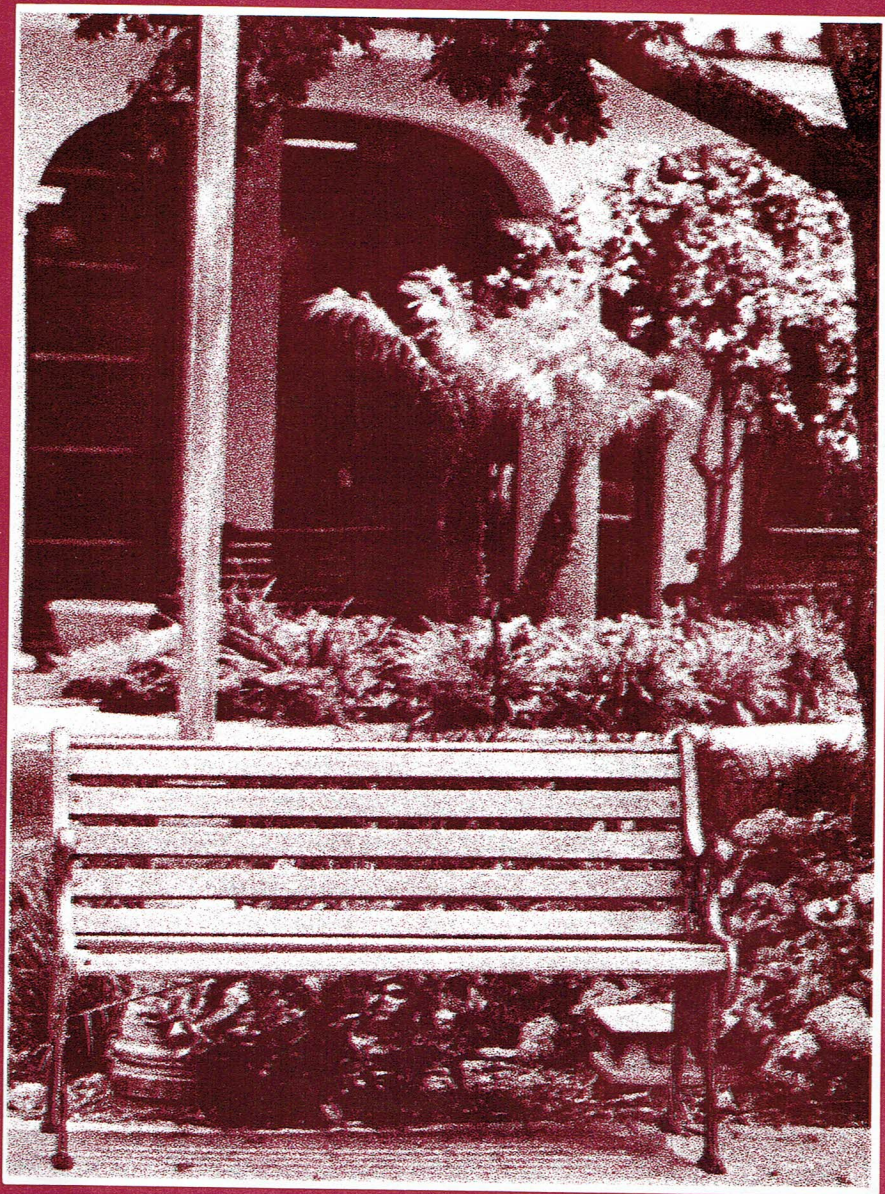


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The SABBATH SENTINEL

Serving the Seventh-day Christian Community

JUNE, 1991



EDITORIAL

Prodigal Son — Modern Version

Consider the following version of the conclusion of the parable about the prodigal son:

The father sees his returning son afar off. He goes to meet the son and say to him, "Well, son, where have you been all these years? What have you been doing?"

"Father, I've come to ask for your forgive..."

"Do you realize what you've put your mother and me through?"

"I'm terribly sor..."

"And what have you done with all my money? Did you spend it all?"

"It's all gone, Father."

"And now I suppose you've come back for more."

"I just want to work for you and be one of your hired servants."

"A servant, huh? Well, I'll tell you what. You can be a servant all right. You can work for me until you've earned back for me all the money you wasted — and more besides. And don't expect any favors from me or you're history. Now go out to the field and find your older brother. He'll put you to work."

Far fetched? It seems to me that this ending to the parable fits the view many Christians have of God better than the ending Jesus gave. They see Him as One who is to be approached with trepidation, One whose favor must be earned through working. One whose love must be repaid by our efforts. They are never quite certain that they are embraced by His love, that their sins are covered by His grace, that they are enthroned in heavenly places in Christ.

As Jesus told the parable, it is obvious that the father yearned for his son, and when the son came into view, he ran to him with compassion and open arms, embracing him and accepting him fully as a son. So great was the father's joy that, before the son did a bit of work, the father put a robe on him, placed a ring on his finger, and ordered a party.

The message of the parable is that God longs to have a relationship with His estranged children — so much so that while we were yet sinners He sacrificed His son for us.

Unfortunately, it is difficult for us to comprehend such great love. We're used to earning love by our own efforts — to gaining approval by hard work, to pleasing people, by doing what they want. We presume that God is the same — that we must earn His love and compassion — that we must repay Him for the debt of sin that Jesus paid.

Had Jesus continued His parable, undoubtedly he would have described a son who obeyed and worked diligently — but as a son, not as a servant. He would have done so because he was loved and accepted not in order to earn love and acceptance. He would have made mistakes and fallen short of his father's expectations, from time to time, perhaps even incurring his father's displeasure and discipline. But do you think that for one minute the father would have contemplated sending his son back to feeding the pigs? How much less would our heavenly Father think of withdrawing his love from us and expelling us from His favor and grace!?

—Richard A. Wiedenheft
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**For those who don't know Him—
Jesus Christ and Him Crucified!
For those who do know Him—
the liberty of His Sabbath!**

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And now abide
FAITH,
HOPE, LOVE,
these three, but the
greatest of these is
LOVE.

Paul and the Sabbath

by Paul Holton

Christians and Jews alike acknowledge that Jesus upheld the law, including the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath, "deviating only in a few unimportant details."

But oddly enough, both groups also perceive the Apostle Paul to have departed from the Law and Sabbath observance, leading Christians to do likewise, and Jews to see a disparity between Jesus and Paul--which makes reconciliation of the New Testament difficult.

The basis of interpretation about Paul and the Sabbath centers in three texts: Romans 14:5, 6; Galatians 4:10, 11; Colossians 2:16, 17.

Reading from the New King James Version, here's a preliminary review of what these texts say:

Rom. 14:5, 6: "One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks."

Gal. 4:10, 11: "You observe days and months and seasons and years. I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain."

Col. 2:16, 17: "Therefore let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ."

The objective of this discussion is to show simply and conclusively what

the apostle CANNOT be saying in these texts.

It's important to point out that Paul lived prior to the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E. And he was Jewish. Today, centuries removed from the Jewish influence and administration of the New Testament church, Gentile Christians tend to think of observance mainly in terms of resting from work. Too often overlooked are the observances of sacrifices offered in the Temple--daily, weekly, monthly, seasonally, yearly--as well as the statutes of the Oral Law (rabbinic teachings recorded in the Talmud).

Because Colossians specifies Sabbaths, let's begin with this text. Paul uses the phrase "festival (Unleavened Bread, Weeks, Booths) or a new moon or sabbaths." Notice how this sequence follows the order of SEASON — MONTH — WEEK (see following comment on Galatians).

Even Sabbatarian Christians have a problem with this text. The popular argument that the Sabbaths mentioned refer to Festival Sabbaths and not weekly Sabbaths is immediately and twice flawed in that such a rendering would not 1) follow the established sequence of season, month, week. Plus 2) Festivals--which include Festival Sabbaths--are already stated. Any intended redundancy is doubtful.

Hosea 2:13 (11) also mentions Festivals, New Moons, and Sabbaths, plus there are six other texts in the OT where these are seen. The Sabbaths referred to are weekly. Let's look at them.

Reading from the New JPS (Jewish Publication Society) Translation:

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Ezek. 45:17: "But the burnt offerings, the meal offerings, and the libations on festivals, new moons, sabbaths"

Neh. 10:34(33): "for the regular burnt offering, (for those of the) sabbaths, new moons, festivals"

1 *Chron. 23:31*: "and whenever offerings were made to the Lord, according to the quantities prescribed for them, on sabbaths, new moons, and holidays"

2 *Chron. 2:3(4)*: for the morning and evening burnt offerings on sabbaths, new moons, and festivals"

2 *Chron. 8:13*: "he sacrificed according to the commandment of Moses for the sabbaths, the new moons, and the thrice-yearly festivals—the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Booths."

2 *Chron. 31:3*: "the burnt offerings for sabbaths, and new moons, and festivals"

Might the connection shown in these texts between burnt offerings and Sabbaths, New Moons, and Festivals, be material to Paul's reference in Colossians?

There seems to be general agreement that what Paul has in mind is common to all three: Festival, New Moon, Sabbath. Assuming that's true, accurate exegesis of this text becomes contingent upon knowing how the New Moon was observed in Paul's day. Before the Babylonian captivity, the New Moon, like the weekly Sabbath, was observed by both resting from work and offering sacrifices. But after the return from Babylon and the rebuilding of the Temple—and continuing through the time of Paul—**work was permitted on New Moon²**, but not on Sabbath.

So in Colossians 2:16, 17, it becomes apparent that Paul must be speaking about Festival, New Moon or Sabbath in terms other than ceasing work, which leaves the sacrifices and rabbinic teachings. The word "shadow" is used in v. 17. Compare Hebrews 10:1: "For the law, having a

shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same **sacrifices**, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect." (Emphases added.— Then in verse 10, "we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

Paul clearly perceives the sacrifices to have met their fulfillment (compare 1 Cor. 5:7)—and their requirements "nailed to the cross," but he nonetheless stresses the importance of the continued keeping of God's commandments (1 Cor. 7:19), which include the Sabbath.

We see in the context of other parallel Scriptural references that the Sabbaths mentioned in Colossians indeed refer to the weekly Sabbath, but that the issue cannot involve resting because resting didn't apply to New Moons, when work was permitted. Furthermore, because the word "shadow" is used elsewhere in connection with "sacrifices," this also helps to provide a better understanding of Colossians 2:16, 17.

Now let's consider Galatians. In Judaism, religion corresponds to nature. *Shabbat, Rosh Hodesh, Moed* (Sabbath, New Moon, Festival) may also be expressed as WEEK, MONTH, SEASON. Colossians uses the former and Galatians the latter. But the phrase "days and months and seasons" in Galatians **omits weeks**. Weeks are synonymous with Sabbaths; it's the same word for both in the Greek NT³. Paul makes no reference to it here.

Because weeks (or Sabbaths) are missing in Galatians 4:10, 11, it's inappropriate to use this text as an anti-Sabbath argument.

Romans 14:5, 6, is unlike the other two texts in that it lacks sequential context. There's no mention of Sabbath, New Moon, Festival -OR- week, month, season. In fact, this text mentions observing days along with not eating. By contrast, "it is an obliga-

tion resting upon every Israelite to eat three meals during the Sabbath-day (Shab. 117b). For these meals the best food that one is able to procure should be prepared. (ib. 118b)".⁴

The weekly Sabbath was considered a feast day—not a fast day—in the early Christian church. Mondays and Thursdays, however, were observed by Jews as fast days. (Compare the statement in Luke 18:12.) Modern Judaism has replaced the fasting ritual with additional prayers on these days.

Whatever Paul has in mind, because the remark in Romans about not eating is inconsistent with the quality cuisine enjoyed each Sabbath, it appears presumptuous to suppose this text is intended to discourage Sabbath observance.

In summary: **Colossians**—cannot be a discussion about ceasing work on the days mentioned, because business was permitted on the New Moon. **Galatians**—omits the word weeks (or Sabbaths). **Romans**—comments about not eating, which is the antithesis of Sabbath's three special meals.

Remember the controversy that developed when Paul didn't feel it was necessary for Gentiles to be circumcised? Consider how no similar controversy is recorded about Sabbath observance. (And the Sabbath is fundamentally more important than circumcision!) If Paul had promoted abandonment of Sabbath, it's probable it would have been passionately contended. The absence of such an account may indeed indicate his delightful regard.

If you refrain from trampling the sabbath, From pursuing your affairs on My holy day; If you call the sabbath "delight," The LORD's holy day "honored"; And if you

honor it and go not your ways Nor look to your affairs, not strike bargains—Then you can seek the favor of the LORD. I will set you astride the heights of the earth, And let you enjoy the heritage of your father Jacob—For the mouth of the LORD has spoken." Isaiah

58:13, 14

New Testament Christians, both Jewish and Gentile, worshipped together on Sabbath. It's difficult to imagine that Jesus intends His followers today to worship separately on different days. History shows that early Christians widely continued to observe (by resting on) the seventh-day "down even to the fifth century."⁵

Likewise, the New Testament records that Paul, as well as Jesus, attended the synagogue. There needn't be seen any disparity between Jesus and Paul in regard to the weekly Sabbath.

Scripture provides us with reason to believe, and room to grow. Let both Christians and Jews reconsider the Fourth Commandment and again uphold its instruction to "remember" (Ex. 20:8) and "observe" (Deut. 5:12).

NOTES

1. Abraham E. Millgram, *Sabbath the Day of Delight* (Philadelphia, 1944, p. 364).

2. Shabbath 24a; Hagigah 18a; 'Arakin 10b (Talmud references).

3. The Greek word for both Sabbath and week is *sabbaton*, whereas the word for day used in Rom. and Gal. is *hemera*. Unless combined with *sabbaton*, *hemera* is not translated Sabbath.

4. *Jewish Encyclopedia*, "Sabbath-Provisions," Vol. 10, p. 601 (Julius H. Greenstone).

5. *Ancient Christianity Exemplified*, Lyman Coleman, ch. 26, sec. 2, p. 527.

—The author shares a Jewish-Christian heritage and lives in southern Vermont.

God is not manifested by reason nor can He be reasoned out of existence.

—Brian Knowles in an article in
Twentieth Century Watch

Polish Group Seeks Help with Ministry

Unity of the Polish Brethren, a small, Sabbathkeeping group of about 50 members is seeking help to renovate a building they intend to use as a community ministry center in Wroclow.

Over a year ago, President Robert Kisiel wrote, "We noticed this place about three years ago and officials allowed us to take care of it. It was badly damaged inside. The state was not interested in the building after World War II. We prepared the hall for services. We are very satisfied with this building and want to stay there and make it a center. We want to help old, poor, alcoholics, drug addicts and keep rooms for them there. We dream about a library, a kitchen, kindergarten and school for children. We want to cultivate the grounds and have animals. There is enough space inside and outside. We know that we

will not find a better meeting place and there is no other solution for us here, but we have no money to rebuild it completely. We trust that God has believers who will react and help us to rebuild it."

According to Brother Kisiel, the building is located in a beautiful quite green area of their town, close by the river, where baptisms can be performed.

For a while Unity of the Polish Brethren (UPB) cooperated with the Sabbath Day Christian Church of Poland (affiliated with the SDB World Federation). They had common services, baptisms, lectures, and organizational meetings. However, UPB's teachings regarding speaking in tongues and other gifts of the spirit became controversial and cooperation was broken off.

President Kisiel writes that UPB



Members of Unity of the Polish Brethren gathered on the front steps of the building they hope can become theirs for ministry; Pastor Robert Kisiel (with Bible) and his wife are in the front row.

has had contacts with Brother Wasia from the Judaic-Christian Church of Proselytes (from the U.S.S.R.), and that they maintain correspondence with believers especially from the U.S.A. Their regular Sabbath services consist of preaching the Word, prayers, singing and praising God's glory, which is followed by an agape "meal of love." During this time they eat and fellowship and talk to people interested in the Word of God. They also have prayer meetings and special services connected with the Lord's Supper, annual feasts, and new moons in their building. They make an effort to help one another and to provide their neighbors with food, clothing, and money.

Dr. Kazamierz Jodkowski, a professor at the University of Lublin who has frequently translated TSS articles into Polish, reports that some members of UPB have accepted the annual Sabbaths and the sacred name teaching. While he is not sympathetic to their charismatic practices, Dr. Jodkowski believes they are a legiti-

mate ministry "very engaged in preaching the Gospel and all truths they accept as Biblical."

After a visit to Poland early in 1990, Ed Saunders, chairman of the Apostolic Church of God 7th Day in British Columbia, and his wife reported that they "found (Unity of Polish Brethren) to be very sincere believers who trace their history to a movement at the time of the Reformation. We saw the buildings which they wish to purchase, and we would like to help them purchase these buildings, but our mission commitments are too heavy at present to undertake any further projects. So we would recommend to anyone who wishes to assist these brethren that it would be a worthy cause."

With appropriate financial support, United of the Polish Brethren can take legal possession of the building from the state and begin developing it for ministry. Any brethren interested in helping with this project may write to the Unity of the Polish Brethren at skr. poczt. 655, 50-950 Wroclaw



Front of the building the Polish Brethren would like to convert to a ministry center in Wroclaw.

Church Growth

Through Networking

by Victor Novak

The key to church growth is reaching the reachable and winning the winnable; in other words; networking.

Many believers have a secret fear of the Great Commission; they are afraid that they will be asked to do something frightening — such as knocking on doors. So, they tend to set their own, less threatening, priorities for the local church. Fear of the unknown is understandable; but, it is unacceptable for the Christian to let that fear get the best of him. Through Christ, we are more than conquerors! We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us.

When fear of witnessing gets the best of believers, the Great Commission is played down, and the Church begins to stagnate; it begins to function in a maintenance mode. Sure, people may speak of the Great Commission, and of the need for church growth; but, little is done about it, few souls are won, and the local church has little, if any, impact on the community at large.

Jesus said, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then the end shall come" (Matthew 24:14). This is our commission, this is the marching order given us by the Messiah himself! Is the Great Commission a commandment? Yes it is! Is it a commandment addressed only to the pastoral ministry, or is it addressed to everyone? It is addressed to everyone. The Bible teaches the priesthood of all believers; it teaches that

every Christian is a minister, that every Christian has one or more spiritual gifts; and that these gifts are to be used to build up the Body of Christ and advance the work of the gospel. Every member of the Church of God is called to have an active part in this vital, life-saving ministry. Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

Is church growth really important; or, is it merely one aspect of the Church's ministry? Church growth is vital; it is central to the Great Commission. Church growth is the fruit of evangelism, and evangelism is a Divinely commissioned rescue operations. About 330,000 babies are born each day, and about 130,000 people die daily. Of the 130,000 who die each day, how many will go to a Christless grave? How many will go to Christless eternities? The world's population grows by about 200,000 souls per day. Who will take the good news of the kingdom to them? These are life and death questions! The gift of God is eternal life in the Messiah Jesus (Romans 6:23), but we are to take this good news to the world! To be truly a commandment keeper, each of us must be involved in this divinely commissioned rescue plan, each of us must be involved in evangelism and church growth.

Does this mean that everyone must knock on doors? No, not necessarily; although this old tried and true method still works well, as the explosive growth of the Jehovah's Witnesses

and the Mormons prove.

The truth is that the local church can experience solid growth through networking: reaching out to the circle of friends, relatives, acquaintances, and co-workers of church members. This method is far less threatening to believers than is door knocking, and it can be even more effective.

Before you begin networking, however, you must put into place a program to assimilate visitors. When you have done that, you will be ready to begin networking.

Networking is simple to put into practice. All that is needed is for the members of a local church to be motivated to invite their friends, acquaintances, and relatives to church. As they bring these guests to services, the guests are taken through the program of assimilating visitors which has already been put in place.

While the work of networking falls primarily on the shoulders of the laity, the pastor needs to provide "reasons" for his members to invite guests. Some ideas are special music, special speakers, special celebrations, or a special series of sermons. If, for instance, the pastor is going to preach a special series of sermons on Christian child-rearing, the church member has a "reason" to invite his friends who are raising children. If the pastor is going to preach a series on the book of Revelation, the church

member has a "reason" to invite many of his friends. After all, with the growing interest in astrology and the New Age Movement, we see that many unchurched people (as well as nominal Christians) are searching for answers about the future. On the other hand, some good special music would give church members a "reason" to invite their friends who love gospel music to attend services, thus allowing them to hear the Truth preached.

Pastors must also preach soul-winning sermons; they must preach the Word, they must preach the Truth. As Isaiah the Prophet has written: "Cry aloud and spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins" (Isaiah 58:1).

While networking is a key that can unlock your church's potential to grow, we must always remember that methods alone are not enough. We must dedicate ourselves to preach the Truth, to uphold the Truth, and to teach the Truth; ...and if we will uphold that Truth, and surrender ourselves to God's service, He will be able to use us as tools in His hands for the salvation of souls.

Reprinted from the *The Harvest Field Messenger*, Nov/Dec '89; at the time the author was a church growth specialist for the General Conference of the Church of God (Seventh Day)

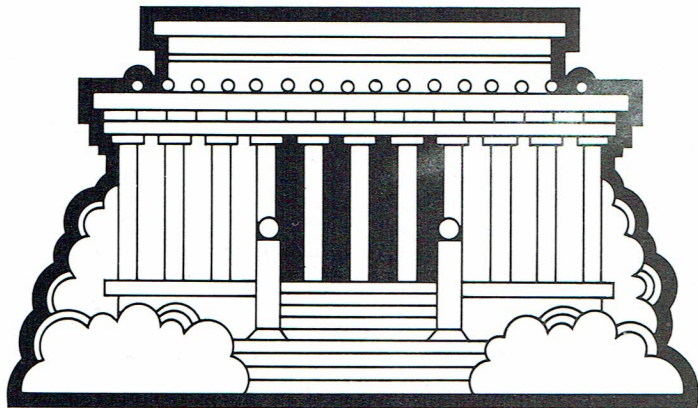
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Fighting for Separation of Church and State

by Mitchell A. Tyner

Editor's Note: The following article, although written from an Adventist perspective, speaks to an issue that affects all Sabbathkeepers. Since it is an issue on which there are varying views, we welcome your response. It should be noted that this article was written over two years ago, before several Supreme Court decisions which appear to make it easier for governments to infringe on religious freedoms.

A century ago A. T. Jones almost singlehandedly led our church into the arena of church-state relations. Motivated by the efforts of influential

members of the United States Congress to pass a law recognizing the sanctity of Sunday, Jones raised the consciousness of both the Congress and the church to the dangers in such efforts and to the necessity of protecting the rights of religious

minorities.

A century later, defending religious liberty has become an article of faith for most Adventists. In the intervening decades our church has come to occupy a position of influence and respect in this field totally disproportionate to our numbers.

But the Sunday-law threat that motivated Jones no longer exists. Although an independently published book currently being read and circulated by many Adventists contains highly sensationalized claims to the contrary, there is no current threat of a national Sunday law. Dozens of such laws on the state and local levels have been repealed in recent years. While support for such legislation could arise in a short time, no serious effort in that direction is currently visible.

So what then motivates Advent-

ists' continued involvement in church-state relations? Why do we continue to expend so much time and energy when Adventists are no longer jailed for working on Sunday? Four points come to mind.

First: Real problems still exist. Although American Adventists are not jailed for working on Sunday, they frequently lose their jobs for refusing to work on Sabbath. In some areas of the world our fellow believers still encounter real persecution. Unfortunately, those countries in which the church has had its highest rate of growth do not often have a correspondingly high regard for the rights of religious minorities.

And even in those nations with the best developed rule of law, problems remain. Fundamentalists, of whichever faith usually fail to see the necessity of tolerating viewpoints opposed to their own, while on the opposite extreme the secularist mind considers religion—and therefore religious freedom—to be largely irrelevant. Those of us who because of position, profession, wealth, education, or geographic accident find ourselves shielded from such pressures must never forget that we are indeed a minority within a minority.

Second: We protect our own rights most effectively by protecting the rights of others. If a government is free to burden the religious practices of another group, even one with which I strongly disagree, then that same government is free to burden my religious practices.

An example, the United States Constitution, as currently interpreted, requires that government must demonstrate a "compelling interest" in order to justify a burden on the free exercise of religion. It must show that such an action is virtually a ne-

cessity. That's a very high standard of proof. It has been used, for instance to prohibit states from requiring schoolchildren to say the Pledge of Allegiance if they have religious scruples against doing so. Although I disagree with those who believe that scripture forbids the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance, it is in my best interest to defend their interests. If that high standard of proof protects their religious practice, it protects mine as well.

Third: Religious freedom facilitates the spread of the gospel. The earliest Christians observed that "the blood of the martyrs is seed," by which they meant that persecution often results in even wider dissemination of believers, and that persecution cannot eradicate the church. Yet the proclamation of truth to large populations occurs most efficiently in an atmosphere of mutual respect between government and religion. So in order to move financial assets and denominational workers across borders, in order to use mass media, in order to be able to establish an efficient church organization, we will wish to establish such an atmosphere whenever possible.

The foregoing all center on the protection of our own rights—a pragmatic, realistic reason to support religious freedom. But in a sense, such a reason is like obeying God in order to escape punishment—religion as fire insurance. Such a motive is pragmatic and realistic, but incomplete. While serving God from fear is not illegitimate, the mature Christian serves Him from love. Obedience springs from an appreciation of who God is and of the rightness of His direction; from a desire to spend eternal life with Him, not just to avoid eternal death. In the same way there exists an even better reason to work for religious freedom.

Fourth: Religious freedom is biblically mandated. Perhaps you've never thought of the parable of the prodigal son as a religious liberty story, but consider the facts. The father in the parable represents God. The father in the story is right, and the son wrong. The father would have been completely justified in refusing the son's request for half the family fortune. Yet he allowed the son to waste his time and the family's money because he would not be satisfied with forced allegiance. He gave the son the right to be wrong, knowing that a satisfactory relationship would be established only when the son became willing. The message: God forces no one.

The life of Jesus demonstrated the point. Jesus taught, entreated, and reasoned. He took ethical and moral positions that spoke clearly to the societal problems of His day. But He never forced anyone to follow Him. Perhaps that is why He so frequently referred to us as His sheep, which voluntarily follow the shepherd, rather than His donkeys, which must be driven. The story of the Gospels establishes this: Every man, woman, boy, and girl has the right to relate to God according to the dictates of conscience—his or hers, not someone else's.

The defense of that principle not infrequently requires us to defend unpopular positions. A case in point is the matter of state-mandated prayer in public schools. Aren't we, as a religious body, on the wrong side when we oppose such exercises? No, we are simply defending equality and freedom of individual conscience, and opposing the coercion of minorities that would inevitably result.

Though the supporters of mandatory school prayer deny it, coercion is inherent in the concept. What kind of prayer shall it be—Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, or Muslim? Even if you assume the proper prayer to be

Christian (as do the majority of school prayer advocates), how do you go about it? Do you pray sitting, standing, or kneeling? With eyes closed, or open? Do you remain still, or raise your arms? Various Christian groups espouse one or more of these variants and insist on them to the exclusion of other ways. Which should the local school board choose?

Inevitably the choice would be that favored by the local majority, which might be Roman Catholic in Boston, Jewish in Brooklyn, Mormon in Utah, or Buddhist in Hawaii. And the child whose parents are of a different faith—or none at all—would be told, "If you don't wish to participate, you may leave the room." For a child of tender years to be forced to opt out of a practice being allowed by the school authorities, his or her teacher, and most of the other students constitutes coercion, and as such is antithetical to the gospel.

The Bible closes with an invitation: "Whosoever *will*, let him take the water of life *freely*" (Rev. 22:17). Not whosoever is coerced by friends, family, government, or church, but whosoever of his or her own free will decides to accept it. God went to great lengths to give us the freedom of choice. He could have denied us that power and avoided Calvary. But He knew that our allegiance must come from a willing heart, freely given. Our Lord went to great lengths to protect human freedom and to avoid any hint of coercion. Surely He expects us to follow His example.

Mitchell A. Tyner serves as an associate director and legal counsel in the SDA Department of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty. This article was part two of a three-part series, published in the November 10, 1988 issue of Adventist Review. © 1988 by Review and Herald Publishing Co., Reprinted by permission.

Benevolent Glances

by Joy Orth

Perhaps you, like me, have long believed that God's church is a spiritual organism comprised of saved people—people wholly committed to Christ—everywhere. Perhaps too, like me, you've found that knowledge hard to put into workable use in your life.

Before I arrived at the above mentioned belief, I had engaged for years in a search for THE CHURCH. Somewhere in this world, I thought, there must be an organized group that teaches and practices everything that Jesus lived and taught. The search was fruitless. If there is such an organization I didn't find it. So the doctrine of the spiritual church, a worldwide network of children of God, brought me considerable joy. The daughter of the King who presented me with this truth is gone now but she'll always be remembered by me with gratitude.

Did this knowledge change my life? Yes and no. While no longer actively searching for the physical "true church" I still feel a deep need to be affiliated with a group which believes at least most of the doctrines I consider to be true. That's right; we need others with whom to work and it's necessary that we basically agree. So where does that leave the other 99.9999% of Christendom? Let's see now, it's quite a quandry.

There is one quality, at least, that all saved persons will share: the singleminded commitment to serve Christ with body, soul and spirit. I asked myself if I've been guilty of spiritual bigotry. By recognizing the value of some of the beliefs and practices of other peoples or groups does that mean we are accepting their error? Tolerating evil? No. It simply means that we find ourselves able to look on others with "benevolent glances," seeing the truth and beauty that may be there. Possibly something we lack.

I first read of the practices of benevolent glancing in an article by a Catholic Sister, Mary Evelyn Jegen, SMD. Am I apt to abandon the truths I hold precious because I can appreciate the merit of something another professing Christian has to offer? Of course not.

Others, too numerous to mention have points from which we can learn: Charles Colson, James Dobson, H.M.S. Richards and many others. Do we need to fear being corrupted by the teaching of these people? The Bible says "we can do nothing against the truth" (II Cor. 13:8). It is simply that we must learn to cull and cherish truths wherever they are. To look beyond our bigotry—self-righteousness over the truths we hold—to look with benevolent eyes upon what another man (woman, child) may be offering us. God's children? I'll leave that to God to decide. Certainly I can know (judge) that in some ways they are wrong. Can they see some things in which I'm wrong? I'll not join them in error. I'll treasure the character of God as revealed in the moral law, but I'll find the fruits of living at least parts of that law in people of other faces, anywhere I can. Looking with quiet, appreciative attention—benevolent glances—can help me do just that.

I've identified the "enemy." It is not the church, not even organizations with which I radically disagree, certainly not the brothers and sisters of God's spiritual church whom I may not recognize.

No, the enemy is Satan in all his disguises and variations. Certainly he has infiltrated churchdom; all manner of evil has been perpetrated in the name of God. Satan is the father of lies (John 8:44). But God will give us discerning spirits if we so desire; give us the ability to look to the heart beyond the believed deception and find, often, another fallible human being who does believe, who does want to serve with a whole heart. Only by looking with "benevolent eyes" will we be able to see him. I'll be talking with you.

Resources Available From BSA

Books

<i>The Sabbath in the New Testament</i> by Samuele Bacchionchi (275 pp.)	\$10
<i>From Sabbath to Sunday</i> by Samuele Bacchionchi (372 pp.)	\$10
<i>Divine Rest for Human Restlessness</i> by Samuele Bacchionchi (320 pp.)	\$10
<i>The Law, the Gospel and the Sabbath</i> by Frank M. Walker (91 pp.)	\$3
<i>History of Sabbath and Sunday</i> by John Kiesz (64 pp.)	\$3
<i>God's Sabbath for Mankind</i> by Richard A. Wiedenheft (64 pp.)	60c

Directory of Sabbath-observing Groups

Sixth Edition, 1986, only	\$5
Supplement, 1989, only	\$2
Sixth Edition and Supplement	\$7
<i>Sabbath at Sommerhase</i> Story and Lesson Book (128 pp.)	\$7 ea.; \$5 ea. for 6 or more
Activity Packet	\$3 ea.; \$2 ea. for 6 or more
(for bulk orders, add 10% of total for postage and handling)	

Back Issues of *The Sabbath Sentinel* (when available) 10 for \$3; 30 for \$5

Booklets

<i>Why the Seventh-day Sabbath?</i> (12 pp.)	20c ea.; \$17/100
<i>Roman Catholic and Protestant Confessions About Sunday</i> (12 pp.)	20c; \$17/100
<i>The Bible Sabbath: Seventh Day or First Day?</i> (6 pp.)	14c ea.; \$12/100
<i>Bible Truth About "Salvation by Grace Through Faith"</i> by F. Walker (32 pp.)	35c ea.; \$6/20
<i>Questions for Seventh Dayists Answered</i> by T. Littrell (18 pp.)	Out of stock
<i>Has Sabbath Time Been Lost?</i> by Joseph M. McGuire (10 pp.)	Out of stock

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Bumper Stickers: "I Break for the Sabbath"	\$1 ea.
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Post cards with Sabbath message on one side, space for personal message and address on the other side	\$1/dozen

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BSA

NEWS FROM THE BSA

BSA Director Hospitalized in Accidental Shooting

John Bevis, BSA director and past president, was hospitalized during March due to an accidental shooting that occurred at the Phil Campbell (Alabama) campus of Northwest Community College, where he is a history instructor. According to a release issued by the school, a female student dropped her purse causing a gun in it to accidentally discharge. The bullet struck Brother Bevis in the arm as he walked down the hallway. He reports, "I am much better but will be in physical therapy for months to come I am told. I am thankful my life was spared."

Article Quotes BSA Friend

Dr. James Tabor, professor of religion at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, and a friend of BSA, was quoted in a recent *The Wall Street Journal* article headlined "Baptists turn to Judaism." The article was about a small movement of Christians who have become interested in studying the Torah and in adhering to the "seven Laws of Noah (the ark-builder) the essence of religion that God intended for the gentiles." Dr. Tabor was quoted as saying that the movement has historical precedent in gentile "Godfearers", who were dedicated monotheists who hung around the synagogues and followed many beliefs and practices of their Jewish neighbors." Referring to a small Baptist church in Athens, Tenn., which

has joined the movement, Dr. Tabor was quoted as saying, "the little congregation must seem 'very threatening' in a place like Athens where 'the average person has never seen a Jew in his life.'" Many fundamentalists in the area consider the congregation a cult.

Do You Read Seventh-day Periodicals?

If so, perhaps you can help the editors. We're always on the lookout for news items for "News from the Seventh-day Community" and "On the Legal Front," short quotations for "To Repeat," and outstanding articles for excerpting or reprinting. If, in your reading, you come across material that you'd like to see passed on to other Sabbathkeepers, please send it to the editor at 4150 S. M-52, Owosso, MI 48867 or to the department editor, Howard Mesick, at Rd 1 Box 299-1, Hartly, DE 19953-9430.

Reminder about the Discount

We offer BSA members a 20% discount on most tracts, books, booklets, etc. made available through the association. However, this discount applies *only to single copy prices*. It does not apply to quantity prices.

Looking for BSA Directors' Names and Addresses?

They are listed in the December, 1990, (1991 calendar) issue, which, we hope, is hanging on your wall.

NEWS

NEWS FROM THE SEVENTH DAY COMMUNITY

COG Changes Financial Model

Having requested comments upon its suggested financial reorganization (this column March '91), the Church of God (Seventh Day) headquartered in Denver has modified its proposal for this summer's General Conference vote. The final recommendation of the Financial Models Task Force presents a compromise between the more centralized system now in effect and the decentralized plan it presented late last year. Local congregations may still give most of the funds they collect to their districts and the GC, having ministers' salaries paid by the districts. They have the option, however, to send only 15% of tithes to the GC, plus all offerings made for GC programs and agencies. These monies shall be forwarded through each district. Under this option, churches shall negotiate with their districts a "fair share" to pay for district expenses. All other funds remain local to cover pastoral salaries and expenses and church needs. In both cases, the GC issues memberships, handles personnel insurance and retirement, and documents ministers. Districts provide payroll services.

COG Expands Here and Abroad

The General Conference of the Church of God (Seventh Day) has approved the establishment of an Eastern Canada sub-district. The Calgary, Alberta, office previously oversaw all of Canada. In India the COG has swelled to 3500 members in about 130 villages. The Indian congre-

gations have planted churches in Myanmar (Burma), Bangladesh, and Meghalaya (of which your dept. editor admits he has never heard). People in Haiti, Zimbabwe, Cameroun, and Tanzania, among others, have requested help. A missionary from Mexico currently serves a church in Belize, Central America.

Road Name for SDA Objector

Georgia Governor Joe Frank Harris recently designated a 5-mile stretch of road the Desmond T. Doss Medal of Honor Highway. Doss (see "A Different Drummer", TSS Oct. '90), an Adventist and a WWII medical corpsman, was the only conscientious objector to win America's highest military award. He lowered 75 wounded men down a cliff while under enemy fire and once gave up his place on a stretcher to another injured man. The governor called Doss someone who "was willing to die, but not to kill." Other SDA servicemen have served as Whitecoats, human guinea pigs for new vaccines and drugs. Currently 7000 Adventists serve the US armed forces, 46 as full-time chaplains.

Rock Fans See The Light

"Daybreak" and "Heaven's Own", SDA gospel and sacred music groups, got the call (from the Bermuda Government Department of Youth and Sport) to sing at the annual "Bermuda Jam" rock concert. Though surprised by the invitation, they brought hundreds of magazines and tracts which were quickly snapped up by the crowd. After four hours of listening to loud

music, the audience of milling teens and young adults grew "strangely silent" hearing the Adventists sing about God. The rock fans asked for more, some saying that the sacred music "really made a difference." Delbert Pearman, Bermuda Conference treasurer who sings with "Heaven's Own" said, "As we walk the streets of Bermuda today . . . the young people know who we are and greet us pleasantly. They come up and thank us for bringing our kind of music to the concert."

Woman Baptized 45 Years Late

When she was 10, Catherine Kelly Kerns wanted to be baptized in the creek next to the Snow Hill, Pennsylvania, German Seventh Day Baptist Church. Her father told her she was too young. She grew up in the church but eventually moved to St. Louis. When her husband died, she returned to the area, rejoining the church in spring, 1990. Finally on Sabbath, December 8, she was immersed in the frigid spring-fed waters of the dammed-up stream at Snow Hill, 45 years after she first requested baptism. Mrs. Kerns attends Hagerstown (Maryland) Junior College, but still doesn't "know what I want to be when I grow up."

Cloister Marks 3rd Century

On March 1 the Ephrata Cloister, a celibate community founded by Conrad Biessel, a German SDB "mystic," observed its 300th anniversary. (A mystic was, in part, one who thought that man can have a personal relationship with God, as most evangelicals now believe.) Daylong activities at the site now owned by the Common-

wealth of Pennsylvania culminated in the giving of gifts to Kurt and Heide Biessel of Eberbach, Germany. Kurt shares common ancestry with Conrad and works at baking, a trade which Conrad left to join the ministry. On April 20 Pastor Edward Rosenberry of Snow Hill German SDB Church officiated at the semi-annual historic Love Feast at the Cloister. All Christians are invited to worship at these Love Feasts (this column, Sep. '90). Communion follows the traditional barley soup meal.

Church Disincorporates

The Biblical Church of God, a small group of churches mainly in California that publishes a doctrinal letter called "Answers 91," has decided to dissolve its corporate structure. It has changed its name to the Congregation of God, though it seems unrelated to the southern-based General Assembly of the Congregations of God. The Biblical COG found corporate rules too restrictive. "We give away our right to govern our own worship," an open letter said.

New CGI Headquarters

Rapid growth is forcing The Church of God, International, out of its 7000 square foot office building in Tyler, Texas. Constructed in the early 80's the structure has been joined by three "temporary" buildings in back. A new headquarters on recently purchased property at Lake Palestine (this column, Sep. '90), will occupy about 10,000 square feet. The new edifice will house TV, radio, printing, and mail processing facilities, as well as offices. The property will also be a Feast of Tabernacles site.

COMMENT

NEWS AND COMMENTARY

In **Living Faith v. Commissioner**, the US Tax Court ruled that SDA vegetarian restaurants are subject to income tax. Although Living Faith set up the restaurants to promote Adventist dietary practices, it was also clearly profit-motivated, said the court. The group didn't show that its activities were needed to help SDAs practice their beliefs.

Iran's repression of Christians has increased, as has bigotry in other Muslim nations. Hossein Soodmand, an Iranian convert from Islam who was a pastor 24 years, was hanged December 3rd after 2 months of torture. He had previously been arrested several times and his church closed. He leaves behind a blind wife and 4 children. Several other Christians are missing and feared dead. The government, which has shut down churches, bookstores, and the Iranian Bible Society, must approve weddings and church outings.

Though Egypt does not usually persecute the 7% who are already Christians, converts from Islam have recently been harrassed and tortured by electric shock. Egypt's constitution mandates freedom of religion and freedom to change religions; but elements within the government bring new charges and rearrest converts as soon as courts free them. Radical socialist Muslims have recognized that Christianity is the enemy of dictatorship, partly because of Christianity's seminal role in the liberation of Eastern Europe. Despite (or due to) persecution, Christians keep evangelizing.

Police brutality against prolife dem-

onstrators (this column, Jan. '91) elicited a request from a member of the US Civil Rights Commission for a Justice Department investigation. The Justice Department, however, has apparently decided not to charge Los Angeles, San Diego, Pittsburgh, and West Hartford (Connecticut) police for using excessive force against Operation Rescue pickets. Claims of "not enough evidence" are refuted by groups who have filmed the violence. Funny that we didn't see **those** pictures on TV during the recent police brutality controversy.

Poland's new Sabbath law requires schools and employers to give people the day of the week off that their church observes. The overwhelmingly Roman Catholic country has thus accommodated 7th-dayers, as well as Muslims and Jews. Well-intended laws are sometimes not properly implemented, yet Poland has been more successful than other Eastern European countries in establishing human rights and a free economy.

The liberal **Progressive Policy Institute** says "Public programs cannot substitute for healthy families and should not try." It criticized liberals' failure to admit that two-parent families raise children best and conservatives' disregard of economic realities.

Thanks to those supplying clippings. Send articles with name and date of publication to Howard M. Mesick, RD1 Box 299-1, Hartly DE 19953-9430.

MAILBOX

LETTERS FROM OUR READERS

Replies to WCG Editorial

Re TSS Feb. 1991 editorial (Open letter to Joseph Tkach), I quote: "The Bible Sabbath Association believes that (God's word is not limited to any one organization)." The BSA as such has no beliefs. It is an association of 7th-day Sabbath observers, not a Church or denomination. I'm sure that the BSA does have at least one "associating church" that teaches that it alone has God's word. There may be several. We do well to say, as information, not as a teaching, that "people of the BSA generally believe that..." TSS's proper function is to report, not to dictate.

Ira Bond, Nortoncille, Kansas

I find no problem with your first commendation of Tkach--"faith in Jesus Christ as the only means of salvation." However, with the second commendation, I must take radical exception. The whole of salvation history teaches the uniqueness of God's position. He did not choose multiple Noahs and provide for multiple arks. He did not bring several "movements" from Egypt or call various Moseses. When the ultimate in the revelation of God appeared, He declared unequivocally, "I am the way, the truth, and the life, no man cometh to the Father but by me." While Babylon is a mother of harlots, with many daughters, there is only one woman clothed in white! When a called out people lose their vision of the uniqueness of the message they have been given, death sets in, apostasy results, and the call for plurality

in thinking and living dominates. The solution is to determine on the basis of the Word, the validity of their claims, and either reject or accept. An ecumenical approach is not the answer.

Wm. H. Grotheer, Editor
Watchman, What of the Night?

Dept. Editor's note: TSS's masthead, that box on the right of page three, explains that BSA is "dedicated to helping Sabbathkeepers of all persuasions learn about and from one another." While this statement doesn't imply acceptance of all 7th-day practices, no matter how bizarre, it does strongly suggest that BSA as an organization repudiates the idea of "one true church." We certainly have members, some very contentious, who see themselves as the only real believers. Yet if BSA as an entity did not think that Yahweh's children are in many groups, I'm not sure what reason we'd have to exist. Underlying all our work is the conviction that no one has all the truth, but that exposure to many views, helps us all to grow toward the truth. We appreciate our readers' warnings not to take doctrinal stands; but the statement in the February editorial is fundamental to our existence.

Bouquets from Overseas

Thank you very much for receiving your free TSS. As I am unemployed, I wonder if you could send me some old back numbers. My opinion is that this is a magazine I must not miss.

Reader from Norway

MAILBOX

LETTERS FROM OUR READERS

Recently I found an issue of TSS in the library of Newbold College, a SDA institution in the United Kingdom. As both a SDA and a theology student, I am very interested in materials concerning Sabbathkeeping Christians. Moreover I'd like to know which groups beside Adventists and SDBs keep the Sabbath in Great Britain and the Netherlands. I am a Dutch citizen.

Roy Kleinveld
c/o Newbold College
Brinfield Hall, Apt. 4
Brachnell, Berkshire
RG 12 5AN, ENGLAND
UK

"Work" Article Really Helps

Your February article (Sabbath--A Day for Hard Work) inspired me to keep on doing the work that I feel sure God wants me to do. Thank you so much for the calendar, it's so pretty. Hard to obtain one where Sabbaths are printed in red. God bless us all.

I was pleased to read Richard Wiedenheft's article. I have recently undergone a re-evaluation of my view on celebrating the Sabbath. We sometimes believe that by attending our local fellowship meeting, we have fulfilled our worship obligations. Unless we are teaching regularly, our preparation for this meeting consists of little more than dressing and driving to our destination. Participation is limited to singing hymns and exchanging pleasantries. We become receptacles which others are required to fill. I recently chose to accept the responsibility and freedom of Sab-

bath "keeping" by developing a thoughtful but flexible plan tailored to my need to stretch my character, grow in grace, and truthfully celebrate the Sabbath unfettered by society's demand that I follow the standard protocol to be considered a member of the church. Rooted in habit and fearful of offending brethren, I had become guilty of following an earthly organization instead of Christ. My Sabbaths once again provide refreshment to my spirit. I applaud your efforts to awaken the brethren to the need for personal accountability in Sabbathkeeping.

Letters from two Sisters

Found Wife through TSS

More singles should use your classified ads. I ran an advertisement during 1989 asking to correspond with single Sabbath-observing women. I received a response in January 1990 and was married in January 1991.

David Erman, Richardson, TX

Glad for Free Help

Hopefully God will bless me with a good job when I am released. I want to thank you for the 1989, 1990, and 1991 "love" subscriptions.

Michigan Prisoner

*We welcome letters, but must condense them to save space. Names can be withheld if requested. We generally don't print the names of writers expressing deep personal feelings, unless asked. Send letters to **The Sabbath Sentinel**, RD1 Box 222, Fairview, OK 73737.*

ADS

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

Young Folks History of the Sabbath. One-hour video with James Arrabito and children tracing the Sabbath from Eden to Eden. An educational tool to acquaint young and old with our wonderful heritage. \$30 including postage and handling. LLT Productions, Box 205, Angwin, CA 94508. (6)

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Tetragrammaton Pin. Wear and witness Yahweh and Yahshua's sacred name. Write for information. Send sae to Pins, Box 308, Spring Valley, OH 45370. (6)

When is the proper time to hold the Passover meal? Yahshua was impaled on the stake about 3 pm on the afternoon of the 14th. This was the same time as the Scriptures show that the Passover lamb was to be killed. Some groups teach that the Passover lamb should be killed at the beginning of the 14th day. This doctrine is contrary to Yahshua fulfilling the scriptures. Did the Messiah make an error as they teach? \$2 postage is welcome. Passover Book, Box 308 Spring Valley, OH 45370. (6)

After 6000 years, the question of "When the Sabbath of the Lord Begins" has been answered clearly and

fully. Please write to the International Sanctuary Research Center, Knoxville, IL 61448 for the booklet, authored by Dr. James D. Wang, Director of the Center. A donation of \$3.00 is suggested for the booklet. (4-6)

A Sabbathkeeping High School — for information write Spring Vale Academy, 4150 S. M-52, Dept. TSS, Owosso, MI 48867 or call (517) 725-2391. (5-7)

Sabbatarian Christians: The Bible says that *no one* committing sin is saved. Want proof? *Free* booklet, "Are You Really Saved?" Fighters for Truth, Box 975, Mill City, OR 97360. (4-6)

Does God love liturgy? Ask Family of God, 7119 Western Tr. San Antonio, TX 78244. (1-7)

Light Magazine opens your understanding to the meat of the Word. News events explained prophetically. No charge. YNCA, POB 50, Kingdom City, MO 65262. (11-10)

Classified ads are available at the rate of 30¢ per word (including each word and each group of numbers in the address). Copy for classified ads should be sent, along with payment, to The Bible Sabbath Association, Fairview, OK 73737. Deadline is the 15th of the month for the issue of the second subsequent month (e.g., June 15 for August issue. BSA reserves the right to reject any copy; publication does not necessarily imply endorsement by The Bible Sabbath Association. Information about display advertising is available on request.



Wrong Day, Right Way

To the Amish, a people of great piety but little education, the seventh day of the week is Sunday. That's what their German calendars say, and they would not trust anyone who told them differently.

Yet they sincerely - and I think blamelessly - keep the wrong day in a manner most of us would love to apply to our Sabbath routine. I've lived in a mixed Amish and English neighborhood (English is their term for outsiders) for eight years.

The central Delaware Amish are "house Amish." Unlike some of the plain folk in other settlements, they meet in homes rather than churches; and Amish generally do not pay their clergy to avoid the abuses of the big-church, paid-ministry system that they and the Mennonites abandoned centuries ago.

These Amish hold services every other week in groups of 100, more or less, judging from the number of buggies present. Church lasts several hours and has its share of long boring sermons, especially in the kids' view. There is, however, much singing in a droning manner, plenty of time for fellowship, and always tons of hearty, pot-luck food, prepared earlier.

Because the Amish live in settlements, none lacks a local church; and meeting in homes prevents any group from becoming too big and impersonal. Everyone really does know everyone else. Since there are no televisions

and cars, people spend much more time being neighborly. Neighbors and brethren are one and the same.

There is no rushing to church, fighting traffic, driving a long, weary way home. Rather the plain people listen to the gentle clop-clop of horses hooves as they converse quietly on short buggy rides. They arrive rested.

There is no paradise on Earth. The Amish life is hard - stifling for some - and the glitter of Babylon draws many of the youngsters away from the faith. Someone who leaves the Amish, even to become a conservative Mennonite, is shunned not only by brethren, but by neighbors as well.

Yet the Amish are happier than most, working hard and experiencing a weekly rest and spiritual fellowship of which we can only dream.

In staying physically separate from the world, they have abandoned the evangelism which is so important to us 7th-dayers. That is too high a price to pay, even for a sense of community in a society that has lost its warmth and brotherly kindness. Yet again the Amish are not without their purpose, often shaming the nominal or lax Christians around them to greater diligence for family and Christ.

They are an example of what Sabbath was meant to be, if a bit off on their reckoning - an imperfect but poignant foreshadowing of our rest and fellowship in the City of God.

—Howard M. Mesick

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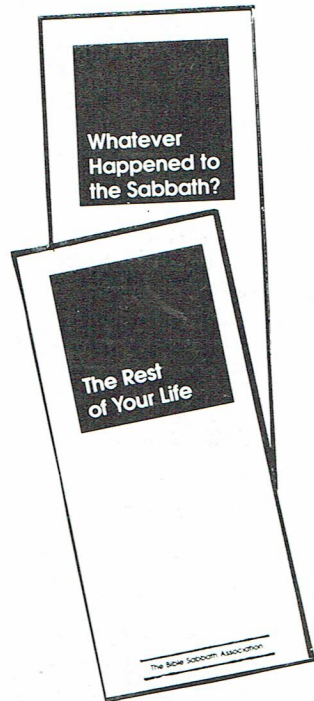
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