or exile from the land."

Sura 8:60. "Strike terror in the heart of the enemies of Allah and your enemies."

Sura 9:5. "Fight and slay the pagans wherever you find them, beleager them in every stratagem of war."

In the Koran there are many references to events and people in the Old Testament but the facts are distorted. Abraham sacrificed Ishmael not Isaac. Noah's flood was in the time of Moses. Mary is presented as the sister of Moses. These are only a few of the inaccuracies. People with black faces will be damned. Dressing modestly is emphasized, as is abstaining from alcohol, yet the Koran approves of blood-shedding, slavery and polygamy. The Encyclopedia of Islam states: jihad "is an act of pure devotion; it is 'one of the gates to Paradise,' rich heavenly rewards are guaranteed for those who devote themselves to it."

The jihad of Osama bin Laden and millions of other Muslims finds authorization in the Koran, although other passages can be found in the same Koran that seem to condemn it. It is evident that of the 6 or 7 million Muslims in the States, most do not hold these views. Either they do not know what the Koran says or they have their own way of interpreting it. It would be grossly unfair to lump them with the terrorists.

However, we should face reality. Islam is not a religion of peace. From the time when it swept across Europe it has maintained the right of extending its influence by force. Even today, of the 41 countries which are 70% Muslim, 26 are considered not free, 13 are partially free and only 2 are free. The rights which Muslims insist on in the U.S. are denied to adherents of other religions in their own countries. There are mosques in almost every major city in the U.S. They are free to promulgate their faith. In Saudi Arabia Christians even from other countries are not allowed to worship legally even in their own homes. Indonesia, even in the past year has seen Jihads against large numbers of Christians and gov't. troops have often stood by and allowed it. The appalling record of persecution in the Sudan has continued for years. The record of Islam has not been that it is a religion of peace. Voice of the Martyrs estimates that 160,000 Christians are

killed each year primarily in Muslim countries. Where they are in a minority and not in control they exist peacefully with their neighbors.

There are many divisions and groups of Muslims. The sunnis strongly emphasize law. They have dominated Islamic governments throughout history. It is estimated that they number about one billion today. The shi'ites believe that authoritarian leadership passed from the prophet Muhammed to Ali his son-in-law. They give martyrdom a central role in theology and ritual. They number over 170 million. Besides these there are many smaller sects.

During the last 30 years there has been an increasing number of fanatical muslims who have promoted the parts of the Koran which promote violence to justify their terrorism. These groups are found not only in Israel and Afghanistan but in many parts of the world such as Indonesia, the Philippines, Iraq, Iran, the Sudan, and as we now know, the United States. Years ago Louis Farrakhan wrote, "God will not give Japan or Europe the honor of bringing down the United States; this is an honor God will bestow upon Muslims."

From the Muslim point of view you are either a Muslim or an infidel--one to be converted by force. In Indonesia Christians and Muslims have lived peacefully together in the same villages. But when radical extremists came in Christians were shocked to find their Muslim neighbors joining in to burn their church buildings and kill and torture them.

As followers of Christ it is important for us to know what should be our attitude toward the Muslims in our midst and around the world. It is helpful for us to try to see our country as they see it. Just like many Christians, Muslims reject many aspects of the culture in America--the materialism, pornography, corrupt movies, and the high divorce rate. They are also greatly disturbed because they see these influences penetrating their own countries and corrupting their own people. Thus America is seen as the "Great Satan." They feel they must attack America because she is the great stronghold for these values.

Many Muslims strongly disagree with America's foreign policy. Basically they consider Israel their great enemy and America's support of Israel is anathema to them. They also resent the presence of "infidel" troops which have been based in Saudi Arabia since the Gulf War. Also some opposition is based on the fact that America is now the super power in the world whereas Muslims believe they are destined to be the dominant force in the world. They resent the poverty in many of their countries and the affluence here. Then there is the bias of the media in their own countries. They are bombarded with the

worst aspects of American life and hear little or nothing of the positive aspects of our society.

Americans have from the beginning seen many good things emerge from the tragedy of Sept. 11. Some things however, are not good. There is the natural human desire to get revenge. But that should not be the focus of a Christian. Vengeance belongs to God. I think it has caused many Christians to rethink their attitude toward Muslims. Many Christians have also asked, "What is the difference between the God of the Bible and Allah. They both say there is only one God. Are we praying to the same God?" The answer is no. Islam says decisively that Allah has no Son. But God has an only begotten Son. Allah is capricious and the source of good and evil. The God of the Bible is holy. Allah is not a god of love but God is love.

We strongly reject the teaching of Islam, but we should have a heart of love toward Muslims. They need to know God as He is revealed in Christ. Even in missions we have largely neglected the Muslim world. We have sent 100 times as many military to Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Kuwait as we have messengers of the Gospel to the Muslim countries. We need to pray that doors may open up in Afghanistan for Christians to go in and manifest the love of Christ to that suffering nation. We need to pray that our increased awareness of Muslim people will result in many more missionaries going out around the world to bring them the light and hope of the Gospel. Some Christian leaders in China have the vision of sending workers to Muslim countries, because they are more acceptable to the general population than Americans are. Finally, we need to be awakened to the opportunities in reaching the millions of Muslims in our own midst. They have come to us. How much more should we reach out to them with love and hospitality.

The Struggle Within Islam

**What is the mind set of those
who would terrorize for Allah?**

by Sam Schloff, Arab World Ministries

Ever since the barbaric attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, we have received numerous inquiries from people trying to understand Islamic terrorism: What is there in Islam that would lead someone to commit such atrocities? Does orthodox Islam sanction such heinous acts? Or are they the aberration of a few radical Muslims? How can a suicidal terrorist who takes the lives of thousands of innocent victims be considered a good Muslim? How should we, as

Christians, respond to the present situation in the light of these insights? Such are the kinds of questions Christians are asking.

I can understand that Muslims in America, to try to assuage the fears and the animosity of the public, have been speaking out in an effort to distance themselves from those who perpetrate such crimes. In recent days, there have been news items and interviews with Muslims on this topic in the local newspaper, or on TV, all affirming that "Islam does not teach or approve such actions," We are told that "Islam means "Peace", and is a religion of peace," or that "taking one's own life is not Islamic and is disapproved."

I can also understand that our government feels a need to make a sharp distinction between Islam and Islamic terrorists, as the President has done in his speeches to the nation. Many of our citizens, as well as many not-yet-citizens in our workforce, are Muslims, and we cannot afford to build a wall of alienation between these and other citizens. And we need to speak out and act decisively against all forms of vigilantism that lash out at any who look like they could be Arabs, or Muslims. What's more, the government needs desperately to maintain peaceful relations with the same forty Muslim-majority nations of the world, and to obtain the support of as many as possible in the war against terrorism. We must work with them, not against them, if we are to make any headway.

But where does the truth lie? Does Islam sanction such terrorist acts? Or is it truly a religion of peace? That is the question. The answer, however is not so simple. The truth is that both tendencies exist in Islam--in conflict with each other. There are two sides to Islam so to speak, two faces.

On the one hand there is normative Islam; to a majority of Muslims this is what Islam is all about. It involves them in believing in the six articles of Islamic faith and practicing the five required "Acts of Worship"--from the five ritual prayers that are performed daily, to the month-long fast of Ramadan, to the pilgrimage made to Mecca at least once in a lifetime, and so on. Between seeking to fulfill these and other duties imposed on them by Islamic Law, participating in various Islamic festivals, and trying to put food on the table, the average Muslim would seem to have little time for much else. But there are those who do know the other side of Islam, but do not want to acknowledge it, or what is worse, do not want the truth to be known.

Islam is not just a religion, it is an ideology with a political agenda.

The truth is that there is another side to Islam, a side that embraces violence "in the way of Allah." As has often been said, Islam divides the world into two zones, Dar as-Salaam ("House of Peace") and Dar al-harb ("House of War"). Islam is not just a religion, as I have written elsewhere; it is an ideology with a political agenda. It holds that all men are created to live in submission to Allah, as prescribed by Islamic law. Muslims believe that Islam's destiny is to extend its control until the whole Da al-Harb is subject to Islamic law in an Islamic state, and this includes the use of force. The word "Islam" does not mean "peace". It is related to the Arabic word for peace (salaam), but it means "to surrender, to submit (as a slave to his master - Allah), to make peace by laying down one's arms in submission." It has a militaristic connotation. Herein lie the origins of radical Islam.

It is a fact that killing and violence have always been part and parcel of Qur'anic teaching. This even includes giving one's life to advance the cause of Islam. In saying this I do not mean to imply that such acts have always and uniformly been practiced throughout history, at least to the extent of barbarity seen on September 11th. In our modern world, at any rate, most Islamic nations try to live at peace with other nations and have taken a position against violence and terrorism, but these have been present to a greater or lesser degree from the very beginning of Islam.

One can readily find passages in the Qur'an that exhort the faithful to fight and kill the unbelievers, that is, to wage Jihad (Holy War). Consider, for example, Sura 2:190-190a "Fight in the way of Allah against those who fight against you, but begin no hostilities. Lo! Allah loveth not aggressors. And slay them wherever ye find them, and drive them out of places whence they drove you out, for persecution is worse than slaughter..."(See also 2:216-218; 8:38-41; 9:5,6 & 29) Other verses promise the martyr who gives his life in the way of Allah, the forgiveness of sins and direct entry into Paradise. Take Sura 3:196b: "So those who fled and were driven forth from their homes and suffered damage for my cause, and fought and were slain, verily I shall remit their evil deeds from them and verily I shall bring them into Gardens underneath which rivers flow--a reward from Allah..." (See also 3:169; 4:74-77 & 100; 22:58, etc) And then there is the example of the prophet himself who, as has been recorded in the Hadith (Islamic tradition), did not hesitate to have his opponents and critics killed.

One will, of course, find many apologists who condemn acts of violence. Claiming that Islam has only been extended by peaceful means, they maintain that Muslims fight only "in self-defense," as the verse cited above seems to indicate. It is amazing, however, how far "self-defense" can be stretched.

One could say that Islam is at war with itself. On the one side are the "moderate" Muslim governments that are trying to run a modern ship of state within the family of nations, more or less within the framework of normative Islam. Nearly all have Islam as the "religion of state" in their constitutions. On the other side are a number of radical Muslim movements, usually on the outs with their own governments, which are usually headed by radical Mullas. These teach that the Muslims are in trouble because they have forsaken true Islam and that the solution is to return to pure Islam. To these movements, "the enemy" is mainly the West, especially the U. S. (the "great satan") but also the "moderate" (to us) governments of the Muslim world. Between the Muslim governments of the world and the radical Muslim movements are the rank and file of Muslims who try to live their lives in accordance with Islam as best they can, but often they are the ones to suffer the most.

As North American Christians, what then should be our response to the present situation? First of all, pray. Pray that our government and its partners act wisely in the war against terrorism; pray that the actions taken do not anger the masses more and precipitate a rush to the side of radical Islam. Pray also for the terrorists around the world who have been duped into thinking that if they become "martyrs" through such acts they go straight to Paradise. Have you ever thought about what awaits them on the other side? Do we dare to pray that God would call someone to go to such people with the love of Christ?

We should also be reaching out in friendship to the Middle Easterners. Asians and other aliens in our midst, whether Muslim or otherwise. And we should speak out against every form of harassment or violence perpetrated against them simply because they are Muslim, or look like they could be Muslim.

In a word, the churches of North America should begin to become much more active one way or another in outreach to the Muslims in our midst. They are everywhere, especially in urban settings, an estimated six million of them. Outreach ministries to Muslims have been launched in a number of cities, and they are doing an excellent job. But the vast number of churches have been content to let these specialized individuals or ministries do the job, while they remain uninvolved. We need to see each church involved in some way in outreach to the Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus and Buddhists in our midst. Several churches may need to partner together to put together an outreach team. But let's get on with it. We have a job to do.

--*Mission Frontiers*, December 2001

ISLAM AND CHRISTIAN MILITARISM

How Christianity has fueled Muslim violence

Don McCurry

For the first three centuries of its history, the Church kept itself separate from secular power. That changed with Constantine, the Roman Emperor who, after his victories in the civil wars that wracked the empire, embraced Christianity and then declared it the official religion of the empire. Around A.D. 312 Constantine, as a Christian Emperor, went forth to conquer using the symbol of the cross on the shields of his warriors. From that time forward, Christianity has been compromised with various levels of entanglement with empire and plagued by those who have failed to distinguish the secular realm from the spiritual, who have used force to defend their faith, or promote it, as a banner under which to wage unholy wars.

It is not my intention to get into a long discussion on the question of the separation of church and state. But I do embrace the idea, and believe that those who have sought to advance the gospel of Christ by military means, for example, the Spanish Conquistadors, have done tremendous harm to the cause and name of Christ. Nowhere has this been more apparent than in the fourteen centuries of Christianity's interaction with Islam.

Muhammed (A.D. 570-632) was aware throughout his lifetime of the long struggle between the Persians and the Christians. The latter was called the Eastern Roman Empire or Byzantine by their foes. In the year that Muhammed made his fateful emigration from Mecca to Medina (A.D. 622), the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius launched a seven-year "holy war" against the Persians. Instead of serving as a check and balance to the Byzantines' militaristic excesses, the Church joined with it, thus weakening the effectiveness of the spirit and teaching with which Christ wanted to establish His kingdom.

How tragic that Muhammed, watching a Christian empire in action, drew the conclusion that one's faith should be wed to the sword. In the most vivid way, Muhammed saw in the example of the Byzantines a model for wedding the sword to the faith. It only took his inventive mind to appropriate the ancient Bedouin tribal tradition of razzia, that is, raiding one another's caravans, and rename it jihad, that is, striving in the way of God.

The period of the Crusades (A.D. 1095-1291), those Christian military expeditions commissioned by the Church to wrest the "Holy Land" out of the hands of the Muslims, were not an exception to wars fought in the name of and with the blessing of the Church. Rather, they were in keeping with unbroken tradition of Christian militarism introduced by Constantine in the early fourth century.

Muslims gradually came to learn that Christians were dangerous. If ever that was in question, the colonial period (roughly A.D. 1450-1970) laid that doubt to rest forever. Spain and Portugal led the way in the sixteenth century with their warrior-missionary adventures. The next century saw Dutch, French and English enter the field in a mad race to build empires. Before it was over, Belgium, Germany, Italy and Russia had jumped into the game. Of them, only France is still at it, occupying the island of Mayotte and French Guyana. The six Central Asian Muslim republics, which formerly belonged to the recently dissolved Soviet Union (Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan), have only recently become free (December 1991). To this could be added the ill-fated Russian invasion of Afghanistan (1979-1988).

To be fair, by the latter end of the colonial period, many of these Western powers no longer went forth in the name of God and their countries, for in several of them the idea of separation of church and state had taken hold. But missionaries, often of the same nationality as that of the occupying colonial power, followed quickly in their wake. Even though these were technically not religio-military incursions, they were perceived as such by the Muslims. Since Muslims make no distinction between religion and state, they tend to see others in the same way. That is, they assume there is an implicit link between our governments and our missionaries.

When one marks on a world map the extent of the colonial powers' occupation of the Muslim world, it comes to about ninety percent. If only we could go into the Muslim world clean! But it is not to be, especially if we happen to have been born a Westerner. It is easier for missionaries who go forth from countries that were never colonial powers. Even so, Islam contains an inherent animus toward Christianity that must be overcome.

Islam and American Militarism

American readers may need to remind themselves that their country, too, has stained its hands with Muslim blood, beginning in 1898 when America defeated Spain and took over the Philippines. Spain had been trying for centuries to rule the Muslim peoples of Mindinao and the islands of the Sulu Archipelago. They had been at war intermittently with these Muslims for almost four hundred years. America stepped in where Spain left off, and fought the Muslims of the Philippines.

In more recent times, America has exhibited a strange ambivalence in its relations to Muslim countries. She invaded Lebanon in 1956. She bombarded it from the sea in 1986. America is the chief supporter of the modern state of Israel since 1948, and yet she stepped in and forced France, Britain and Israel to back off from their attempted seizure of the Suez Canal in 1956. In the Iran-Iraq War (1979 to 1988), the United States assumed the responsibility of defending Kuwaiti ships, and later all ships under attack by Iran, thus

tilting toward Iraq. Yet later (1991), the United States went to war with Iraq to expel Iraqis from Kuwait. The United States' quarrel with Libya is well known. We could say more of our armament deals with several Muslim countries, beginning with Saudi Arabia, and others such as Egypt, Jordan, Pakistan and the Afghan resistance movement.

But the most painful thorn in the side of Islam is what the West and its friends did to bring into being the modern state of Israel. America was the first country to recognize the state of Israel following the United Nation Resolution of 1948. Ever since then, in the eyes of Muslims not only in the Middle East, but around the world, Americans have been perceived as the power behind Israel, and hence the real enemy of Islam. Muslims ever since the Jewish victory in the War of 1967 feel they have been deprived of one of their most treasured possessions: Jerusalem. Muslims consider Jerusalem their third holiest city, after Mecca and Medina. The Dome of the Rock and al-Aksa Mosque, both in Jerusalem, are sought out by pilgrims from all over the Muslim world.

When the pain of losing these sacred places, which Muslims had controlled for almost thirteen hundred years, is compounded with the pain of what the Jews have done to the Palestinians, it becomes the most inflammatory issue between Islam and the West—and in line with the way they perceive Westerners. We are considered guilty because of our blind support of Israel. It's as though all of our vaunted espousal of democracy, the rights of individuals, and our well-publicized stance on 'human rights' has washed away in the flood of our unquestioning support for political Israel, right or wrong. The birth of Israel in 1948 could not have happened without the United States. Jewish-Americans responded as volunteers and spilled Muslim blood in vouchsafing the land to the Jews.

The explosion of outrage in the Muslim world was instantaneous. The Muslims have never forgotten. Every ruler of Saudi Arabia from the late King Faisal to the present has proclaimed jihad (holy war) against Israel. That it is not being prosecuted militarily at the present in no way means it has been forgotten. The Muslims, in spite of various peace efforts, are waiting for the most propitious time to commence jihad militarily.

In addition to the pro-Israel foreign policy posture of the United States government, a segment of the American church, based on its own understanding of biblical prophecy, has given unqualified monetary support to Israel. Because of this, Christians are perceived as being religiously, politically and militarily anti-Muslim. In plain words, we are perceived as the ultimate enemy.

Undoubtedly, Islam presents a formidable challenge to Christian missions. All cross-cultural missions involve replacing or radically altering a people's world-view with one based on the Bible. The clash between that of Islam and a biblical world-view, on the surface so similar, is so sharp that every effort must be made to avoid any other

complicating clashes on lesser issues such as nationality, patriotism, political opinions or military adventurism. That is, unless of course, Muslims commit aggression that force the rest of the world to become involved.

All of these comments, based on recent events, tend to reinforce the impression in Muslim eyes that America is either an extremely suspect friend or a potentially dangerous enemy, or both. The fact that the majority of Protestant missionaries abroad are from the United States (so far) sends mixed signals to our Muslim friends. Their question is, "Are you in league with the political leadership of your country?" Muslims who have never had a personal missionary friend think our answer would be "Yes." They assume Christians are like them. They have seen very few, if any, models of Christians whose supreme loyalty is to a supranational and even a supernatural kingdom of God. If His kingdom is not to be characterized by soldiers, political boundaries, military adventurism, conquest and forcible subjugation of others, what is it about?

The kingdom of God is about love. It is about serving. It is about humility. It is about truly caring for others. It is about striving to restrain others from their headlong plunge into destruction and instead bringing them into the everlasting kingdom of God's dear Son. The central person of this kingdom is, of course, Jesus Christ, the King who emptied Himself and took upon Himself the form of a servant, and who, in the end, died for us. His teaching is about the renunciation of power, the denying of one's self, giving one's self in service to others.

Muslims, who in my opinion have erred massively in confusing spiritual power with worldly power--power of the sword, fear, and intimidating tactics--are hypersensitive in detecting the same in others. Perhaps no other religion heightens the stark difference between the world's way and the way of God as does Islam. Therefore, the burden is on the Christian to separate himself from the ways of the world, as seen in the history of military states, crusades, colonialism and modern power politics, and to enter the harvest fields equipped only with spiritual weapons and power. The Christian worker who intends to work with Muslims must have come to a deep understanding of the nature of Christ's kingdom, lest he or she become confused and begin to fall back on the use of worldly power, pride and prejudice.

And the work will not be easy. Jesus, who came as a lamb, sends us as sheep among wolves.

-- Excerpted from the new book by Don McCurry, *Healing the Broken Family of Abraham: New Life for Muslims*

Recent Persecution in Indonesia

There was a training center for the Laskar Jihad, supported by Bin Laden, in the city of Posso on Sulawesi. The warriors "cleansed" Posso and attacked and burned about thirty Christian villages on their way to Tentena, a city to which many of the Christians had fled. About 60,000 Christians were there waiting to be massacred, but in response to prayer and international pressure, the Indonesian government finally landed several thousand troops, collected weapons, and began to send home all the Jihad warriors who did not live on the island.

In anger the Jihad warriors rioted in Posso and burned the one remaining church, but it seems the government is able to keep peace at present. However, Christians who have tried to return and reclaim their land have been turned away at times, and several who have tried to leave the refugee camps and return to their home on the island of Molukku (which was cleansed last year) have been murdered ruthlessly. The tension is still terrible. Most of the weapons turned in were homemade ones, not the AK-47's supplied by the Al Qaeda.

A missionary from Australia who has been in Indonesia for 40 years gave this report: I have seen kilometer after kilometer, village after village burnt to the ground. Over 30 villages in area of over 3,000 square km, each with 150 or more families, reduced to ash or rubble in just the last 6 months. The destruction goes from the sea coast of Central Sulawesi to its southern border. In most cases the Christians put up some local homemade resistance, then ran for their lives. They were no match for the truck loads of jihad arriving with automatic weapons. The Christian, women and children included were often outnumbered by 2:1. That is, a family consisting of maybe mum and dad, 3 or so children and maybe a grandparent or more armed with 2 or 3 machetes and some other homemade weapon would be facing 5-10 jihad (usually young males) each armed with a rifle and a machete. I would run too and because they ran there have been very few deaths in the last year.

However the massive loss of property and possessions have left the people in desperate need. I praise God that the imminent massacre foreseen in early December was averted and that most families are still intact and that in His mercy, Jakarta has brought in a heavy police and military presence to put a lid on a pot that is still simmering. We stayed one night in a burnt out Christian village that was destroyed by over 1,000 jihad within a day. The prayers of over 1 million Christians around the world and the international pressure has temporarily arrested this crisis.

Through money donated from overseas food, farming tools and building materials have been distributed to 8 villages. It sounds like a drop in the bucket and it is!....but it goes with God's blessing and every drop counts. And, when we bring material help, we can also bring the Living Water and Bread of Life, the Gospel. We have met these people in their makeshift homes of burnt corrugated iron, listened to their stories and all they have lost, hugged them and prayed with them. I had no answer for them but that their heavenly Father loves them and is watching over them. They are not alone. Jeff ran seminars and evening evangelistic services. 1000's have turned up hungry for the Word. We gave our testimonies and have seen 100's turn to Christ for the first time or recommit their lives to Jesus. The teaching has brought them into a deeper knowledge of His Word and on all occasions we have gathered as one body in Christ united by His love.

Churches from all denominations have been burnt and now is the time for the body to be united in their vision and build relationships. In one village the Presbyterian and Pentecostal churches met together for the first time for a Sunday Service. Our constant message was:

- To challenge people to repent and make a personal commitment to Jesus
- For churches to work with each other and be united as part of one body
- For Christians to be the salt in a community that is in conflict.

Seeing and hearing God being praised in all the villages we visited makes their great losses easier to take. The Christian and Moslem communities have lived together peacefully for at least 20 years since the Moslems moved here from other over-crowded parts of Indonesia. Many want that to continue but there seems to a group who would want all of Central Sulawesi to be a Moslem area only. It is an agenda that shows little or no tolerance.

We must continue to pray for the Christian communities as individuals and as a church that they will be channels of God's peace, love and grace to the people of Sulawesi.

How Christians Fare in Some Other Muslim Countries

Saudi Arabia

At least 12 foreign Christians jailed months ago in the port city of Jeddah remain under arrest. Investigations of their case have apparently been completed weeks ago, but diplomatic officials from the five countries whose citizens remain under arrest have been denied access. All are members of small expatriate congregations meeting for Chris-

tian worship in private homes. Under strict Saudi interpretation of Islamic law, non-Muslims are forbidden to meet for public worship.

Northern Nigeria

Persons believed to be Islamic fundamentalists burned three churches in northern Nigeria on October 6. The gutted remains of the church buildings were defaced with posters of Saudi millionaire Osama bin Laden. Five Christians were trapped inside one of the churches after it was padlocked by the Muslim mob. Fortunately they were saved by security forces.

Sudan

A Sudanese student who converted from Islam to Christianity was severely beaten and tortured by security police in Karthoum, apparently at his own family's instigation. "He was tortured and beaten, a source says, "and he lost three fingernails pulled out with pliers." The convert was reportedly forced by security police to sign papers promising not to attend any church or Christian gatherings again. The young man has refused, however, to renounce his faith in Christ.

Turkmenistan

Jailed Turkmen Christian Shageldy Atakov, 39, reportedly said his farewells to his wife when she was allowed to visit him at the Seydy prison labor camp at the beginning of the year. Atakov had been offered his freedom during the annual amnesty in the Islamic month of Ramadan but refused, since it involved reciting the Muslim creed over the Koran in a local mosque. Atakov has been placed in strict isolation, cut off from all mail, packages and any other contact with the outside world. He has been subjected to regular beatings and forced drug treatments throughout his imprisonment. Atakov's wife has been put under severe pressure to convert to Islam.

-Open Doors

VOICES From The FIELDS

Dennis and Betty Allen

January 30, 2002

The church in Hong Kong invited us to come back and help them celebrate the 20th anniversary of the church at Tsuen Wan. They graciously offered to pay our expenses. We had already purchased our tickets before Sept. 11. Our flight date was Sept.26. We prayed that if the Lord wanted us to go the flight would not be canceled. It wasn't. We had a good flight over, going for the first time over the Arctic Circle, Siberia and Mongolia. It was a wonderful two weeks. They had rented an apartment for us and anticipated all our needs.

The church had just recently bought a new apartment. It is the complete 3rd Floor--around 3,000 sq. ft. The church is still growing. There were about 120 present at the morning worship. There was a wonderful spirit of love and cooperation manifest. It was so good to see every one again and especially to see the children and young people of our former Sunday school students now loving and serving the Lord. Our hearts were warmed by all the love and hospitality showered upon us.

Robert and Joy Garrett

January, 2002

We had a wonderful holiday with Sharon and Tom and their five children. They spent five weeks with us on their way to Kenya. It was wonderful to have grandchildren in the house those short weeks. We visited many of the tourist spots and shops. Now we are back to doing many things at once and never quite catching up. They are now in Nairobi, Kenya where they are attending language school to learn Swahili before being posted to the mission hospital in Kapsowar.

We had a year of relative quiet as far as thieves are concerned. Now that is over. Thieves have hit us and our neighbors. One night three batteries were stolen and a car's back window taken. As we had a ruined tire and other items we needed we went to South Africa.

Our 20 year old diesel car had developed a bad transmission leak and noise, so while we were there that car spent time in garages. It is performing much better now. We always load up on groceries when we visit there. We are allowed to bring back a certain amount of goods without paying customs. South Africa returns the sales tax it has charged on certain items. That helps on the cost of the trip.

New Years Day day is our Harvest Day when all Harare area churches congregate here at Rockwood to worship and give to our building fund. This year a certain amount was set aside for proclaiming the gospel. Bob and Tom and Bro. Zilawe were speakers this year. Bob and Tom (by request) spoke on the family, while Bro. Zilawe spoke on spreading the gospel. The building was crowded and a good many sat outside. It was difficult to get a proper count, but I think there were at least 800 people here. Various church choirs sang. The collection was the most we have ever had (over Z\$262,000). It sounds like more than it is because our inflation is so high. The unofficial exchange rate is rumored to be about 300 Z to one US dollar. The official rate is pegged at 55 Z to one US\$, but prices in the shops reflect the "parallel rate." There are shortages of many products here: oil, sugar, soap, and ground corn meal which is the backbone of their diet.

In our last newsletter we spoke of our plan to have a one-week of intensive Bible lessons for church leaders from distant places to be held the second week of January. We had 15 students. They came from Binga, Bulawayo, and Kadoma. There are 22 small congregations in Binga which is near the Zambezi River. I had visited there last September and told one congregation that if they would come we

would feed them and pay their way home. The cost of transport is very high. While I took the majority of the lessons from 8 am to 5 pm, I had some good help from Patrick Machaya, Tom Schreiner, and Ruchiva Chibura. We had some wonderful cooks that volunteered to cook this week and also cooked for that big meeting on New Years day.

I am sure you have read about the difficulties we are having in Zimbabwe and we ask your prayers about the situation here.

Excerpts from Karen Ashley's letter to the Ladies' Retreat

Written 17 Sep 2001, from Sa'a village on the island of Malaita in the Solomon Islands -- in the South Pacific to church ladies retreat.

One of the benefits of our time in Papua New Guinea was that we made personal connections at that Wycliffe Bible Translators center, enabling us to feel comfortable leaving our youngest two children there for this school year while we returned to the Solomons. I say comfortable, but I guess that is relative: it was still very hard to leave them. But knowing their situation, their teachers, their friends was necessary to bring me to the point of even considering the possibility. Philip as a senior is only a year from being on his own anyway, but we had anticipated having Susan around for several more years since she is only 12. We left Kent behind at Bryan College only two short years ago, and never expected to be empty nesters so soon!

We would never have left the kids had we not been fully convinced it was the best thing for them at this time, but since coming back to the Solomons we have seen other benefits. James has been able to concentrate his time on translation. Lunchtime used to be a family time for us; we often read books as a family around the lunch table. Without the kids here, James has taken to skipping lunch and working straight through until dinnertime. His productivity has dramatically increased, and we are very much encouraged.

Since our return James has completed exegetical checking of Galatians and is most of the way through Ephesians. At this rate he will also finish Colossians before we make a quick one week trip to Honiara for meetings from Sept. 20-27. The end of the month should see us back here in Sa'a, with either 2 Corinthians or the 5 "T books" as the next target.

As James completes the exegetical checks on these books, they will then come to me for the next step: back translation. In this step the Sa'a is translated very literally back into English to show how the smaller chunks of meaning come together to communicate the deeper thoughts of the passage. This serves two purposes: If the back translation comes out wrong, we know the passage needs to be reworked. Then the completed back translation goes to a consultant for a further check for accuracy and completeness. In the past various young men with a higher level of education than most have drafted the back translations, with James tidying up some points like verb tense and pronouns. These young men are not in the village just now, so I hope to

find some ladies who will work with me to get the job done. They will give me the core meaning in a combination of English and Pijin, and I will fit their words into readable English sentences that accurately reflect what is in the Sa'a text.

Having me do the back translations should also contribute to speeding up our progress towards the goal of finishing the Sa'a New Testament by the end of 2002. Work on the Old Testament has already begun, and the current plan is for that project to continue under the leadership of our national coworkers while we move on to oversee and promote translation all over the country as director of the Solomons translation group, SITAG. Having been in the Solomons for 15 years, we are now old timers, and our experience is needed to assist new teams of both missionaries and nationals in pursuing the goal of addressing translation needs in the rest of the 70 languages spoken in the Solomon Islands.

The larger need has been brought more into focus by the problems the country has been struggling with in political and economic areas. While the two ethnic groups who were fighting last year are no longer at war, all the major industries closed down, causing huge cash flow problems for the national government. Grants and loans from developed countries have allowed the government to limp along, but the threat of closure of basic services like police and hospital services is almost constant as workers are not paid. News reports are full of accusations of poor management and worse. There is little hope that the current government can bring the situation under control, and everybody is looking towards the elections in November to return the country to normalcy. It won't be that easy, but certainly electing honest officials who will consider the good of the country above their own interests will improve the situation. Pray for these elections to proceed fairly and without violence, and that those who win will indeed manage the country's affairs with wisdom and integrity.

On a personal level, James and I are doing well as we adjust to the strangeness of life in our current situation. I had expected to feel a huge void without the kids since most of my time and effort over the years has been put into their educational program. While I don't have them around me on a daily basis, we have been able to talk with Philip and Susan on Saturday mornings via HAM radio; this has been a major help as we try to maintain the connectedness of our family. Since HAM is free we are able to chat about normal activities without the pressure that ordinarily accompanies more expensive methods of international communication. While they do miss us, both Philip and Susan seem to have adjusted to living with another family and are coping well with the demands of the various activities they are involved in. Susan is in the marching band flag corps and is also looking after a horse. Philip is serving as a senior class officer, is filling out college applications, and has bought a motorcycle. They are both maintaining their good grades and are not letting homesickness keep them from en-

joying life with the friends they have made amongst the other missionary kids.

I have been spending my time so far unpacking and cleaning up our village house which grew very moldy while we were gone, but I anticipate having more time to spend with folks around the village than I could with the kids here. I would appreciate your prayers for God to give me opportunities to reach out to the people around me on a more personal level. While I am fluent in Sa'a, it is not easy to converse on a deeper heart level in a foreign language, and people here are often preoccupied with basic subsistence and not used to talking about abstract topics like spiritual growth. On the surface the people of the Solomons are very religious, and the church is one of the strongest institutions in their society. But the churches are often dominated by ritual and tradition, with only a rare mention of faith, personal salvation, and a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. When we finish the Sa'a translation, we will leave behind a major tool for the Holy Spirit to use in drawing people to the Lord, but in a society where reading is a new skill, personal contact can be a key factor in opening their hearts. Pray for me to be sensitive to God's leading, to know who to talk to, what to say, and how to say it in Sa'a.

In the coming months we plan to keep working away at exegetical checking and back translation, but there will be interruptions. In December we will meet with the other 14 families that make up the Solomons translation group for a week of fellowship and strategic planning. Philip and Susan will be coming over from PNG in mid December for their 6 week school break, and we want to take a good chunk of time to enjoy them and make up for the family times we have missed. James is also involved with some administrative functions of our translation group: presently he is writing and editing an emergency manual which outlines procedures and recommendations for unexpected crisis situations. And various community activities always take time away from work, though they are very important in maintaining relationships with the people around us. Pray that in all we do we will continue to be faithful representatives of our Lord Jesus.

I hope this has given each of you a chance to understand what is going on in my life so far away here in Sa'a, and I know that as you think of us in the days ahead, your prayers will be God's tools to further His work here.

Mark and Candy Garrett

February 11, 2002

Yes, we did have a safe flight. Yes, the security was really tight. No, they didn't confiscate more than one set of nail clippers. Yes, we are glad to be back. We feel much more adjusted now to life in the USA. And we have seen God at work.

On arrival, God abundantly provided our every need just like the Scriptures promise! The house next to my parents' came up for rent

that week! Now our children can see at least one set of grandparents anytime they want.

A Christian friend owns a used car lot and sold us a minivan for a very low price. We praise God for good reliable transportation.

Candy needed a break from home schooling. We found a good Christian school option for Kathryn (6th grade). However, the public school where we hoped to place Bryan, only two blocks away, was full in his grade. The school system could only offer us a place in a much inferior school across town. Wanting to give Bryan a positive school experience we prayed that God would provide an opening for him at the nearby school, even though there was one student ahead of him on the waiting list. When we returned from Candy's family reunion that principal called with good news. It seems the superintendent decreed an increase in class size which was just enough for Bryan to get in! And he is now thriving in his new school setting.

The Olympics is only held every four years because it's not easy to get all the athletes together from so many different places. Assembling the members of Candy's family from five countries on three continents is no less daunting. But we all met in North Carolina right after Christmas. It had been four years since the last reunion and was a very sweet fellowship time. And games there were! The "In-Laws" team squeaked out a victory in a ferocious Soccer match. And on New Year's eve six of the adults teamed up to race the clock, completing a difficult 500 piece puzzle in 30 minutes. For our children there was a new cousin to meet, and a new aunt who joined our family just over a year ago. Then, God blessed us with 6 inches of snow! The children reveled in the white stuff and still talk about the 9 ft. snow bear that all the uncles built just before our goodbyes.

Always creative, our team in Senegal did a first for this past Christmas celebration. Instead of inviting their friends to a party they brought the party to their friends. The team loaded up and made the rounds of their friends' homes, caroling in Wolof and even some in English. Their friends were surprised and delighted to be chosen by the traveling choir. Bowls of Christmas cookies and sweets were also delivered and were soon devoured. This was a great way to maintain friendships.

Thanks for praying for us and for the Wolof people of Senegal! God has used you, our prayer backers to help us persevere in a "dry" place. Now that we are back in the USA we are seeking to reassemble and re-energize our prayer support team. If you would like to be a part of that ministry email us so that we can include you in our group emails. E-mail: mark.garrett@sim.org May God use us well until there is a strong, vibrant Wolof speaking church!

"Rise Up and Call Her Blessed"

Alice E. Broaddus, born in Canada, Sept. 9, 1904; died at Maple Manor in Sellersburg, IN. Jan.22, 2002.

I called her "Mom" Broaddus because she wanted me to...because she missed her daughters back in the States, and because she filled the place of a Mom to me those years in the 60's in Hong Kong.

We were living in small, temporary quarters (an electric hotplate in a closet for a kitchen) with two pre-schoolers and a baby on the way and a helper who had mental problems, when we received a letter from Mrs. Broad-dus asking us to meet her plane and help her get settled back in HK after a hiatus of about 15 years in the States. I shall never forget seeing her stride purposefully off the plane, a suitcase in each hand. We had known of each other, but did not really know one another at that time.

She was ensconced on a cot in the children's room, and related well to them from the beginning. Her experience in dealing with oriental servants enabled her to take the helper in hand, so to speak, and keep her gainfully occupied. She coped with the hotplate, the local foods, the inconveniences, the adjustments, without complaint. I went off to the hospital in due time without a qualm about the well-being of the two children or the household.

She knew how to do everything,--and did it! (What does one do with a crocheted tablecloth that has been chewed by rats? Mrs. B just sat down and reconstructed it --no big deal!) She was firm but kind to the children and they probably filled a place in her lonely heart. Besides managing our household, she was busy establishing an outreach to refugees by way of a gospel boat and a roof top school. She was always there when I needed her. It was wonderful to have fellowship in "woman-talk."

There are those who can write more authoritatively about the details of her life. I simply want to "rise up and call her blessed," because she was a "mom" to me...

--Betty Allen

Chinese Church Faces Challenges Ahead

China's formal membership into the World Trade Organization, announced in November 2000, will open China's internal markets to world competition, giving the country an economic boost in the long run. But in the meantime, it will bring staggering rates of unemployment and poverty. Economists are expecting the largest social migration in history.

Chinese Christian leaders have mixed feelings about these changes. "We anticipate a second boom in the revival here, since there will be over 150 million internally displaced people leaving their homes, coming to cities and looking for work," says Pastor Zhou, who leads seven house churches in Shanghai. "These people are frightened and insecure, and they are incredibly open to hearing the Gospel."

But the growth is also a challenge. A pastor who works for the Little Flock house church movement observes, "Already we cannot cope with the demands of discipling new converts. We appeal to the international body of Christ to ask China to allow the church to have more resources."

As an example, the pastor suggests that Western Christians put pressure on the government to allow the Amity Printing Press, co-owned by the United Bible Societies and China's state-controlled Protestant church, to produce 6 million Bibles a year, up from 2.6 million today.

"If the Chinese government is genuinely serious about having a free market, then let them break up this monopoly on printing Bibles and let demand determine supply," the pastor adds. "Also let us print discipleship and devotional literature without having to risk six-to-ten year jail sentences!"

Other challenges resulting from joining the World Trade Organization are social and political. Churches will have to become involved in relief work when unemployment reaches very high levels. One house church movement in Jiangsu province is already beginning to arrange soup kitchens, but its leader says, "Unfortunately, only Western Christians are allowed to do social work in China. We are prevented from doing this by the local government, because we have no legal status."

-- Newsbrief, Open Doors

Teachers in China Learn Powerful Lessons From Their Students

Give Me Five

A Bible courier from Henan: I always had doubts as to whether I was truly blessed by God, but when I started this work, I was cured. There have been so many times when God has delivered me. Now I know I'm blessed.

Last week, I was transporting a large consignment of Scriptures by road, and a Public Security Bureau official stopped me. He looked into the back and saw all the books. "What are these?" he asked.

I never lie, so I said, "They are Bibles."

He looked at me, amazed, then began to laugh. I thought he was relishing spending the money he would fine me, and then take me to jail. But all he said was, "Give me five." I did, and he sent me on my way.

Teaching the Teacher

A Bible teacher from Jiangsu: I had talked for 10 hours on Hebrews and was exhausted. It was the third day on my feet; they throbbed and my bones ached. I felt sick and wondered how I could go on. So I prayed, "Lord, please send me a sign of encouragement."

Before dawn, someone poked me awake. I groaned and tried to ignore him. How I needed sleep!

But it was an excited young student who had received his own copy of Hebrews just two days before. When he spoke to me, something sounded odd. I concentrated, and then lay back amazed. He was reciting the book of Hebrews from memory! He had not gone to sleep the past two nights, but by flashlight had memorized the whole book, and now he wanted to show me.

By the time he finished speaking, I was refreshed as if I had slept for a week. What a sign of encouragement! How they drink the Word!

Saved by a Quarrel

A Bible courier from Zhejiang: I was working late in a secret Bible warehouse when suddenly there was a loud bang on the door outside. I knew the visitors were not friendly because they did not knock in code.

My heart thumped and I quivered inside, thinking, "Oh no, I'm going to jail! I don't think I will survive it." Something warned me not to open the door, which I thought was foolish, since all the lights were on and it was obvious someone was here.

I crouched down and waited.

I could hear what sounded like three men talking. I didn't know whether they were thieves or police. Then I heard one of them say he was going to climb up outside the building and videotape through the window. I heard him clambering up the corrugated iron structure, his feet making booming sounds all the way.

But as he neared the window, I heard him slip with a curse. Something bounced down the side of the building and smashed in the alley below.

There was silence, then the men began quarreling loudly. Apparently, he had dropped the video camera. His supervisor was furious, saying that the damage would come out of his wages.

They got into such an argument that they forgot why they had come. As they drifted off, I made a quick telephone call. We moved the Bibles out that night.

When the police returned in the morning, there was only an empty floor.

Forged Diaries and Authentic Scripture

Steven Mosley
Part 2

An Obvious Source

From the beginning, those who read the "Hitler diaries" were struck by their lack of revealing information on important matters, such as the persecution and murder of the Jews. After perusing four volumes, Cambridge historian Norman Stone found little of substance in the diaries and plenty of inane repetition. He told the *Sunday Times* of London, "This reads like a Charlie Chaplin Hitler."

The reason for this lack of originality became apparent when Federal Archives officials were allowed to examine seven volumes of the diaries. Dr. Wolfram Werner noticed parallels to a book written by former Nazi archivist Max Domarus. Werner was able to demonstrate that *Hitler's Speeches and Proclamations 1932-45* formed the basis for most of the information in the diaries. As Hans Booms explained,

"Where Domarus makes a mistake, the forger makes a mistake. Where Domarus keeps silent, the forger keeps silent."

Such an obvious source for the content of Scripture has been harder to find. While an examination of ancient cultures reveals much that illuminates biblical events, it also presents stark contrasts.

Nothing in the fanciful legends by which Egyptians, Babylonians and Assyrians sought to explain their origin compares with what is acknowledged to be the Hebrew "genius for historical construction." According to Albright, "The patriarchs come alive with a vividness unknown to a single extrabiblical character in the whole vast literature of the ancient Near East."

While other ancient religious texts make no attempt to relate stories of the gods to secular history, the acts of God in the Old Testament are firmly linked to the political and social milieu of definite times and places.

Isolated figures among contemporaries of the Hebrews sometimes pointed toward a single god over all others, but as archaeologist G. E. Wright observed, "No other nation (apart from those influenced by the Hebrew faith) ever did develop a true monotheistic religion which commanded the general allegiance of its people. "Only Israel felt compelled to give allegiance to the one God with all their heart, mind and soul."

Other contemporary law codes, although having parallels with Israel's statutes, reveal nothing which corresponds to what Merrill F. Unger called "that twofold golden thread running through the Mosaic legislation--love to God and love to one's neighbor."

Albright sums up the evidence: "Every fresh publication of Canaanite mythological texts makes the gulf between the religions of Canaan and of Israel increasingly clear."

The New Testament account of God becoming man, dying a substitutionary death and rising from the grave also stands apart from other religious documents of its time. Some critics have pointed to similarities between Christ and the savior-gods of Greek mystery religions and asserted that the Christian revelation is part of that motif. But as historian S. H. Hooke pointed out, "Between the eternal, immortal, invisible, and only wise God, and the dying and rising gods of the Mystery-cults, there was a great gulf fixed."

Attis, Osiris and Dionysius come across as "nebulous figures of an imaginary past." Jesus' crucifixion under Pontius Pilate is reported by

eyewitnesses. In the mysteries, the dying god expires "by compulsion and not by choice, sometimes in bitterness and despair." Only Christ's death is a victory over the forces of evil.

According to classical scholar E. O. James, "The resuscitation of Osiris, Dionysius, or Attis is an annual ritual based on primitive conceptions of mummification, and the renewal of the new life in the spring." Christ, on the other hand, appeared in bodily form to more than five hundred people after his resurrection. No one ever tried to stand on the streets of Athens or Rome and urge the public to go and inspect the empty tomb of Osiris.

The mystery religions promised salvation through the correct performance of prescribed techniques. Devotees engaged in elaborate rituals to win favor from the god. Only in the New Testament do we find a God reconciling the world to himself and justifying believers by their faith alone.

The more we look at the social and religious environment of the biblical authors, the less ground we find for their insights. The unique message they proclaimed points to a more-than-human source.

Slip of the Facts

The creator of the "Hitler diaries" gave himself away most tellingly by perpetuating minor historical errors found in his major source. Both the diaries and Max Domarus's book describe the crowd at a Hitler rally in Breslau as half-a-million strong. More reliable reports, however, stated there were only about one hundred thirty thousand present. In another diary entry, Gen. Franz Ritter von Epp congratulates Hitler in 1937 on the fiftieth anniversary of his enlistment in the German army. The Fuehrer was forty-eight years old at the time.

Critics have claimed to catch biblical narratives in just such a slip of the facts for a long time. But the clincher still eludes them. The essential historicity of Scripture remains intact. In fact, when the Bible reports a fact contrary to other historical sources, it is often proved right as hard evidence comes to light.

Because no ancient sources outside the Old Testament ever referred to the Hittites, "the assured results of higher criticism" pronounced them mythical. But today we have hundreds of references excavated which cover more than twelve hundred years of Hittite civilization.

First-century historians Diodorus and Strabo wrote that Egypt, for a time, enforced a closed-door policy toward outsiders. Diodorus

stated that the early pharaohs had a habit of "either killing or enslaving any who touched its shores." Many scholars therefore concluded that Abraham could not have visited Egypt and been welcomed. However, we have recently discovered tomb paintings of Asiatic Semites coming into Egypt during the patriarchal period and have found records of a large influx of Hyksos about that time.

In the book of Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar is credited with the building of "this great Babylon." Greek historians ascribed that honor to Queen Semiramis and hardly mentioned Nebuchadnezzar. For decades Daniel, as the single witness to the contrary, was presumed to have been mistaken.

But then cuneiform records were unearthed which describe Semiramis as a temporary regent for her infant son. Numerous building inscriptions were also discovered which name Nebuchadnezzar as the rebuilder of temples, palaces and towers--and thus, the creator of a New Babylon.

Daniel also referred to Belshazzar as the last king of Babylon, while all other ancient sources omitted that name and placed Nabonidus last on the list of kings. That was considered final proof against the historicity of the Old Testament book until texts were unearthed in the Moon Temple of Ur containing a prayer of Nabonidus in favor of Bel-shar-usur, his eldest son. Later the Verse Account of Nabonidus appeared in which that monarch "entrusted the kingship" to his eldest son. After this discovery one still skeptical scholar pondered his dilemma: "We shall presumably never know how our author [Daniel] learned that Belshazzar was functioning as king when Cyrus took Babylon."

At one time most scholars conceded that Luke had gotten things askew in describing events surrounding the birth of Jesus. All non-biblical evidence indicated that there was no census, that Quirinius was not governor of Syria at the time, and that the people were not required to return to their ancestral homes.

But once more a bit of digging changed the picture. Roman inscriptions were found which referred to census taking and the enrollment of taxpayers under Augustus. An inscription unearthed in Antioch and dated around 7 B.C. ascribed to Quirinius the post of governor. And a papyrus discovered in Egypt gave directions for one census: "All those residing for any cause away from their homes should at once prepare to return to their own governments."

Problems still remain in the biblical record; not all discrepancies have been cleared up. But after hundreds of years of studying its text scholars have found no signs of forgery.

And archaeology continues to corroborate details mentioned in Scripture. In 1976 a stele unearthed at Tell Deir Alla in Jordan was found inscribed with lengthy curses by a prophet named Balaam. Two Hebrew seals were published in 1975 bearing the titles, "Jerahmeel the king's son," and "Berechiah son of Neriah the scribe." Archaeologists have demonstrated that these names "correlate absolutely" with the Baruch and Jerahmeel mentioned in Jeremiah 36.

A Personality

The final blow to the "secret diaries" came when handwriting analysts examined photocopies. Autograph dealer Charles Hamilton declared the writing "too smooth and consistent" to be credible. Throughout the volumes no changes were made, no words crossed out or erased. Hans Booms stated, "It all looks perfect. That is not how people write."

Critics sometimes take Scripture to task for its inconsistencies. The writing is not as flawless as one might expect. The Gospels, for example, don't tell all the stories in the same way. But if the Bible writers were always smooth and consistent, we would suspect collusion. In the varied details picked out by different eyewitnesses, their accounts ring true. They told it powerfully, as they saw it.

These men were also honest in describing their own weaknesses and failures. The characters we encounter in Scripture don't hide behind some facade of perfect piety. Their sins smudge the record for all to see. But they press on toward God's high calling, and that earnest struggle makes their "thus saith the Lord" believable.

The scores of prophets and apostles who penned the Bible spoke from varied passions and points of view, each one emphasizing a different aspect of truth. They did not just copy a message, they lived it. Their pens dug deep with full conviction. Those authors could afford no cheap, imitation religious talk; theirs was a testimony sealed with blood.

Only a great Personality could have inspired such allegiance. The books of the Bible are unified by the bold sweep of God's hand in history. His wisdom is evident in the awesome scope of the plan of salvation; his holiness, in the fact that the Word always calls us further upward.

This last point of evidence is rather subjective. No artifact or ancient text can verify that God is revealed in the Scriptures. But it is the most important issue. If we don't come face to face with the living God in those documents, then all discussion about their authenticity is purely academic.

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I Saw the Iron Swim!

JOYce Broyles

Last Saturday, I saw the iron swim! Well, metaphorically, at least.

Five years ago, a student of mine told me that she wished to go to college, but there was no way she could do it, due to financial problems. I told her that if she really wanted to, she should do her part to prepare by studying and then ask God to do the rest.

Hers was a desperate case, but I had read a sermon by the English preacher Charles H. Spurgeon, whose works are still popular. In "The Iron Did Swim," Spurgeon relates the story of Elisha, whose young man lost an axehead into the water as he was felling a tree. Since the axe was borrowed, he was afraid, and ran to tell Elisha. Elisha cut down a stick, threw it into the water, and the "iron did swim." Elisha told the young man to get it out of the water, and he did. (2 Kings 6:1-8)

We know that it is impossible for iron to float in water, but things that are impossible *with man* are possible with God. Spurgeon gave examples of three men who were in impossible circumstances. They needed strength, finances, and an attitude change. After much prayer, their "irons did swim."

After assuring my young student that I would pray with her daily about her dream, she began to work diligently at her studies. Three years later, after graduation, she received a grant and hurried to enroll at the university, acknowledging God as her benefactor. Last Saturday, I took her to her dorm room where she will begin her fourth semester of college work. As I helped her carry in boxes and luggage, I wondered how she would cram all of it into that little cubicle she will call "home" for the next semester. It will primarily be used for sleep and study, and forging her way to that degree.

On the return trip, I thought of several things that have come and gone in the past year. No case was so desperate, no matter in hand that could not be taken to God to let Him make "the iron swim." Watching the finger of God work marvels constantly amazes me. When something happens that I think is bad, He can make something good come from it. What sometimes seems impossible to me is taken care of when I let it go and let God take over. Such is what my young friend did, and now she is swimming toward her goals with a song in her heart. Monday she wrote that classes are great. She is one-third of the way to her goal. When all seems hopelessly lost, contrary to all expectation, we can come from the depths of gloom to rays of light when we trust God for our personal expressions.

NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Bennie Hill

S.B.S. Lectureship: "Christian Living in the Endtimes" with Dennis Pollock of Lamb & Lion Ministries speaking. This will be held at Southeast Church of Christ, 12610 Taylorsville Rd., Louisville on March 15-16 (7:00 p.m. Fri. & 9:00 a.m. Sat.). Dennis will speak twice each time. A question/answer time will be held Sat. This lectureship is sponsored yearly by the School of Biblical Studies.

On Resurrection Evening, SING! The next 5th-Sunday Song Meeting in the Louisville area will be March 31, Easter day. It will be held at the Portland Ave. church at 6:00. In addition to singing songs, we will learn about them and their writers. Graham McKay from Nashville will share stirring stories from a few writers' lives, and/or of the circumstances which led

to the writing of well-known hymns. Then we'll sing them with greater appreciation and blessing.

Westminster Church of Christ (Maryland) Gary Pearson writes: "Please share with your readers the good news of our new church building which we worshiped in for the first time January 20, 2002. We had 142 present. Our new facility is located on Maryland Highway 97 and is passed by thousands of commuters every day. It has six classrooms, a nursery, a library, a minister's study, a teachers' resource room and an auditorium designed to seat 175. While still somewhat small, it is almost double the amount of space we had before. About 25 present on January 20 were visitors and we hope to have renewed growth this year as the result of our

move. We finally have a baptistry and we want to put it to use! We invite anyone visiting in the Washington - Baltimore - Southern Pennsylvania area to come worship with us.

Highland Community Church (Louisville) The Portland Christian School's High School Chorus will perform during the morning service of April 28. Portland is the oldest Christian school in the metro area and has had Highland students for nearly 20 consecutive years. [No doubt there are Catholic schools here older than PCS. --avw]

Chattanooga, Tennessee. A federal judge ordered an end February 8, 2002 to Bible classes that have been taught for 51 years in the elementary schools of the county where the Scopes "monkey trial" was held. Judge Allan Edgar said the classes in Rhea Co. violate the First Amendment's clause calling for separation of church and state. He said: "government may not teach, or allow the teaching of a distinct religious viewpoint." Strange it took "51" years to come to that conclusion!!!

Lilly Dale Church of Christ (Indiana) Here is the new address for their web site. Go to <http://members.truepath.com/LD> CC Elmer Pacheco is doing a good work there!

2002 Meetings:

Feb.23,24 - Tell City Evangelistic Mtg. with Sonny Childs

Mar.15-16 - SBS Seminar at Southeast, J-Town, Ky.

Mar.25-28 - Oak Grove,LA "Crusade for Christ"

April 13 - Ladies Inspiration Day at Portland (Louisville, Ky)

April 19-21 - LeCompte LA with John McNerney

July 14-17 - Cynthiana, Ky with Wayne Smith

July 21-25 - Waterford, Ky with Bennie Hill

July 22-28 - Lilly Dale, Ind. with Alex Wilson

Aug. 5-8 - Ky/Ind. Fellowship, Louisville

Oct. 6-9 - Tell City, Ind.

We would love to announce your meeting.

Ladies Inspiration Day, Sat. April 13, 8:30-2:30 at Portland Ave. Church in Louisville. "Peaceful Families in a Troubled World" is the theme. A special session for teens will be held, & child-care will be offered.

Operation Mobilization, Waynesboro, GA. The OM Literature center has been reopened after being enlarged. The "new" and improved center was dedicated to "Hall and Alice Crowder for their unwavering devotion to the Lord and the OM ministry."

They have ministered in this worldwide outreach ever since Sister Crowder retired from school teaching. Bro. Crowder still preaches monthly at the congregation they attend. Pray for

them; her Alzheimer's is worsening.

David Moldez, Central Bible College, Manila: I thank the Lord for 18 people who were baptized at Novaliches since December. I thank the Lord that He is able to supply our needs. I thank the Lord for 76 students who enrolled this semester at CBC. We are now evaluating those who will be graduating.

We are in much prayer for Mr. and Mrs. Victor Broaddus. God's grace is sufficient for us. As one song goes, "He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater; He sendeth more strength when the labors increase, To added affliction He addeth His mercy; To multiplied trials, His multiplied peace." Jan. 26, 02.

MILESTONES We're Late in Acknowledging:

Stan and Nan Broussard of Plaucheville, LA, celebrated their 50th anniversary on Jan. 10, 02. He has serious back problems. And back on Nov. 25, 01 **Antoine Valdetero** completed 50 years in the pulpit. Val asks, "How's that for a 37 year old man?"

Pray regarding the Health of...

1) **Victor Broaddus:** He has grown weaker, and now has a feeding tube attached directly to his stomach. He is at home, cared for by Mae & the rest of the family, assisted by Hospice.

2) **David & Retta Tapp:** She was hospitalized for 12 days in Nov. & 9 days in Dec. David has been experiencing heart irregularity. Once his blood is at the right level, electrical shock to the heart is planned to get it back into rhythm. His radio program, **Sowing the Seed**, is still aired on 3 stations in Ky. & also in New Orleans.

3) **Irene Allen:** Norman Allen writes, "Mom has not been doing real well for a while but the Dr's can't seem to get a lock on what the problem is." He says she has been in and out of the emergency room several times in recent months. But so far nothing helps her. "They put her on antibiotics but never seem to find the source of her trouble."

Today the Dr. said he'd make an appointment for us with a specialist about 70 miles from here. It may be several weeks before we can get in.

"Mom's sister, Flora Jean Sparks was taken into the ER in Chattanooga, TN. yesterday with a bowel blockage and is not doing well herself. Don't know the latest word on her today yet. It sounds like it is serious for her though."

Sister Irene's email address is: iallen@kdsi.net

Tibbs Maxey Jr. went Home to be with the Lord on Nov. 20 -- just 10 days short of reaching his 91st birthday. He was buried in Joplin, Missouri. In 1945

Bro. Maxey founded the **College of the Scriptures** (Louisville), especially to train preachers and church leaders among our black brothers and sisters. He served there for many years. **David Pieratt**, the present president of C.O.S., assisted in the funeral services.

May I Have Your Attention?

"It may be that God is using Sept. 11 to get our attention. It may even be a wake-up call to reconsider our wanton, luxurious, greedy way of life in a world where multiplied millions suffer both physical and spiritual want. While something like 5,000 Americans died in the tragedy of Sept. 11, on that same day 35,000 children around the world died of malnutrition and starvation. And on Sept. 12 another 35,000, and on and on.

Millions more are deprived of decent housing and simple justice.... God may be using

Sept. 11 as a summons for a nation spoiled by luxury and self-sufficiency to stop and think."

--Leroy Garrett

Who May Partake at the Lord's Supper? "The next time you sit at the Lord's Table measure its dimensions. This table is so high it reaches heaven, yet so low the humbled child of God can sit there. The table is so long it reaches from an upper room in Jerusalem to the end of history. And it is so broad that there is room for every one of God's family, 'red and yellow, black and white,' rich or poor, correct or incorrect. When you are old enough to have a grown family, you know the heartbreak of a father having set a Thanksgiving table for all of his children and then some are unable to come to the family feast." --Alger Fitch in *One Father, One Family* [via *One Body* magazine]

A Few Selections from
PRAYERS For OUR DAY
by E. Lee Phillips

If I need to fast to fight hunger, if I need to get involved to bring peace, if I need to take a towel and kneel at the feet of the suffering to bring the message of Hope from a God of love, then so discipline me, so motivate me, so kneel me beneath the cross of Jesus that I may toil in the center of the world's pain and at last, see heaven's light. Amen.

* * *

A midday prayer:

*Bread enough for every day,
Hope sustaining in all sorrow.
Strength enough to live today,
Grace sufficient for tomorrow.
Light enough to see the way,
Peace no doubt can steal or borrow.
Joy enough to give away,
Love has met me: Lord I follow!
Amen.*

**Let me not feel the compulsion to solve others' problems
but undergird them as they find their own solutions.**

May I be flexible enough to change my mind
when my mind needs changing
and to expand my mind
when the issues require re-evaluation.

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