

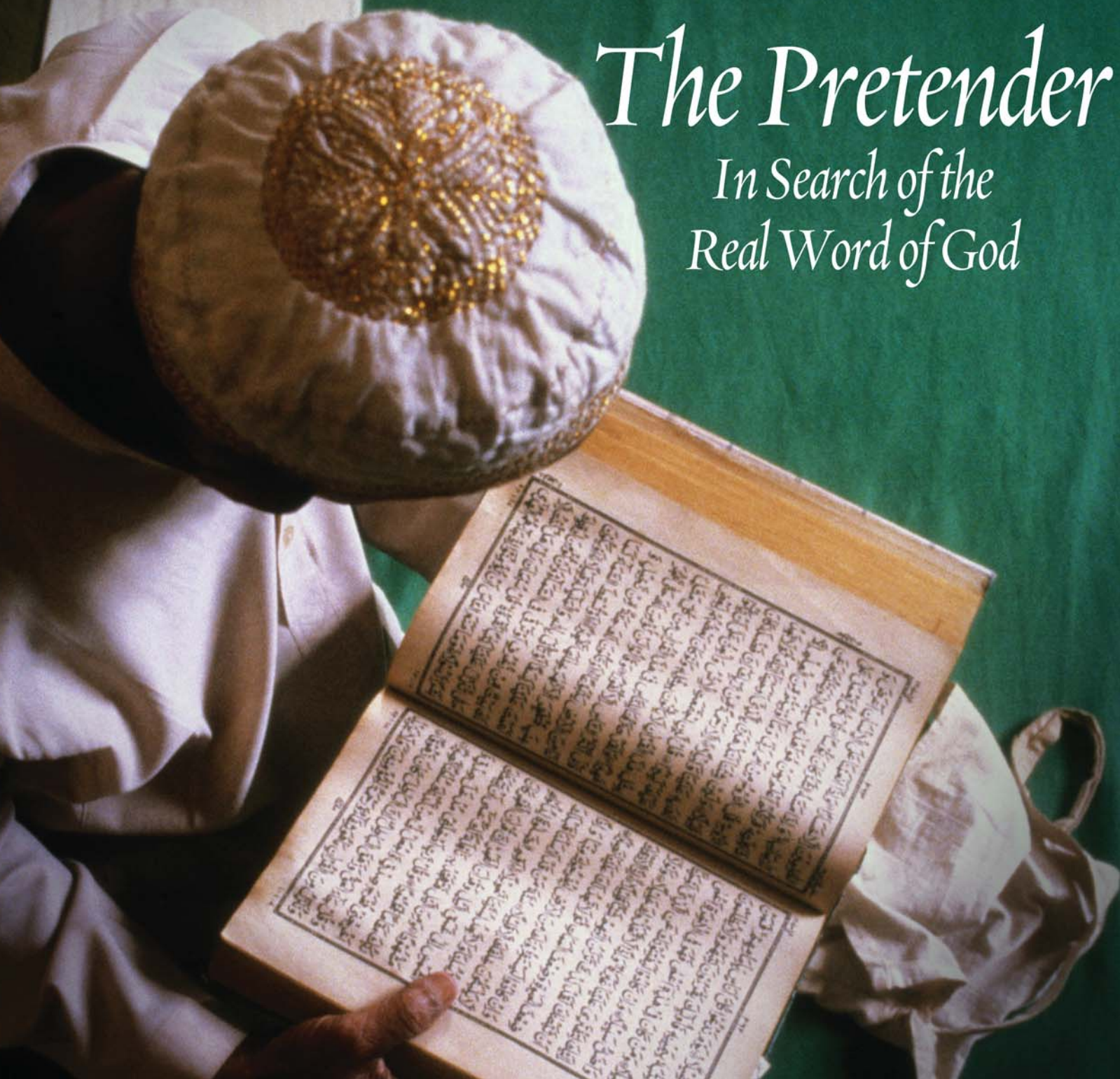
S P R I N G 2 0 0 3 I S S U E

SOLA SCRIPTURA

AFFIRMING THE AUTHENTICITY, ACCURACY, AND AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE

The Pretender

*In Search of the
Real Word of God*



CONTENTS

SOLA SCRIPTURA MAGAZINE : SPRING 2003, ISSUE 3


SOLA SCRIPTURA

6 The Pretender

In Search of the Real Word of God : *The Bible and the Koran both claim to be the Word of God. Yet the teachings in these books are diametrically opposed to each other.*

BY DR. DAN HAYDEN

12 It's the Whole Thing

The Place of Faith : *Faith is so integral to the Christian life that it can be boiled down to a very practical definition: Faith is believing in the Word of God and acting upon it, no matter how I feel, because God promises a good result.*

BY DR. JAMES MACDONALD

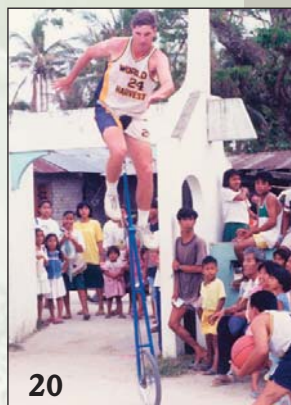
16 The Mystery Remains

If You Do Not Know : *A biblical mystery deals with issues that only God understands. Unless God reveals the mystery it cannot be known.*

BY CHARLES COOPER

20 Free Throw

An Interview with Tom Randall : *A conversation with the Director of World Harvest Ministries, which takes building crews, medical groups, and sports teams to minister in the Philippines.*



DEPARTMENTS

3 Opening Thoughts : *A Way of Life*

4 Letters & Feedback : *Defense of the Truth*

19 The Van Kampen Collection : *The Eliot Bible*

24 Truth for Today : *Picking and Choosing*

26 A Word From the Word : *Cursed of God*

27 Final Thoughts : *1 Corinthians 15:54b, 57*

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The pages of Sola Scriptura are designed to be evangelistic and pastoral in nature: evangelistic in that the magazine is dedicated to proclaiming and defending the historic gospel of Jesus Christ; pastoral in that the magazine is committed to equipping and encouraging believers through sound biblical doctrine.

"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness..." (2 Timothy 3:16)

"In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following." (1 Timothy 4:6)

"Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." (Jude 3)

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A Way of Life

Scott Pierre, Executive Director

We live in an age when there are many things that bid for our time. In my family, there are work requirements, social meetings, church activities, sports events and a host of other miscellaneous requirements. In light of this, I was asked recently to comment on a challenging topic with the people of our church body: How does my family seek to keep Christ central in our lives throughout the entire year? As I thought about how to share a way of maintaining a delicate balance in a complicated life, the answer came to me in a flash. There is nothing delicate about it! In my family we have a solid, uncomplicated bottom line. That bottom line has been, is, and will always be all about Jesus. We must keep our focus on Jesus 24-7-365 if we hope to keep Him central in our lives—that's twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, three hundred sixty-five days a year. In Deuteronomy 6 we read, "And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words, which I am commanding you

today, shall be on your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." Further, in Colossians 3, Paul writes: "If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above..."

You see, for us to have success in keeping Christ *central* in our lives, our faith must become a *way of life*—our lifestyle. My wife and I had the privilege of spending many hours with her family during our dating years. Rarely was there a time that they were together—a dinner, a walk or a simple night out—that they didn't have some sort of spiritual conversation geared around Christ and His word. Over the nearly fourteen years of our marriage, my wife and I have tried to emulate that environment in our own home. Whether it is driving the kids

to school, at the dinner table or lying down in bed at the end of a hard day, we try and relate the events of our lives to Christian principles, and we talk about things of the Lord. We include our children in spiritual conversation seeking to impart basic biblical truths along the way. Our faith is a way of life.

It's a bit like dieting. Most people will try the easiest, quickest way that they can find to lose weight. Consequently, most diets will provide some sort of weight loss early in the program that seems to creep back in over time, either as we lose interest or as we see some small success and then return to our normal eating habits. Any diet that results in long-term success requires a permanent lifestyle change. It is the same way in our walk with Christ, except God has given us the perfect food that has no fat or calories: His written Word. We have all that we need pertaining to life and godliness in this glorious book we call the Bible.

In this issue you will read a convicting comparison of the Bible and the Koran by Dan Hayden. Charles Cooper provides a compelling article on the mystery of the Gospel, and James MacDonald gives us valuable insight on the issue of Faith. All this, and lots more in our regular features will help you to maintain a consistent, life-changing walk with Christ that permeates everything that you do.

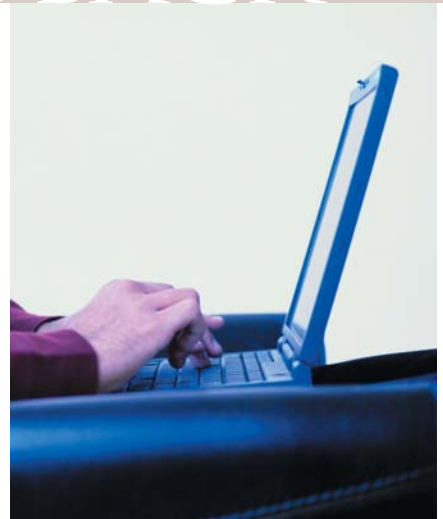
It is for this reason that we at Sola Scriptura seek to engage you in the careful articulation and study of the Word. In doing so we hope that it will become a way of life for you as well. Remember: when you sit, walk, lie down and rise up—saturate yourselves with the truth. ■



Defense of the Truth

■ As a pastor I want to thank you for your defense of the Truth and the willingness to research and present such a logical defense of the gospel. I have been receiving information from you for sometime, and I appreciate what you are doing. Keep up the good work.

—PASTOR WADE CHILDERS
Winston-Salem, NC



A useful resource

■ I would like to use your Winter 2003, Issue 2, magazine as a teaching aid in our evening degree completion program. I have also requested that our library acquire a subscription for the use of day and evening students.

—DR. DAVID COLBURN
Trinity College of Florida

■ We just received our initial issue of *Sola Scriptura* because of previous contact with Dr. Dan Hayden when he was working in the north woods of Wisconsin. My husband and I were impressed with the content and the truth of your words. Thank you for sending it to us, and we will be subscribing so we can enjoy it in the future. We also think our pastor would be interested in what you have to say. God bless.

—KIM RUMSEY
Tomahawk, Wisconsin

Lampstands and vessels

■ Just received the Winter 2003 issue; I'll bet most everyone who received it studied the *Final Thoughts* page, reading the marginal notes of Revelation 1 from someone's Bible. My favorite is under 2:1, "The church is only the lampstand—or the vessel through which the light (Christ) shines!" It is the truth. We are the lampstands, and our lamps must be trimmed and our vessels filled with oil so that He shines to a lost world.

—DAVID MOHLER
Dayton, Ohio

Signing up

■ I was very impressed with your introductory issue of *Sola Scriptura*; I read it cover-to-cover. Considering all the junk that comes in the mail, your magazine was very welcome and appreciated I will be subscribing to your publication.

—JOE LOGRASSO
Morristown, New Jersey

■ Your August 2002 Premiere Issue was magnificent. So much value, so heartening to read. The article by Charles Cooper ("Why Another Magazine?") was outstanding, for we are seeing an increasing and swift decline in morals. What's the subscription for this truly wonderful magazine?

—ED OXNER
Manhaca, Texas

Signing off

■ A friend of mine turned me on to your website a few years back. But today I received a letter from you stating that unless I send you money for a subscription I have received my last issue of *Sola Scriptura*. Don't you realize that there are brothers and sisters out there that live from one paycheck to the next? I am sick and tired of so-called ministries that require money for resources. What did the Lord Jesus say to those who said to Him that they had done many wonderful things in His name? Keep your magazine!

—EDWARD VANEK JR.
Michigan City, Indiana

Impact and influence

■ I want to first thank you all for everything you do. I know you do it for our Lord Jesus Christ, but you may not realize the impact and influence you have on many lives. So thank you, thank you, thank you.

—SCOTT RUSSELL
Spring Hill, Florida

■ This seems to be one of the best magazines when it comes to answering some of the questions which I've been asked lately. Your talents are truly being used by the Lord, and I believe this magazine is great!

—LOIS HAMILTON
Horseheads, New York

■ Thank you so much for the way your website is presented. This is extremely important to me as a pastor in presenting material to my congregation. God bless you in all your work for the King of kings.

—JEFF DALY
Middletown, California

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THE PRE

In Search of the Real Word of

D R . D A N



T E N D E R

God : The Koran? The Bible?

H A Y D E N

T H E P R E T E N D E R

A forgery is difficult to detect, especially if it has all of the characteristics of the original. Take art forgery, for instance. There are fraudulent paintings of the Great Masters that are nearly impossible to expose because the forgers are so good at imitating the features of the true artist. Elmyr de Hory was an artist with that kind of ability. In fact, Orson Welles was so impressed with Elmyr that he made a movie of his life, entitled *F for Fake*.

It is estimated that Elmyr de Hory “made more than 1000 counterfeit paintings”¹ before he died in 1976. Art critics often mistook his works for the genuine masterpieces and, consequently, the forgeries were unwittingly sold as originals throughout North America, Europe and Japan. Knut W. Jorfald, the Norwegian film maker who also produced a movie of Elmyr’s life in 1997, said that the revenue generated by Elmyr’s forgeries “has been estimated at over one hundred million dollars.”² On one occasion in 1968, the Spanish government imprisoned him for two months and then expelled him from their country for the crime of signing wrong names on his paintings—“Names like Picasso, and Van Gogh, and Modigliani, and Matisse.”³

Elmyr de Hory’s forgeries were almost impossible to distinguish from the original pieces. In fact, Robert Wilson makes the suggestion that, “Every time you walk through a museum and see a Picasso or a Matisse... you should stop and ask, ‘Now did Picasso or Matisse do that, or did Elmyr do it?’”⁴ It seems, in some cases, that there is concern in the art world as to who has the original masterpiece and who has the forgery.

When it comes to imitations of the Word of God, it can be equally difficult to separate the authentic writing from the pretender. Add to that the emotional element, and you have a real challenge! No one likes to admit that they are wrong or that they have been conned into believing something that is untrue. This is the situation faced by people who are committed to their religious traditions.

For instance, for a Muslim to admit that the Bible is the real Word of God and the Koran is the fake would be to deny his culture and family heritage, since these things are intimately entwined with the religion of Islam. The same would be true for Christianity of course. Yet, ultimately, somebody is basing his entire life and eternal destiny on a lie—and that’s disconcerting, to say the least. The greater the stakes, the more serious the fraud. In that regard, religious fraud is worse than art fraud because it affects both this life and the life to come.

The only reasonable solution is to study the evidence and allow the facts to determine the truth and expose the error. After all, how can a forgery be told from the original? Only by subjecting it to close scrutiny and careful examination can authenticity be verified.

The Bible and the Koran both claim to be the Word of God. They are each presented to the world as an authoritative voice from a divine source that reveals the will of God for mankind.

Furthermore, both the Bible and the Koran have each enjoyed

a degree of popularity. Yet the teachings in these books are diametrically opposed to each other as to who God is and what He expects from His people. Therefore, unless we are willing to abandon reason and logic in favor of a pluralistic philosophy (the notion that conflicting ideas can both be right), we are left with a choice. Which one is the Word of God? So let’s compare the two writings as we seek to answer that question.

THE KORAN—The Scriptures of Islam

According to Muslim tradition, the Koran (sometimes spelled “Quran”) is the foundation of Islam. It is for them the revelation of divine truth and is the Word of God given to mankind through the prophet Muhammad. Muslims consider it their most holy writing, although the Hadith (which records the sayings and deeds of Muhammad) is also highly revered.

Development of the Koran — A Brief History

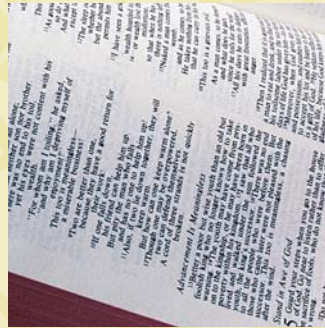
Muhammad was forty years old when he began to receive the revelations that eventually became the Koran. He had been spending an entire month each year in a cave three miles north of Mecca, where he would “wrap himself in a garment, keep night vigils, and repeat the name Allah,”⁵ which in Arabic means “the God.” While in the cave on one occasion in the year 610 AD, the angel Gabriel reportedly appeared to him and gave to him his first revelation. Initially he thought that he had come under the influence of a demonic spirit, but his wife, Khadija, convinced him that the appearance was an angel of God and not the devil.

For the next 23 years until his death, Muhammad continued to receive revelations from the angelic spirit whom he had come to know as Gabriel. However, it was not until twenty years after his death that the Koran was actually compiled.

It is generally agreed that Muhammad did not know how to read or write. Therefore, as he received the revelations from the angel, he would repeat them to his followers and they would endeavor to remember them. They “carried portions on pieces of paper, stones, palm leaves, shoulder blades, bits of leather, and from the memories of men.”⁶ The official version of the Koran was then compiled from these sources by Uthman, the third Caliph (line of successors from Muhammad). There is a tradition in the Hadith that Uthman then ordered that “all other Qur’anic materials, whether written in fragmentary manuscripts or whole copies, be burned.”⁷ From that point on, the compilation of the many fragmentary materials into one text by Caliph Uthman became the official version of the Koran.

The Koran contains 114 chapters (called “Surahs”) of varying lengths, and is comparable in length to the Christian New Testament. Muhammad is said to have received 86 of the Surahs from Gabriel in Mecca and the other 28 in Medina. The Surahs are not in any chronological order, and are simply a collection of instructions on “worship, marriage and family, economics, politics, community affairs, hygiene, and all other affairs of humanity.”⁸

THE WORD OF GOD



The KORAN and the BIBLE both claim to be the Word of God.

*They are each presented to the world as an authoritative voice
from a divine source that reveals the will of God for mankind.*

*Yet the teachings in these books are diametrically opposed to each
other as to who God is and what He expects from His people.*

In comparing the Koran with the Bible... One is a fraud — that much

The history of the development of the Koran, therefore, is brief and simple. All of the revelations were received in private by Muhammad from the angel Gabriel over a period of 23 years. Muhammad, then, communicated them orally to his followers who, in turn, scribbled them on scraps and fragments. Finally, the fragments were compiled by the third Caliph, Uthman twenty years later. Thus, within a 43 year period (from 610 to 653 AD) the official version of the Koran was complete.

Comparison with the Bible—A Brief Analysis

A thoughtful and careful comparison of the Bible with the Koran would take more space than this brief analysis will allow. Therefore, for a fuller treatment of this subject I recommend the book by Norman Geisler and Abdul Saleeb entitled, *Answering Islam: The Crescent in the Light of the Cross*.

Yet there are a number of initial observations that can be made which will help us in our search for the real Word of God. Both the Bible and the Koran claim to be a divine revelation and the ultimate source for truth; and both have enjoyed a large measure of popularity. But a comparison of the two reveals a great deal of difference between them.

1. First of all, the circumstances surrounding the production of each book are radically different. The Bible was produced by 40 different authors (most of whom were prophets) over a period of 1500 years from three separate continents under a wide variety of circumstances in three distinct languages—giving ample opportunity for corroborating evidence to substantiate the claim to divine origin.

The Koran, on the other hand, was conceived by one man (Muhammad) in two adjacent locations (Mecca and Medina) over a 23 year period (610-633 AD) in one language (Arabic). No one else contributed to the Koran, except in compiling the texts of Muhammad (which was done solely by Uthman, the third Caliph), and no other person ever received a revelation from

Gabriel or witnessed the angelic appearances. In other words, there is no corroborating testimony to bolster the claims of the Koran—that it is the Word of God. It stands solely on the witness of one man (Muhammad), who was an illiterate business man (admitted by many Muslims—although challenged by some)⁹, and who was an Arab living in Arabia five hundred years after the Bible was completed and accepted as the Word of God by most of the civilized world.

2. Second, there is no evidence of a divine presence in the Koran, as there is in the Bible—no miracles and no prophecy. Muhammad was not a man of miracles in the fashion of Jesus, who did many miracles. According to Abdul Saleeb,

All Muslims hold that miracles confirm Muhammad's claim to be a prophet. But many Muslim apologists claim that his miracles were the Suras of the Qur'an. Indeed, in the Qur'an Muhammad himself never offered any other proof, even when challenged by unbelievers to do so (3:181-84).¹⁰

In other words, the Koran contains no miracles other than the miracle of the Koran itself—that is, that an Arabic literary masterpiece was produced by a supposedly illiterate prophet. It is true that miracles are attributed to Muhammad, but only miracles of a spiritual nature, like the miracles of the Miraj, where Muhammad claimed he was transported to Jerusalem by Gabriel and from there “ascended into heaven on the back of a mule”¹¹ or, the splitting of Muhammad's breast where “Gabriel is said to have cut open Muhammad's chest... removed and cleansed his heart, then filled it with wisdom, and placed it back in the prophet's chest.”¹² But when it comes to tangible verifiable miracles like healing a blind man or raising the dead, there is nothing to match the Bible in the Koran.

Another area of divine presence manifest in the Bible, but lacking in the Koran, is the inclusion of legitimate prophecy. There are hundreds of substantiated prophecies in

the Bible and some 300 prophecies of Christ's first advent alone. Yet, there is nothing like this in the Koran. There are no general prophecies that could legitimately be called supernatural, and no prophecies concerning Muhammad. The element of predictive prophecy, verified by historical fulfillment, is missing.

There are a few instances in the Koran which Muslims like to claim as predictive prophecies that prove its divine origin, but they are mostly predictions of victory in battle. Muhammad is known as “the prophet of the sword,”¹³ and Muslim forces, which became a dominant presence in Arabia, were promised paradise for their efforts. Therefore, the prediction that they would win a battle was not necessarily a supernatural event. Abdul Saleeb adds this thought: “...the only really substantive prediction was about the Roman victory over the Persian army at Issus...” But he goes on to say, “Close scrutiny, however, reveals several things that make this prediction less than spectacular, to say nothing of supernatural.”¹⁴

There have been numerous attempts on the part of Muslims to embellish Muhammad with miracles and prophecies in order to establish him as a legitimate prophet. Yet, all of the claims to the supernatural on his behalf are fanciful, unverifiable, and unconvincing. After discussing one such alleged prophecy having to do with ten years of persecution experienced by early Muslims as recorded in Surah 89:2 of the Koran, Abdul Saleeb makes this comment,

In any event, there is certainly no clear prediction of anything that would have been evident to an intelligent observer in advance of the event. Its very usage as a predictive prophecy by Muslim scholars shows how desperate they are to find something supernatural in support of the Qur'an.¹⁵

3. Another interesting observation with regard to the Koran is the fact that so much of the Koran is a reaction to the Bible. Most



is certain. Both cannot simultaneously be the true Word of God...

of the characters in the Koran are biblical personalities. In fact, Alan Jones, in his introduction to the Koran says, "Old Testament stories, often in a guise somewhat different from that in the Bible, dominate much of the narratives of the Qur'an."¹⁶ These are mostly stories of God's judgment on the disobedient infidels (the Jews), which in turn, becomes the proof that Muhammad is right and the Koran is true. In other words, the Koran is constantly trying to justify itself by demeaning Jews and Christians for their inability to live by their Scriptures.

The Bible, in contrast, speaks of a Savior who offers salvation to all on the basis of a vicarious sacrifice on behalf of those who have sinned. The Koran has no such thing. It is a self-effort system where the righteous Muslim earns his heavenly reward and God simply forgives his shortcomings without asking for the payment of a penalty. There is no divine justice in the Koran, except the condemnation of unbelief in Allah. Since martyrdom is the ultimate righteous act, worthy of a straight ticket to heaven, Muslims actually seek death in the service of Allah. This is the basis of terrorist acts of self-sacrifice. Some refer to this as "the dark side of Islam."¹⁷

What a contrast to the teachings of the Bible where, although unbelief is also condemned, a truly righteous Savior (Jesus Christ) is presented who saves people from their sins by paying the penalty for their guilt through His sacrificial death. There is no savior in Islam. The Muslim is his own savior. The Bible is the only book that offers a Savior and a plan of salvation from the sin and evil that is in our world. The Koran is a book of law and judgment. The Bible is a book of grace and salvation.

4. One other comparison that should not be overlooked is the impact each book has had upon society. There is no question that over the years, bad things have been done in the name of the Bible, as well as in the name of the Koran. And radical extremists in each religious tradition have taken their teachings to limits that each book was never intended to portray. Yet, the type of

society each one produces is radically different from the other.

Islamic societies, generally speaking, are restrictive regimes where other points of view are not tolerated, and where women are severely limited in their social interaction. Christian missionaries are not permitted in Islamic countries and proselytizing by Christians is a crime worthy of imprisonment. Also, women do not fare as well as men in Islam, being largely secluded and relegated to subservient roles. Furthermore, the welfare of the masses is a low priority with favor being reserved for the wealthy and powerful. These characteristics can be readily observed in countries like Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan, where Islam is the dominant political force.

Christianity, on the other hand, has influenced societies toward personal freedom and individual liberty. In Europe and America, for instance, Muslims can proselytize, own property, and build mosques, due to the principles of religious freedom and personal opportunity. Women are afforded equal rights in the western world and, generally speaking, are encouraged to express their individuality. There is a huge middle class in America, and to a large extent, the poor can exercise upward mobility through diligence, education, and hard work. America certainly is not perfect, but it is the land of opportunity.

Now the point here is that the west has been mostly influenced by the Bible, and the Middle East has been mostly influenced by the Koran. The two societies are true reflections of the Books that influenced them. Furthermore, the Books are true reflections of the type of God each Book represents. So the question for us is, which God seems to be the true God—the God of love and opportunity, or the God of law and restriction? The answer to that question will have a great bearing on which Book we believe is the true Word of God—the Bible, or the Koran.

Weight of Evidence

So, in comparing the Koran with the Bible, we are being asked to consider which

one is the Word of God. In other words, which one has the higher degree of credibility and authenticity? One is a fraud—that much is certain. Both cannot simultaneously be the true Word of God.

There is obviously much more that could be said concerning the differences between the two books. Yet even a cursory comparison is enough for a fair inquirer to recognize that the Bible has the weight of evidence in its favor. The Koran cannot begin to demonstrate the same divine qualities that are manifest in the Bible. It is inferior in every respect, and deserves the label—"The Pretender."

If the Bible, then, is the Word of God—as it claims to be and as we are convinced that it is—it deserves our undivided attention and requires our absolute allegiance. The Bible is God's message to man, and that message simply cannot be ignored. ■

ENDNOTES

1. www.nwfilm.org. "Masterpiece or Forgery: The Story of Elmyr de Hory" (Northwest Film Center Archive: March/April/May, 1999).
2. Ibid.
3. Robert Anton Wilson, www.syntax.net/hoax/elmyr.php, "Painter Jailed for Committing Masterpieces," p. 1.
4. Ibid., p. 3.
5. George W. Braswell, Jr. *Islam* (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), p. 12.
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11. Ibid., p. 159.
12. Ibid., p. 161.
13. Ibid., p. 150.
14. Ibid., p. 195.
15. Ibid., p. 196.
16. J.M. Rodwell, translator. Alan Jones, Forward and Introduction, *The Koran* (London: Everyman, J.M. Dent, 1994), p. xxii.
17. R. C. Sproul & Abdul Saleeb, Tape series: *The Dark Side of Islam* (Orlando, Florida: Ligonier Ministries, 2002).

Without faith it is impossible

to please Him, for he who

comes to God must believe

It's the WH

IT'S THE WHOLE THING
IT'S THE WHOLE THING
IT'S THE WHOLE THING
IT'S THE WHOLE THING

that He is, and that He is a

rewarder of those who seek

Him. — Hebrews 11:6

OLE Thing



I don't know about you, but as a believer in Jesus Christ and as a pastor, I run into a lot of people who tell me they've "lost" their faith. They just don't believe like they used to. Do you meet people like this? What do you tell them?

I start by getting right to the heart of their question. I ask them, "what do you think faith is?" and "Who do you have faith in?" That usually clears things up real fast.

When you share grace and truth with people you must first get on the same definition page. We'll get to what God's Book says about faith in a minute, but let's first rid ourselves of the faulty notions about faith:

- Faith is not an ostrich, head-in-the-sand denial of the obvious or inevitable. It's not pretending that something is real when deep down you don't believe it. That's *fear*, not faith.
- Faith is not anti-intellectual either. Faith is not a warm feeling that requires you to check your mind at the door. That's *feeling*, not faith.
- Faith is not a stained-glass and dreamy escapism. I cannot stay in church, hiding from the real world. That's *fluff*, not faith.
- Faith is not a motivational seminar, with some high-powered guru calling for breathing exercises or self-realization, telling you to picture a better future. That's *fad*, not faith.
- Faith is not some stupid positive mental attitude, a you-have-to-keep-believing thing. It's not ignoring the pain and embracing optimism. That's *foolishness*, not faith.

Now hear this:

Faith is so integral to the Christian life that it can be boiled down to a very practical definition: **Faith is believing the Word of God and acting upon it, no matter how I feel, because God promises a good result.**

By James MacDonald

HING

Genuine Faith Always Downloads Into Life

BELIEVING THE WORD OF GOD
BELIEVING THE WORD OF GOD
BELIEVING THE WORD OF GOD
BELIEVING THE WORD OF GOD
BELIEVING THE WORD OF GOD

Let's break that definition down so you can see how it will work in practical ways in your life.

Faith is believing the Word of God

That word believing is not “wouldn't it be nice if...” Believing is a lot more than just shallow hope. Believing is, “I've got all my eggs in one basket. I'm 100 percent in.” That's faith.

But faith is not believing in a vacuum; it's belief based on the Word of God. That's the key. I'm not trusting the newspaper, the television, my neighbor, or my boss. I believe in a God who wrote a trustworthy Book. Faith, Romans 10 says, comes by hearing the Word of God so the more I get in God's Book the greater will be my faith.

And acting upon it

Genuine faith always downloads into life. We say we believe in all kinds of stuff--but we really don't unless it shows up in our lives. In family matters, an active faith means we will trust God to work through a wayward child or even an unbelieving spouse. In finances, we will trust God to meet our daily needs, while giving tithes and offerings; we believe the Scripture that says, “God is able to make all grace abound to you, that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed” (2 Corinthians 9:8).

Maybe you're reading this with an overwhelming sense of loneliness. Maybe you're just discouraged about your life and your direction. You're not sure where to turn and you're not sure what to pursue. As a follower of Jesus Christ, you can turn to Him to meet your deepest life needs. When you believe the answers to life's deepest perplexities are found in Christ, then you are believing the Word of God and acting upon it.

No matter how I feel

This is critical. Faith discounts how we feel and boldly acts upon the Word of God.

I know a woman who wants like anything to talk to her husband about Christ. She's having a hard time believing that she can't be a big part of the solution! She feels she must say something or he will never change. But faith discounts how we feel and boldly acts upon the Word of God.

Maybe you're at a place of real financial hardship, and you feel giving a consistent tithe or offering to your church is unrealistic. I understand the fear that comes with limited funds. When Kathy and I were in Bible college, we didn't have two dimes to rub together. We had \$180–\$200 per week of expenses, and I was making \$150 a week as a youth pastor. I can remember writing that little tithing check for \$15 and thinking to myself “Why am I doing this?”

Choose Obedience; Refuse To Be Guided By Emotion

Those were real fears and frustrations, but they were nonsense compared to God's faithfulness. God was teaching us some very important lessons about life. I learned that God is true to His Word and can be trusted to meet all of our needs if, by faith, we choose obedience and refuse to be guided by emotion. Here's the best part of faith: We can act upon our faith, no matter how we feel, because...

God promises a good result

Here are four questions I've heard from those struggling with faith:

"Why would I do what God tells me?"

"Why would I wait on God to bring my husband to Christ?"

"Why would I give of my finances when I have so many debts?"

"Why would I invest my energies in following hard after the Lord when I feel like my life is so empty and meaningless?"

The answer to each question is the same: Because *God promises a good result*.

This message of faith permeates the Bible; it's somewhere on every page and in every story. Every step with God is a step of faith. Every lesson learned is a lesson of faith. Every victory won is a victory by faith. That's the prominence of faith in God's Book. It's on that basis that I say this: *Faith is not a part of the Christian life*.

Say what? That's right; faith is not a *part* of the Christian life. It's not like patience, kindness or other character traits. It's not like teaching or ministering. It's not like worship or prayer or other actions that we take toward God. Those are parts.

Faith, however, is not a part of the Christian life; *it's the whole thing*.

At the end of the day the Christian is only and entirely about faith. The author of Hebrews 11:6 wrote, "without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a *rewarder* of those who seek Him." Genuine believers trust God and His Word and act upon it no matter how they feel, because God promises a good result.

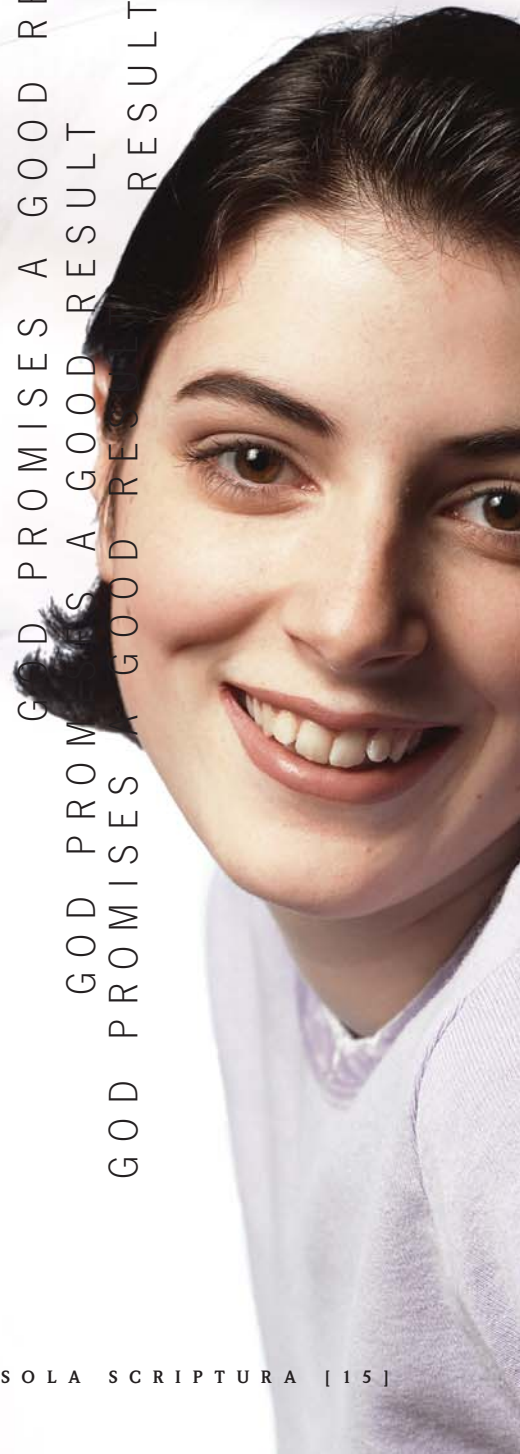
The next time you meet someone who has lost their way, teach them what God is teaching you about faith. That it's real and relevant and abundantly rewarded by God Himself. Faith is not a part of the Christian life... **it's the whole thing!** ■



Dr. James MacDonald is the founding pastor of Harvest Bible Chapel in Rolling Meadows, IL and radio Bible teacher on *Walk in the Word* (walkintheword.com) which emphasizes the precise exposition of God's Word and its practical life application. James and his wife, Kathy have three children—Luke, Landon, and Abigail—and reside in the northwest suburbs of Chicago.

More on this topic from James MacDonald can be found in his book *Lord, Change My Attitude (Before It's Too Late)*.

GOD PROMISES A GOOD RESULT
GOD PROMISES A GOOD RESULT
GOD PROMISES A GOOD RESULT



A WONDERFUL MYSTERY YET TO BE REVEALED

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A WONDERFUL MYSTERY YET TO BE REVEALED

The MYSTERY Remains

BY

CHARLES

COOPER

I do not know.

IT IS A SIMPLE STATEMENT.

THERE IS NOTHING INHERENTLY PROBLEMATIC OR ACCUSATORY IN ITS STRUCTURE OR MEANING. IT DOES NOT IMPLY THAT ONE IS LAZY OR STUPID, YET SOME ARE SO ADVERSE TO THIS STATEMENT THAT IT WOULD REQUIRE THE PROVERBIAL SUB-ZERO DAY IN THE ETERNAL HOME OF THE UNRIGHTEOUS BEFORE THEY WOULD UTTER THOSE FOUR SIMPLE WORDS.

Pride and fear often make such a response to legitimate questions about the Christian faith untenable. Perhaps some are inclined to think that an unanswered question exposes a weakness in the Christian faith. Others boast that Scripture encourages us to “be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15, ESV). In their thinking, “I do not know” is an inappropriate defense. However, to project the attitude that we can vocalize an answer to all the great questions of the ages is disingenuous and unrealistic.

There are two significant reasons for using “I do not know” in answer to a question. First, it may indicate that the specific facts required for an answer are available, but require additional research or consideration before a credible answer is offered. In this case, it means, “I’ll have to get back to you.” The second reason to use “I do not know” might indicate “I do not know because I cannot know.” In other words, the requisite knowledge is beyond the grasp of the human mind.

While the Holy Spirit, Scripture, and historical tradition can help us answer most of the basic questions about our faith, understanding the God of our faith is another issue altogether. There is no shame in admitting “I do not know” in answer to many of the detailed questions about the nature of God. This is because the nature of God is a mystery. Unless God chooses to reveal Himself, He cannot be known. A general statement about the nature of God is painted across the landscape of the universe. We can look at nature and see the complexity and beauty of a creation that speaks loudly of its Creator. On the other hand, Scripture records specific statements about the nature of God. While Scripture does give a great deal of information about the nature, purpose, and capabilities of the God of Holy Bible, it is not exhaustive in its detail. Some of what is contained in Scripture about God requires a bit more explanation to satisfy what we would like to know, though not necessarily what we need to know in order to live the Christian life. How can Jesus be infinite God and finite man at the same time? How can God know every possibility, but not influence man’s choices? How can God hold man guilty for the choice of his predecessor? How can God be three individual distinct “persons,”

The MYSTERY Remains



yet one in essence? How could God live in perfect happiness before anything existed? How can God live outside of time and space? For many people, responding to these questions with “I do not know” undermines the Christian faith. For some reason, man believes he must have all the answers.

With the lessons learned from hundreds of years facing one attack after another against Christendom, many have learned the basic arguments that allow us to defend our faith. Concerning the critical doctrines of the Christian faith, the Evangelical Church has learned well the art of logic and reason. Given that Scripture speaks explicitly about only some aspects of science, world history and philosophy, carefully articulated responses to attacks in these areas are useful in dealing with a world that changes with each new day. After rejecting the objective statements in Scripture (because they have no faith that what the Bible says is true), critics often delve into philosophically speculative matters to argue against the Gospel. Creation is a case in point. Scripture explicitly declares that God created the heavens and the earth out of nothing. The world flatly rejects this claim because it cannot comprehend how something can come from nothing at the hand of an omnipotent God. Instead, they find it more easily understood that nothing could give birth to everything by pure chance and happenstance. Scripture states clearly what happened at creation. To some degree, Scripture even tells us how it happened—“God said, ‘Let there be... and it was...’” Scripture also tells us when all of this happened relative to the process, which day for which created entity.

In this case, there are specific things that we can “know” for certain because Scripture is clear. For other things, we can logically infer answers, given an understanding of Scripture and a study of natural processes. Finally, some of the details “we cannot know” and will remain ignorant of until the information is supernaturally revealed. The critical issue for the contemporary Christian is knowing the difference between what can be known and what cannot be known. Wisdom can be viewed as the result of a practical application of this knowledge. More fundamental though, is our willingness to admit that “we do not know” the answer to some very important questions. While we certainly are free to try to logically reason our way to the truth, those conclusions must always be stated in less than dogmatic terms. There is much about our

faith that is still a mystery, even with the effects of hundreds of years of applied reason and logic.

A biblical mystery is not synonymous with the recipe for a modern day “whodunnit” mystery. A cup of greed combined with a half cup of cleverness and a dash of human imperfection yields a mystery that can be very complex and confounding. Fortunately, the applied reason of a Sherlock Holmes, a Columbo or Gil Grissom from CSI’s Las Vegas crime lab combined with a tenacious work ethic will always result in solving the mystery—and usually in under an hour! On the other hand, a biblical mystery deals with issues that only God understands. Unless God reveals the mystery, it cannot be known. Even in those cases where He does reveal all or part of a mystery, there is still a great chance that we will not fully comprehend it.

Logic and reason are not enemies of the Christian faith. Every believer is called upon to think logically and reasonably about his faith (1 Peter 3:15; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:16-17). However, we must be cautious not to over emphasize the value of logic and reason. Brian McLaren, a pastor of a successful church in Maryland, writes about a young woman’s journey to faith in Jesus Christ in his recent book, *More Ready Than You Realize*. The young woman writes:

You know, all the logic and reasoning that people always say about Jesus, that he “MUST” have been the son of God, that if he wasn’t, he was a lunatic or a liar, that they’ve found proof, blah, blah blah,... it is just so lame, in my eyes, to feeling like your heart is going to explode when you start to see just how wonderful Jesus is... when you start to understand that Jesus ISN’T dead. I never understood that. I think a major part of my little epiphany was realizing that God is so far beyond all that petty logic and knowledge. I’m sure for other people, the logic is great. But when proof stops at logic for me, it is pretty lame.

Sola Scriptura’s chief goal is to affirm the authenticity, accuracy, and authority of the Bible. Through a fifty-five minute journey at The Scriptorium: Center for Biblical Antiquities in Orlando, one is able to explore the complete history of the English Bible from the earliest manuscript traditions to the latest translations. The facts are there for all to see and appreciate. However, it is important that we fully recognize the necessity for passionate hearts to declare the Living Word. Our proofs do not stop with logic but are confirmed by the personal experiences of those who have discovered peace and contentment in Jesus Christ.

The Bible can be viewed as a means to an end. That end is to have a personal, dynamic relationship with the God of the Bible. The Bible can teach us much about our God and our Faith. One of the many facets of the Father is that we can “know” Him intimately and beautifully, yet we cannot “know about” all aspects of His character. Saying “I do not know” does not mean that we have given up learning. It merely suggests that we recognize that there is still a wonderful mystery yet to be revealed. ■

The Eliot Bible

Dr. Herbert Samworth

In Hebrews, chapter eleven, the writer speaks of what many have called the “Hall of Faith.” The Hall of Faith includes men and women who were faithful to the Lord during the Old Testament times, including Abraham, Samson, Rahab, the prophets and many others, both named and unnamed.

While no one would dare add to the Scriptures, there are certainly other names that could be included in this Hall of Faith. History does record the deeds of many who were faithful to the Lord, and I want to introduce you to one such person.

That individual’s name is John Eliot. He was born in England in 1604. While there is much of his life that remains unknown, we do know that he attended and graduated from Cambridge University. At that time Cambridge was the university of the Puritans. Because of his Puritan leanings he was denied a position in the Church of England by the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud. For several years he taught school in Chelmsford, Essex where he served under the direction of Thomas Hooker, later to be the principal founder of the Colony of Connecticut in the New World.

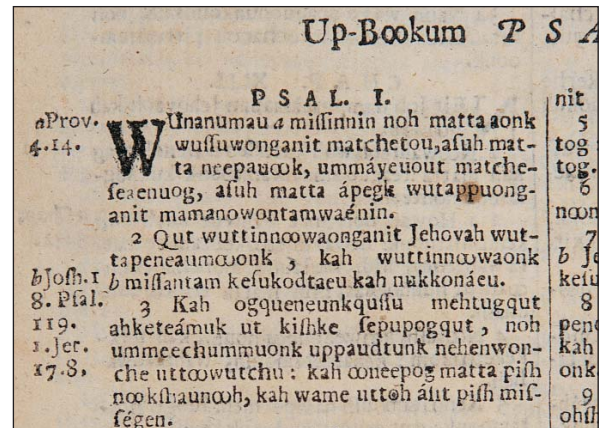
Finding that his entrance to the ministry was blocked by the leaders of the Church in England, Eliot decided to emigrate to the New World. He arrived in the Massachusetts Bay Colony in November 1631. Although he was offered the position of Teacher in the highly esteemed First Church of Boston, Eliot refused it in favor of a similar position in the church of Roxbury, Massachusetts.

It may appear inconceivable to us that Eliot would have turned down one of the most important and influential positions in the entire Colony. What could have motivated him to refuse such a prestigious position? To answer that question, we must understand

why the Puritans established the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The Puritans came to the New World not only to worship according to their consciences, but also to evangelize the Native American Indians. The seal of the Colony depicted an Indian imploring someone to come and tell them the good news of the Gospel. Eliot had already purposed to evangelize them, and it was more practical to do that from Roxbury than from Boston.

Eliot devoted the remaining fifty-eight years of his life to serving the church of Roxbury while evangelizing the Indians. Soon after his settlement, he began to visit them on a regular basis to learn their language, one of the most difficult in the world. After fifteen years of studying their language and preaching the Gospel to them, he determined to translate and print the entire Bible into the Algonquian language.

It is impossible to convey in words the enormity of this task. Algonquian did not exist as a written language; there were no dictionaries, grammars, or lexicons for reference. However, with the assistance of a faithful helper, John Sassamon, Eliot began his work. How was he able to continue despite the seemingly insurmountable odds? The following statement of Eliot sums up his approach to the difficulties he faced: “Prayer and pains through faith in Jesus Christ can accomplish anything.” News of Eliot’s labors reached the missionary venture in England known as the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in New England. Established in 1649, this society determined to underwrite the cost of printing the Bible. Not only did they provide the funds, they even sent a press and printer to help in the work.



In 1659 the printing of the Algonquian New Testament began in the print shop of Samuel Green in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Fifteen hundred copies were finished in 1661, and work began immediately on one thousand copies of the Old Testament. The entire Bible was completed in 1663. The Algonquian, or Eliot Bible, was the first Bible printed in America and the first Bible to be translated and printed for the express purpose of evangelizing a people.

Space does not permit telling the full story of the impact of this Bible on the indigenous peoples of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Due to the ravages of time and war, only eighteen copies of the Eliot Bible are in existence today. One of those copies is on display at The Scriptorium, located at the Holy Land Experience in Orlando, Florida. It testifies of how one person invested his life in things that are eternal in nature.

How can we summarize the life of John Eliot and his work? Is his name worthy to be included in the Hall of Faith? Let one who was no friend of the Puritans have the final word. Nathaniel Hawthorne, writing in the nineteenth century, spoke this of John Eliot: “It is good for the world that such a man has lived.” ■

The Eliot Bible is part of **The Van Kampen Collection**, one of the world’s largest private collections of Bibles, artifacts, and biblical manuscripts in the world. The Collection is the centerpiece of Sola Scriptura’s ministry, and is housed at **The Scriptorium**, an interactive museum at **The Holy Land Experience** in Orlando, Florida.

FREE

An Interview with Tom Randall



Tom Randall is director of World Harvest Ministries, which takes building crews, medical teams, and sports teams from the United States and Australia to the Philippines in an effort to equip Phillipino nationals so that they may have opportunity to more effectively minister the Gospel of Jesus Christ. A 1976 graduate of Judson College, he was named a four-time unanimous All-Conference basketball player setting seven school records, four conference records and two national records. He averaged 31.5 points per game and led the nation in scoring as a senior. He played in over two thousand international basketball games around the world, sharing the Gospel in each location. His half-time unicycle and juggling show has been performed in Olympic stadiums, on the Wide World of Sports in Australia, in palaces, prisons, universities, military bases and leper colonies. In February 2000, Tom began work as Chaplain for the Senior PGA Tour. The following is an excerpt from a recent interview with Tom.

Sola Scriptura: Let's go back to the beginning for a moment. What was your life like as a child, and when did you become a Christian?

Tom Randall: I grew up in an inner-city integrated neighborhood in Detroit, so I was quickly oriented to crime, conflict, racial prejudice and that type of thing. I did things at that time in my life that I am not proud of. I was raised Irish Catholic and went to a Catholic school from grades 1 through 8. I had a heavy indoctrination of religion. When I got recruited to play basketball and run in college, I met Dick Helm. He was my first coach in college as a fresh-

man. He has now been a coach in the NBA for sixteen years. The biggest influence in my coming to Christ was watching his life and slowly beginning to ask questions, first of myself and then of him. I eventually came to Christ my senior year, so the whole process took four years! When I came to Christ my senior year, I was at the peak of my basketball career. I was second in the nation in scoring and doing very well, but I just wasn't happy. I went to Coach Helm and he explained to me that what was missing in my life was a relationship with Christ. It was a tradition I knew, but it wasn't a personal relationship. I went on my knees and asked for forgiveness and asked Christ into my life and walked away on a cloud. I have never come off that cloud. It was 27 years ago now, and I have been in ministry all those years.

Sola: You've been able to merge basketball and ministry in a powerful way. Tell me how that happened.

Tom: It was really natural the way it happened. When I came to Christ I started reading the Bible all the time. It was like someone took a blanket off of my eyes, and I could suddenly understand what I read because of my willingness to believe and follow it. When I came to the cross, I thought it was the most magnificent thing, and I wanted to tell everybody else about it so they could too. Basketball was the easiest way to do that because I had a natural platform. Anytime I got a chance in front of a microphone or crowd, I would share a little bit about my faith. I accepted a position on a Christian basketball team to Taiwan in 1976, and that's what really opened my eyes to how much more I could use basket-

THROW

A person in mid-air, performing a high jump over a bar. A large crowd of people is visible in the background, watching the event. The scene is set outdoors, possibly at a sports field or arena.

Grace and

Basketball

Meet in

Ministry

Around the

World

FREE THROW: An Interview with Tom Randall

ball to share Christ with people as a missionary and not just as a basketball player. I really wanted to develop my ministry around basketball. When I played games overseas, I would share my testimony at half time and would talk with people after the game. I played basketball, but I was really there to speak with people about Christ.

Sola: How did you get interested in ministry work in the Philippines?

Tom: When I was in Taiwan, I met a couple of the players from the Australian national team, and they liked my attitude. They asked me to go to the Philippines with them. They knew about my faith and they needed a strong ball player to support them in their tour of the country. The Philippines is an amazing place if you play basketball because it is the national sport there. Everyone just loves the game. I had returned from Taiwan and Karen, my fiancée, and I wanted to get married, but the trip to the Philippines meant that we had to postpone our wedding. That was a big stretch for us, but the Lord gave us a whole future in the Philippines because of that trip.

Sola: You are known for your Christianity and your skill in basketball, and of all things, a unicycle! How did that happen?

Tom: I had seen entertainers like the Harlem Globetrotters, and I love that kind of entertainment. I had been learning tricks while playing basketball like spinning the ball on my finger and dribbling behind my back, but I was severely injured in an automobile accident in 1982. I had a concussion, broken shoulder and my right elbow was destroyed. I ended up having seven operations on the elbow, and it never quite worked just right after that. During the time I was recovering from the accident and my elbow was in plaster, Karen felt I was a bit sad (I'm usually happy-go-lucky), and she wanted to cheer me up, so she took me to the circus in San Francisco. These guys were out there playing basketball with

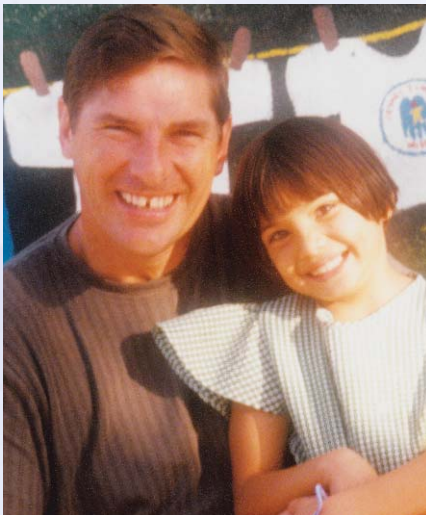
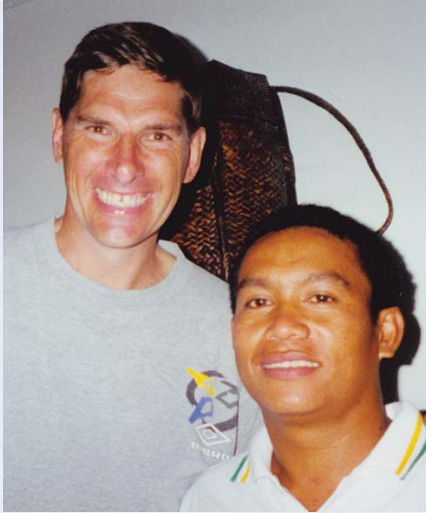
unicycles. They had ten guys, five on a team, and the two centers were on giant unicycles. I thought that was great, and I laughed so hard. Karen said that the Philipinos would love that, and I thought maybe I could do it. We went back to Detroit to see my parents when I had about a month left on my medical leave, and I immediately went out and bought two unicycles from a circus performer who had retired. I taught myself to ride while we were in Detroit. I developed a whole show with the tricks that I knew and then performed them all on the unicycle, like juggling three balls and spinning the ball. I also made up tricks as I went along. Pretty soon, I had developed a 35-minute show. Then I selected some popular music that had a strong beat and I used that in the background. The first time I performed the show, was in Manila. I went to a playoff game with a stadium of 25,000 people, and I told the commissioner I could do a half-time show for him. He said, "Tom, I don't know what you're talking about," and I

We went to every place in the country that we could go... I played in the game, did the half-time show and then shared my faith.

said, "Well, if you need me I'm here. I've got my unicycles and the basketballs, and I can entertain these people." I had already worked it out with the guy at the desk. He would put the tape in and have the music coming out over the loudspeaker. Then during the game, a guy went out and dunked the ball and broke the rim. They had to change the rim, and it was going to take a long time. The people were bored to death, and it was on National TV, so the commissioner said, "Tom, maybe you ought to try that thing." So the Lord gave me my opportunity, and I went out. At first everybody wondered what in the world I was doing out there because they only knew me as a basketball player. So I started doing it, and people were enjoying it and were laughing. By the time I had a kid on my shoulders while riding the tall unicycle and dunking the basketball, they were going crazy. This went over national TV, and everyone in the country wanted to see the show. For the next 20 years, we went to every place in the country that we could go. We would go to one town or village, and they would want to see it in the next. So we used that as a platform to share Christ. I played in the game, did the half-time show and then shared my faith. That was our ministry and the Lord again blessed us. I've been on Wide World of Sports and in professional stadiums and universities and schools all over the world.

Sola: Let's talk about your organization, World Harvest Ministries.

Tom: Well, I was with a larger mission for many years when I first went out ministering in the Philippines. The team that I went out with was called Sports Ambassadors. For twelve years I toured with basketball teams and performed with my unicycles. I would take short-term mission teams all around the country. I had a burden to build and help nationals get started in the ministry. Because of my contact with the villages and cities, I would meet all the key pastors and missionaries and Philippino Christians in the area, and I discovered that



Top: Toto Luchavez, Tom's right-hand man. **Above:** An orphan girl from Sankey Samaritan Mission Home.

they needed help. They couldn't afford a church building and some of the pastors didn't even have a place to live. So, at first, Karen and I just gave them some money of our own and built a home for them. Then we broke ground on our first church, and it went so well that I wanted to build even more churches. This was not really an area that Sports Ambassadors was specializing in, so I started World Harvest for that purpose. The main idea was to equip nationals and try to give them an opportunity to minister. I would add short-term basketball trips to aid them in the building and construction projects. We built over 100 buildings in the first eight or nine years, starting with churches and pastors' homes. We expanded to medical clinics, small hospitals, basketball courts, an orphanage, gymnasiums and anything that could be used to help the Christians minister in their area. We recently took lease on a 20-acre piece of land with 16 cottages and cabins with a huge spring-

fed swimming pool. It has tennis courts, basketball courts and a big dining hall. We are developing a Christian sports camp, and we will have about 40,000 Philippino kids through each year for evangelism through sports.

Sola: You are now the Chaplain for the Senior PGA. How did that come about and what are your responsibilities with that organization?

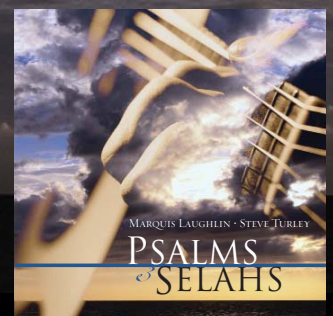
Tom: A Hall of Fame golfer, Larry Nelson called me and asked if I might be able to come out and help with the tour. I told him I was a basketball player, but that I also loved golf, so I told him I would do it for one year. My responsibilities were to organize a fellowship once a week every Friday evening and give a message. The Friday night thing went well, but it was during the week that I was getting my effective ministry done—talking with guys about personal problems or questions they had about their faith, their life, problems in their marriage, or addictions. I never imagined it would blossom into such a ministry. We started with about four or five couples, and this year we have reached 90 or more people at some of our meetings. I will be starting my fourth year with the tour in January.

Sola: How can we pray for you?

Tom: Well, people have prayed for my health for quite a while now, but physically I'm really doing well now. I would ask for prayer for the continued ministry in the Philippines and with the Senior PGA, and that I would be able to balance time for both. I really have everything I need right now, plenty to do, plenty to be thankful for and plenty of challenges to go. I'm thankful for what God has done in my life, and I give all the glory for any successes to Him. ■

Tom Randall and World Harvest Ministries can be contacted at 10404 Big Canoe, Jasper, GA 30143 or through email at: tkrandall@aol.com.

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SOLA SCRIPTURA

Picking and Choosing: *Tattoo or Taboo*

Charles Cooper

The practice of using Bible verses to support convictions and beliefs is central to living a godly life. Christians should be able to defend their decisions with Scripture. Where Scripture speaks specifically to an issue, the believer is faced with one of two possible options: obedience with a humble heart, or disobedience with a rebellious spirit. It is important to note that this simple decision is made a bit more difficult when considering the text of the Old Testament because commands given to Israel do not always apply verbatim to the believer of the New Covenant. Given our strong stance on the authority of Scripture, we must exercise extreme care when we advocate action based solely on Old Testament verses that are not also defined in the New Testament. The practice of picking and choosing only those passages of the Old Testament that seem to support a belief undermines respect for biblical authority.

Any discussion of issues must recognize that, although there are certainly topics which are as clear today as they were three thousand years ago, our culture has permitted a dissolution of many practices and beliefs over time. As an example, let us look at the issue of body art, which for our discussion, includes tattooing and piercings. Some Christians, in their attempt to hold the line on this issue, point to Leviticus 19:28, which states, "Do not cut your

bodies for the dead or put tattoo marks on yourselves. I am the Lord" (ESV). This, they say, proves that Christians should not engage in body art. Can Leviticus 19:28 be used to support a prohibition against body art or is this an example of picking and choosing a passage that supports a desired conclusion?

At first glance, Leviticus 19:28 seems to prohibit any kind of body art, yet many Christians permit "limited" piercing of the female ear. The problem here is that once ear piercing is allowed, where does it stop? How many earrings can a woman have? What about men's earrings? Why only allow piercing of the ear? From this line of thought, it is easy to understand the rationale behind the growth in tattooing and piercing among committed believers. The cross and other Christian images have become favorite symbols for believers to have tattooed on their bodies. The rose, which is the most often requested tattoo, is for the most part harmless in that it does not openly evoke evil or sensual ideas. A Christian cross tattooed on the back of the neck may be seen to promote consciousness of Christ's great price for our salvation. However, an overwhelming majority of body art is not harmless in what it depicts or suggests. The whole tattoo culture seems to be a slippery slope. Harmless tattoos can give rise to evil depictions and body art can encourage body modifications to an extreme.

What is the big deal about body art? Body art has experienced a revival in recent years and has gone mainstream. Far from the art that used to be seen only on the arms of sailors some years ago, a look in any magazine today will show tattoos and piercing on models, actors, politicians and business men. Body piercing, tattooing, scarring, and branding are as old as humanity itself. Some cultures use body art to express beauty and belief. Other cultures use it to express pride and rebellion. Still others use body art to express courage and virility. However, in the American culture, body art, including tattoos, and jewelry in noses, tongues and belly buttons, has been identified with the expression of self-choice and individualism.

The response of the Christian community to the growth of body art varies. While some believers oppose body art, others see nothing wrong with it. Is this a gray area left to individual choice? Let us look again, at what Scripture teaches. Leviticus 19:28 lists only one of several prohibitions in this chapter. Notice what else is prohibited:

- "When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest... You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the Lord your God" (vs. 9-10, ESV).
- "You shall keep my statutes. You shall not let



Can Leviticus 19:28 be used to support a prohibition against body art or is this an example of picking and choosing a passage that supports a desired conclusion?

your cattle breed with a different kind. You shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed, nor shall you wear a garment of cloth made of two kinds of material" (v. 19, ESV).

- "You shall not eat any flesh with blood in it" (v. 26, ESV).

- "You shall not round off the hair on your temples or mar the edges of your beard" (v. 27, ESV). To pick Leviticus 19:28 as the only verse to obey while ignoring these other verses undermines the authority of Scripture. Believers without thought daily eat their steaks cooked rare; wear sweaters that are 70% cotton and 30% polyester; harvest their fields bare; plant yellow and white corn together; shave their faces and clip their sideburns. These are all biblically prohibited. Yet, many believers only focus on the issue of body art when referring to Leviticus 19's list of prohibitions. Biblical consistency demands that we look at all of Scripture and not just those verses we like.

However, the question regarding Leviticus 19 is an interpretive one. The question is this: are we to follow God's specific instructions to the nation of Israel or are we to apply the *prin-*

ciples upon which God's specific instructions to Israel are based? A clue in Leviticus 19:28 will help us answer this question. The reason people cut their bodies in ancient times had to do with some ritual regarding the dead. The verse states, "Do not cut your bodies for the dead..." This indicates that God's prohibition goes beyond the mere act to the reason behind the act. God prohibited the acts of body cutting and tattooing because of the very reason that the nations around Israel sought to engage in these acts. He wanted their behavior to mark them as distinct from the culture around them. This was the biblical principle upon which the prohibition against body art was based. This also explains the laundry list of prohibitive deeds outlined in Leviticus 19. God listed for the Jews those deeds that would make them holy, or set apart from the nations that surrounded them. As we apply this principle today, we do not have to engage in picking and choosing those verses that we agree with while ignoring others. We ask instead, "What sets me apart from the society and honors the Lord?"

The fact that Scripture declares that man is made in the image of God invokes to our bodies a majestic legacy. This alone ought to cause those thinking about tattooing or piercing their bodies to hesitate. Because society preaches that all bodies are not equal and shuns those who do not "measure up," some people attempt to adorn themselves with the hope of finally passing society's test. God forbid! 1 Peter 3:3-4 states, "Your adornment must not be merely external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God" (ESV). We must remember that we are fearfully and wonderfully made and no amount of body art will increase our beauty to the God who made us.

Certainly, believers must live in accordance with what Scripture teaches, but by taking all of Scripture in context and understanding the principles of Godly living, we are able to avoid the pitfall of selectively choosing Scripture that may only support our desires while undermining the whole of God's Word. ■



Land Animals—Did they really fit on the Ark?

Question: It's difficult to imagine how Noah could've fit all the land animals on board the Ark—especially when you consider the thousands of species of animals that now live on earth. How was this possible?

Answer: First of all, Noah didn't take all the *species* of animals on the Ark—just the *kinds*. For example, Noah didn't need the African elephant, the mammoth and the Stegodon on the Ark. He just needed two elephants. After the Flood, as the elephants spread out over the Earth, different varieties resulted from the tremendous amount of information God put in the genes of these creatures. Thus, Noah didn't need anywhere near the number of animals we think he did. Calculations indicate that he probably only had about 16,000 animals. There was plenty of room!

Also, many people think most land animals were large, like elephants, giraffes and so on. But only 11 percent of land animals are larger than a sheep! So the average size of an animal on the Ark was much smaller than that of a sheep. When we research carefully, we find answers to show Noah's Ark had plenty of room.

Even the large dinosaurs had plenty of room in the Ark! **Ken Ham** reveals much more about these fascinating creatures in his dinosaur booklet. You can read the text right on your computer screen when you go to AnswersRadio.com, or request it by calling 1-800-950-9507.

IN MEMORIAM

On January 21, 2003, day six of the Space Shuttle *Columbia's* mission, Commander Rick Husband's wife Evelyn requested Steve Green's recording of the worship song *God of Wonders* to wake the crew. The words and music of this song proclaim glory and honor to a majestic and all-powerful God. We pray for all those involved in the tragedy and for the families and friends of those brave souls on board the *Columbia*.

God of Wonders

God of all Creation
Of water, earth and sky,
The heavens are Your tabernacle,
Glory to the Lord on high
God of wonders beyond our galaxy,
You are holy, holy
The universe declares Your majesty,
You are holy, holy
Lord of heaven and earth...



God of Wonders written by Marc Byrd and Steve Hindalong. ©2000 Storm Boy Music/Meaux Mercy (admin. EMI Christian Music Publishing) and New Spring Publishing, Inc. / Never Say Never Songs (ASCAP) (Administered by Brentwood-Benson Music Publishing, Inc.) All Rights Reserved. Used by permission.

Cursed of God

Dr. Dan Hayden

Quality control is a concern for any business. If the quality of a product or service declines, then so does the business. It is for this reason that companies have strict standards and monitoring devices by which they continually scrutinize what is being done. They cannot survive if quality is not maintained.

This is what Paul is saying in Galatians 1:8 with regard to the Gospel. When it comes to pure truth, any change from that high standard and any introduction of contaminants is intolerable. The Gospel is pure truth and attention to quality control is essential. This is why he says, “But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed.”

The word “accursed” is a translation of the Greek word *anathema*, which means “that which is devoted to destruction.”¹ Kenneth Wuest makes the following comment about *anathema* in his word studies from Galatians: “It is a word used in the LXX [Septuagint] of a person or thing set apart and devoted to destruction, because hateful to God. Hence in a spiritual sense it denotes one who is alienated from God by sin.”²

When it comes to the Gospel, Paul is saying that quality control is a serious matter. Well, this can have any number of applications to heretical divergences from the true Gospel that have been introduced into the Christian community over the centuries. Yet there is a particular aspect of Paul’s concern that speaks to our contemporary concern with Islam.

Muhammad claimed to have gotten his revelations from the angel Gabriel. According to those revelations, Paul was all wrong about



salvation coming through Jesus Christ. Muhammad said that he valued Jesus as a prophet, but he didn’t accept Jesus as the Son of God making atonement for the sins of the world. He said an angel from heaven told him that.

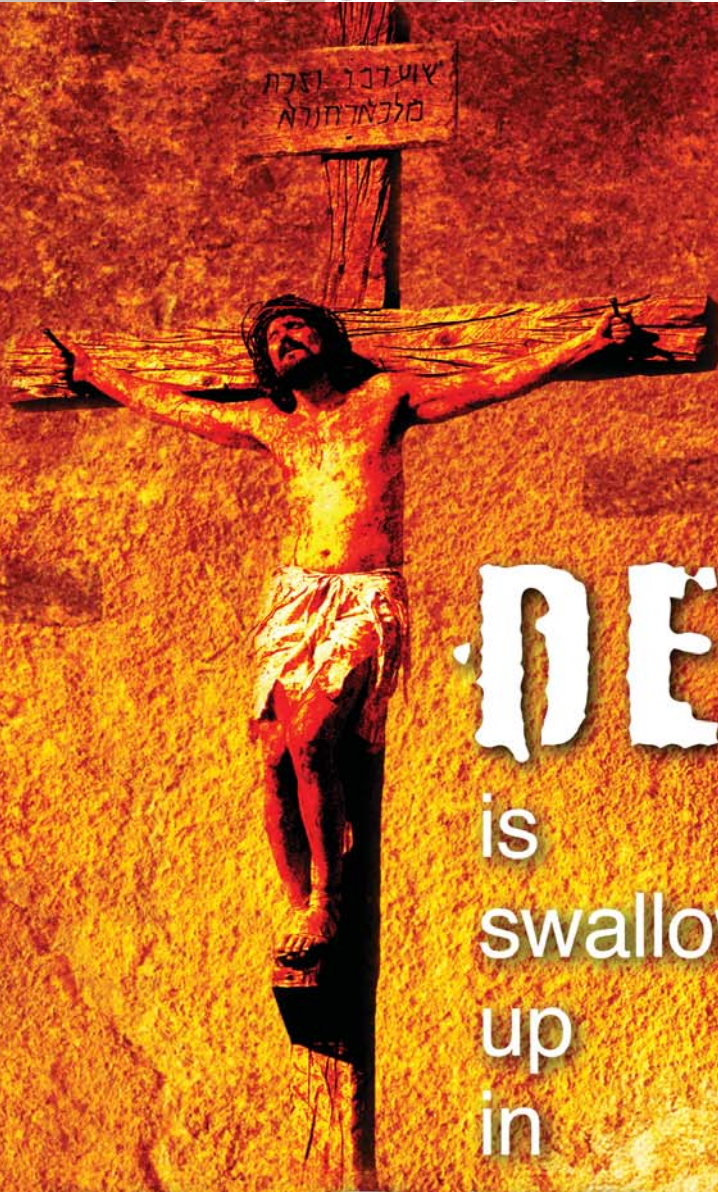
Well, according to Galatians 1:8, Muhammad and his religious system are “accursed” and devoted to destruction by God. For even if “an angel from heaven” should tamper with the true Gospel of Jesus Christ, that angelic message is *anathema*.

There may be nice people with good moral ethics in the Muslim religion, and we should certainly be sensitive and caring about their spiritual need to come to Christ. But Islam as a religious system is cursed by God. Islam is *anathema*. ■

1. John MacArthur, Jr. *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Galatians* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1987), p.17.

2. Kenneth S. Wuest. *Galatians in the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1944), p.40.

FINAL THOUGHTS



DEATH

is
swallowed
up
in

*Thanks be to God, who
gives us the victory through
our Lord Jesus Christ.*

— 1 Corinthians 15:54b, 57

VICTORY

AND SINCE WE HAVE GIFTS... LET EACH EXERCISE THEM ACCORDINGLY...



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