

The Sabbath Sentinel

November-December 2000

Report on
House Churches in

CHINA

BSA-The Bible Sabbath Association

"The Sabbath was made for man" - Jesus, the Christ

The Sabbath Sentinel

November—December 2000 Volume 52, No. 6 Issue 486

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Editor: Royce Mitchell, rmitchel@flash.net

Associate Editors: June Narber and Shirley Nickels

Copy Editor: Doby Petrovic

BSA's Board of Directors for 1999-2003:

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BSA Worldwide Web Site: www.biblesabbath.org
Correspondence and manuscript submissions: Address all inquiries to: Royce Mitchell, Jr., c/o *The Sabbath Sentinel*, 3316 Alberta Drive, Gillette, WY 82718. Phone: (307) 686-5191, E-mail: rmitchel@flash.net

International addresses:

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

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Religious Freedom

As this issue goes to press, many of our readership are getting ready to celebrate the autumn High Sabbaths spoken of in the Scriptures. We wish them a joyous Festival season! May we all be blessed with God's peace and freedom through the Sabbath days of our lives!

The Bible Sabbath Association (BSA) extends a brotherly greeting and warm welcome to the many new subscribers who have started receiving this magazine over the past few months. We hope that you have been finding the articles stimulating and interesting. Our mission at the BSA is to promote Jesus Christ and His Sabbath—as well as to facilitate cooperation and understanding among those who believe that we ought to keep God's laws—including His Sabbath.

TSS has quite a variety of articles this month. One of particular interest is about the house churches of China. When I read what Chinese Sabbatarians have to endure to keep God's Laws, I am astounded....

Many of us take for granted the freedom, which we have in our Western countries, to worship as we see fit. Yet, in the Far East communist country of China, meeting on the Sabbath is something that is done as secretly as possible. Imagine having to get up in the middle of the night in order to silently slip to some secret stream simply to be baptized!

Some should take special note regarding the article on house churches in China, that (as its writer Paul Wong has stated in the previous TSS issue) the True Jesus Church (TJC) is connected with the Pentecostal Movement. For those who find the "extraordinary" statements of such inclined things questionable or objectionable—be warned, in advance, that you will read of some amazing manifestations asserted to be happening with the TJC in China. With this caveat to our diverse readership, the BSA has chosen to publish the history and current circumstances of the Sabbatarians of China.

All of us stand before God in the faith that we have—and, as we believe that He has instructed us. We felt that the hardships and struggles of Chinese Sabbatarians were valuable to read about, and have (for the most part) chosen to leave the article[s] unedited. You will find that Paul Wong is a capable writer and quite easy to read nevertheless.

As I reflect on the hardships under the persecution of communism, which Chinese Sabbatarians survive and endure to practice their faith, I am very thankful for the ideas laid out and protected in the Bill of Rights of the United States Constitution. The founding fathers of America stated, in Article I of the Bill of Rights, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...."

Over the years, our God-given unalienable right—to decide for ourselves how we ought to worship God—has been trashed by those who think that they know better than we do.

Even more, the guarantee under the Bill of Rights has been perverted to mean that our children can not hear about our God, nor pray to Him on public school property. Why?

The murders of school children by other school children are continuing examples of the amoral behavior that results when, into a godless system of education, we turn our children loose and neglect teaching them about God and His Way ourselves.

By this "parental education," I don't simply mean that we need to instruct our children about the existence of God—although we certainly should be able to facilitate their understanding of that fact. What I mean, more specifically, is that we should be instructing our children about all that God gives to us and expects from us. We should be enlightening them about the value that God places on each of us, and how very precious we are in His sight.

If we could drive home the reason why God said, "You shall not murder," children would not see a reason to take a gun to school to shoot a teacher or classmate. Some people want to blame guns, violent games or movies for the problems with the violent children: However, the guilty culprit is often the one staring back at us from the reflection in our mirrors.

Children are like blank slates at birth; they are ready and eager to grow in knowledge. We as parents have the awesome privilege of impressing our Godly values upon those "blank slates"; such true education is beyond the State's purview. If we don't accept our parental responsibility, we can be certain of one thing: the "prince of the power of the air" will not be so negligent. He wants to teach our children that life is pointless and futile, that there are no conscionable boundaries—and that others were made to be used for deviant, amoral "indulgences"; such would even include murder.

It's true; if we don't drive home the beauty and glory of God's Law, we can be certain that our enemy will make his way glitter and shine in all the ways that appeal to young, inexperienced eyes. So, rather than let the influence of the evil one take over their minds, we should strive to imprint upon them the true Way of God. If we do so, we won't be reading about how one of our sweet little ones shot up a classroom full of children. We won't be blaming Hollywood for their evil movies. Instead, we will be blessed with wonderful children, and eventually, wonderful grandchildren.

Children are a blessing from God: so He says. With that blessing comes the powerful responsibility of parenting. The blessings only begin with our children. Someday, if we endure, we will see those blessings reflected in our children's children; and they will hopefully be able to grow in God's grace and knowledge in peace and freedom.

Royce E. Mitchell Jr.

The Vice-President's Message

by
Tom Justus



As I sat down before my computer to write this article, I closed my eyes, and in my mind went back some forty-five years ago. At that time, I was a much younger man with four small children. My wife, Thelma and I were active in the Church of Christ. As a young preacher in this church in Southern California, I firmly believed God's laws were no longer needed. In fact I taught that they were a burden.

At this point in my life my goal was to become wealthy. I worked from 7:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. on my regular job. There was also a second job, where I worked from 6:00 p.m. until midnight, running a press for an in-house plant. To add to this, I worked on some weekends. Soon enough, I was able to have a new house built, as well as start my own small printing plant.

Then, disaster struck. Thelma became quite ill with rheumatic fever. She was unable to get out of bed for several months. With four children, one of them being under one year old, we had to pay to have someone take care of our family. Since there was no health insurance at that time, it became necessary for me to file for bankruptcy—and, in what seemed like a flash, I lost everything that I had worked so hard to acquire.

The year was 1955, and it was at this particularly difficult time in my life that first I heard the preaching of Herbert Armstrong on the *World Tomorrow* radio broadcast. Not long after that, I learned that the Sabbath was still Holy, and that we should cease from our regular work on that day. ... There were many things that I did not yet understand, but it seemed clear that I could no longer work on the Sabbath: It was Holy to God. God's Sabbath rest was a great joy—for which there were no feelings of guilt associated with ceasing from work.

Now, after forty-five years of keeping the Sabbath (and being a Minister many of those years), I have remained thankful for this wonderful, blessed Holy Day. Throughout this time, I have made it a habit to think about what can be done that is pleasing to God on this Day. ... Such is simple and easy to develop, yet oddly enough, you can ask a hundred Sabbathkeepers how to observe the Sabbath, and you will likely be told—a hundred different dogmatic ways—of what you must do to observe this day.

Thankfully, I learned early that how I observed the Sabbath was just between me, myself, and God: It was not to be legislated by man. This was the problem with the Jewish traditions in Christ's time (Matthew 12)—and sadly, it is still a problem in the Sabbath keeping Churches. The fact is that the Bible does not define each detail of Sabbath observance.

We must always remember that the Sabbath was made for man (Mark 2:27). God knew that mankind would

not only need physical rest, but that there would also be required a means to perpetually remember that God was the Great Creator of all things and that He was Holy. In His infinite wisdom, God's solution was to set aside the seventh day.

The word Sabbath appears in our Bible 116 times, and the plural (Sabbaths) is there 33 times. Of the verses that include these, very few set forth the way to observe the Sabbath. Certain Scriptures are explicit about not doing your regular work on this day, but other Scriptures are not so clear on what we should do on the Sabbath.

What are we as individuals to do then? I feel this falls into the same category as what Paul states in Philipians 2:12, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." This Scriptural direction becomes an attitude of mind—a desire to draw close to God and please Him. Through the Scriptures and the guidance of His Holy Spirit, God has brought (and continues to bring) us to His Truth—including the Sabbath—yet, He allows us the freedom to make the decision as to how we shall keep it.

When our children were young, Friday night became family night. We all came together in the living room. Each child had their opportunity to talk. We had prayer together, we talked about God and Jesus, and Bible stories were read. As a family, we all really looked forward to the beginning of the Sabbath.

Thelma packed lunches on Friday for the Sabbath. Early Sabbath morning, we headed out for Pasadena (125 miles one way), to make it for services that afternoon. Along the way, we would stop at a park and have lunch together. For many years we did this, making it a happy trip for the children, and it was always an enjoyable day for all of us. Right up until today, the Sabbath day is one of the things that has helped us remain a very close family.

Remember, the Sabbath day is a day of rest and refreshing, not just for the body, but for the mind also. It is a period of putting out of your mind the past weeks work or the work that needs to be done the following week. It is not only a time of drawing closer to God, but also a time when the family can come together.

If the Sabbath seems to be a burden, we need to find out why—since it should be a happy time. We need to think of how great God is, and of all the blessings that He grants us. For me, Sabbath is a time when I tell God how grateful I am for my family, and how grateful I am for a day away from the hassle of this society.

When I observe the Sabbath each week, I think about what God said in Exodus 31:13 "... Verily my Sabbaths you shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that you may know that I am the Lord that does sanctify you." These words help me to be

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'Lost tribe' Members Seek a Return to Israel

By Allan Phillips in Jerusalem

MEMBERS of a people who claim descent from one of the lost tribes of Israel have asked for permission to immigrate from India to the Jewish state, 2,700 years after their tradition says that they were forced into exile. Israeli authorities fear that such an immigration would open the floodgates for millions of people around the world—anyone who might claim a perhaps mythical link to one of the 10 tribes which disappeared in the 8th century BC.

This particular request comes from the Shinlung people, a collection of tribes who live in the Indian states of Mizoram and Manipur, and across the border in Burma. They were converted to Christianity in the 19th century, but believe that they are descended from the lost tribe of Manasseh—one of 10 tribes taken into captivity by the Assyrians (in 722 BC) to what is now Iraq. Activists from the Shinlung people asked the Israeli parliament's immigration and absorption committee on Tuesday to allow 100 members a year to enter the country as immigrants and receive the subsidies and benefits that any Jewish person from the Diaspora would receive.

But, Rabbi Shmuel Halpert (an ultra-orthodox member of the committee) said, "If you bring one, think how many non-Jews will come." He stated that there were millions of people of Spanish origin—in Spain, Portugal and Latin America—who were descendants of Jews that were forced to convert to Christianity, but who kept up some Jewish practices in secret.

He said, "They have far more of a clear link to the Jewish people." The government's adviser on immigration, Anna Isakov, said no more Shinlung should be allowed into Israel until a thorough investigation was made of their

claims to be the lost tribe of Manasseh.

Estimates of the numbers of the Shinlung vary from 1.5 million to three million, but only 3,500 are understood to be practising the Jewish faith actively. The cause of the Shinlung is being promoted by Rabbi Eliahu Avihail. Thanks to his efforts, 450 members of the tribe have entered Israel over the past 10 years, but each has to go through a year-long conversion process, as their claims to being Jewish are not recognized.

Rabbi Avihail declared, "Their traditions have many similarities with that of the ancient Israelites. They carry out circumcision of male children on the eighth day after birth, using sharpened stones, as was done in Biblical times. They carry out sacrifices on altars." One song, which has apparently been handed down for millennia, contains the lines "We crossed the Red Sea on dry land. At night we crossed with a fire and by day a cloud." They also mark the Passover with an evening meal, as Jews all over the world do.

Rabbi Avihail says it is unfair to say that the Shinlung want to move to Israel for a better life. He said, "They are rich and well-educated in India. They have cars and servants and nice homes. They lack nothing, and when they come here they live as paupers."

Behind the government's reluctance to accept them lies a serious fear about the Jewish character of the state of Israel. More than half of new immigrants from the former Soviet Union last year were not Jewish according to rabbinical standards. There are many other "lost tribes" which might want to enter Israel, including the Pathans, who live in Afghanistan and Pakistan and number about 10 million.

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more thankful for this day.

Each person and family needs to plan for the Sabbath; don't "just let it happen." Since it is a Holy time, we need to view it as such. We should always approach it in a positive way, realizing that God knows what is best for us. Too many Sabbathkeepers approach this as a negative day—thinking of what they cannot do—rather than utilizing this wonderful positive opportunity inherent in coming under God's sign.

Many years ago, in Southern California, our Worldwide Church of God (Santa Barbara) had a three day outing—camping in a beautiful mounting setting. This was for all the families in the church. We ate together, played games, and on the Sabbath, had services and a sing-along.

During Sabbath, after services, we let the children play along the stream that flowed through the campground. There was one man who would not let his seven year old son play. He made the boy sit on a stump all afternoon and read the Bible. He felt this was teaching his son "not to do his own pleasure on the Sabbath day." (Isaiah 58:13).

... What do you think this young boy thought of God's Sabbath?

Today, many Christian Sabbathkeepers have their own set of "rules" about how to observe the Sabbath. This would be fine, if they would only not try to force others to keep it "their way." Interestingly enough, many of these same people also think that the way some Orthodox Jews observe Shabbat is non-Scriptural. You see, in the New York high-rise buildings where many Orthodox Jews live, all Sabbath day long, the elevators (having been pre-wired) continually stop and open on each floor, so that no elevator buttons will have to be pushed. (This is not criticizing Orthodox Jews, it is just one example of the extreme tenets that are taught.)

We must be careful of the dogma that we try to impose on each other. Let no man (or church) judge you in the observing of the Sabbath day Colossians 1:2:16). This is a Spiritual matter between you and God! We should be happy and rejoice in this day.

HOUSE CHURCHES IN CHINA

by
Paul Wong



*Among many Sabbatarian groups, there has been much interest and discussion about Sabbath-keepers in Communist China. The following is the **second** human-interest article from Paul Wong, a minister in the **True Jesus Church**, which is a Pentecostal Sabbatarian denomination. He gives us a brief glimpse of the lives and beliefs of the Sabbatarians of China....*

—Ed.

§

The house church originated in Jerusalem when Christianity was at its infancy. Right from apostolic times, the gospel has spread not only through preaching at public places, but also through meetings in believer's homes. After Pentecost, the disciples met in homes and broke bread **"from house to house"** (Acts 2:46). The apostle Paul wrote to the disciples in Rome to greet Priscilla and Aquila and also **"the church that is in their house"** (Romans. 16:3-5). House churches have been in operation throughout the centuries.

Generally there are two types of Christian churches in China. The first type consists of Chinese government approved institutionalized churches that are organized by the Three Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM). Normally these churches are also members of the China Christian Council (CCC). The second type consists of house churches that are also known as "underground churches." These house churches operate illegally, that is, without the sanction of the Chinese government.

Before the Communist takeover of China in 1949 there were three indigenous movements that worshiped in house churches. They are the True Jesus Church, the Jesus Family and the Little Flock. Of the three only the True Jesus Church worship on the Seventh Day Sabbath. After the takeover these churches continued their worship in house churches and operated in a clandestine manner in many parts of China.

Due to lack of demographic data it is impossible to have an accurate count of the Christians in China. Most researchers agree that there were less than 1 million Christians in China in 1949, and that serious church growth did not start until the 1970s. The Amity News Service from Hong Kong, that based their report presented to the Sixth National Christian Council in January 1997, gave an estimate of ten to fourteen million Protestant Christians. These figures do not include the Catholics or the Underground Church.

Researchers from the Little Flock claimed there were 30 million Christians meeting in house churches. Later estimates went higher still to 50 million and beyond. These

reports are amazing because during the past 50 years the Chinese Church has undergone severe persecution, probably comparable to the ones that were experienced by the Early Christians under the Roman tyranny. Estimates of Christians that were, imprisoned, tortured and killed for their faith go into the millions. In addition, virtually entire evangelical Chinese intelligentsia was destroyed or silenced. Therefore, by even the most conservative estimates, the Chinese church must be considered one of the most victorious in the world. During a fifty year period when the churches in the developed countries have not experienced any significant growth at all, and in many places have even decreased in size, the Chinese church has grown at least twenty, and perhaps fifty-fold.

It seems today that most of the ferment of growth in China is occurring, not in the Government sanctioned "Three-Self Patriotic Movement" (TSPM) churches, but in less organized and illegal house churches.

Characteristics of the House Churches of China

1. House churches are indigenous to China.

House Churches are not affiliated or associated with any organization and certainly have no formal ties with any Christian churches outside China. When the organized churches were destroyed in the Cultural Revolution, traditional forms of Christian ministry were also done away with. The dynamics of house churches, therefore, flow partly from their freedom from institutional and traditional bondage. Without any organizational structure, they are not bothered with committee meetings, agendas, reports and the power politics so common in large organized churches. They are also free from control by any central or national organization.

Without an institutional and hierarchic structure the house churches rely on the Holy Spirit for guidance. Just like the Holy Spirit gave directions to the early Christians the house churches also receive direct instructions from the Holy Spirit. While in Hong Kong I met a small group of young Christians from the True Jesus Church that had worshiped in house churches in China. All of them have wonderful testimonies of their experiences that I shall relate here. (For security and protective reasons only fictitious names are used in this article.)

2. House churches rely on the power of the Holy Spirit.

The True Jesus house churches operate through the gifts of the Holy Spirit. One of their members that I met in Hong Kong was Sister Su. She took out a black book and told me that was her Bible. It was filled with her own handwriting on every page. She said that after the Communist

Cultural Revolution Bibles were scarce and difficult to obtain. Their house church prayed and asked the Lord Jesus Christ to give them His word. She said there was an elderly deaconess who was over eighty years old. She had totally fasted (abstention from food and water) and prayed for nineteen days. She became filled with the Holy Spirit and would sit in the middle of the house church. Everyone would sit around her. Through the unction of the Holy Spirit this sister would recite Bible verses loudly and clearly, and every one would write down the words in their books. Every word is the word of God. At the time when there were few Bibles in China God had anointed a sister with a special charismatic gift of reciting Bible verses. God feeds His people with His word if they hunger for it.

The story, which Sister Su told me, of how her family got out of China, is truly amazing. While the family was praying for guidance God spoke to them through interpretation of tongues and gave them a message. God told them they have a mission to warn all the Christians in the free world that they have to prepare themselves for the coming Great Tribulation. The Christians in the western countries will experience the same kind of sufferings and persecutions that the Christians in China went through. For the purpose of warning Christians in the free world, God would let them go out of China. He had given them a date and told them to apply for an exit permit. They obeyed God and left China on the exact date. I am passing on God's warning message to you.

Another brother told me that the house churches meet in different homes so that the Communists could not detect their meeting places. One must remember that in China telephones were very scarce and very few homes had them. Because of wiretapping by the government it was not safe to talk about meetings on the phone. How do the Christians know where and when to attend the meetings? They had to completely rely on the Holy Spirit to direct them. The Christians would pray earnestly and asked God to show them the place to attend the meetings. It is incredible that the Holy Spirit would direct each believer to the same place of meeting at the same time.

Here is another astounding example of how the Holy Spirit protects the house churches. While the meeting was going on, the preacher said the Holy Spirit had just revealed to him that God was dealing with a person in the room. There were about fifty persons in attendance. Through the charismatic gift of knowledge, the preacher said there was a Communist spy in the congregation. He preached the love of Jesus and showed how God loves everyone and urged the person to confess his sins and accept Jesus as his Savior. One man stood up and confessed that he was a Communist spy who had disguised himself as a believer. Nobody knew his identity and intention. He confessed he came with the intention of spying on the house church and then report to the government and get the believers arrested. Since the Holy Spirit exposed him he became fearful of God and was convicted of his sins. Praise

God—he accepted Jesus as his Savior. Such incidents are often reported in the house churches in China. God really protects His Church.

3. The house churches abound with miracles, signs and wonders

I am told more than 80% of the believers in the TJC house churches in China believed in the Lord Jesus Christ because they have either seen or experienced some miracles, signs and wonders. How else can you convince atheists there is a One True God? ***“God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will.”*** (Hebrews. 2:4).

The main occupation of some thirty thousand people on Sun Island (off the China coast) is fishing. A fisherman's family had accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior through the preaching of an itinerant preacher from the TJC. At one time when the preacher arrived on the island one of their family members had died. During the funeral service the preacher comforted the bereaved family and while everyone was praying the dead man was resurrected. This news spread throughout the island and almost all the inhabitants believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. More than two hundred cases of people resurrected from the dead have been reported in the TJC in China.

In Hong Kong I met an atheist who became a believer on his first visit to the house church in China after he received healing. Tong worked as a machinist in a government factory. There was some problem with the machine and the electric saw had accidentally cut his right thigh. He was bleeding profusely so they rushed him to the hospital. Due to lack of proper medical treatment gangrene had already set in the wound. They told him that his thigh had to be amputated the following morning. Tong was highly distressed. Chen, a colleague of Tong's in the factory, came to visit him in the hospital. He told Tong that his leg might not need an amputation if he agreed to attend a meeting with him. That evening Chen came and placed Tong on the back of his bicycle. They came to a house that Tong could not recognize. Inside the house there were about 30 to 40 people. They placed Tong on a chair. When the meeting started Tong heard for the first time in his life everybody was praising Jesus and shouting “HalleluYah”. After singing praises they all knelt down and prayed in unison. Many were praying in the Spirit; some laid hands on him calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Within a few minutes Tong felt the pain in his right thigh was gone. The wound had healed instantly. He was released from the hospital without amputation. Brother Tong showed me the scar on his right thigh. He looked at me and smiled, “This is how I came to know Jesus. Praise God, HalleluYah!” He then picked up the phone and called long distance to a relative in Indonesia and witnessed to him about the Lord Jesus Christ.

4. The house churches receive God's protection

One of the difficulties that the house churches of the True Jesus Church in China encounters concerns water baptism that must be administered in the "Living Water", that is natural bodies of water that are created by God such as seas, lakes, rivers or springs. Man-made pools, cisterns and tanks are not used. In order to avoid detection by the Chinese Communist government water baptismal sites are often obscured, remote and hard to find. For security reasons the location cannot be divulged.

At one time over six hundred believers in a certain locality had to be baptized. The leaders had chosen a national holiday because they figured on that day the number of Communist military men on duty would be minimal. The baptism was to be administered at night so that the movements of the believers could be kept secret. They had chosen a river deep inside a mountainous area that could only be reached by walking through a ravine. There was only one way in and a one way out. Thank the Lord Jesus Christ over six hundred believers were baptized into Him without a hitch in the river that night. It was still dark when the believers started walking out of the baptismal site. When they almost came to the opening of the ravine the dawn was beginning to break. They saw something that perplexed them. There were many guns strewn all over the place, but no one was there. Everybody praised the Lord that the baptism was carried out successfully.

On the following day a house church brother overheard the conversation between two soldiers in the marketplace. One soldier was saying to the other: *"It was weird yesterday. We received information that many Christians were inside the ravine. We were setting an ambush for them. Suddenly an army of giants appeared. They had shiny white uniforms. We did not shoot them because the gunshots would let the Christians know we were there. The giants were big and strong and they were coming straight at us with their drawn swords. Every one of us got so scared that we left our weapons and ran for our dear lives. . . ."* God protects His Church. ***"The Angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them."*** (Psalms. 34:7) ***"Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them."*** (2 Kings 6:16) Praise the LORD.

My personal visit to a house church in China

I have heard and read a lot about the house churches in China and I had longed to visit at least one of them. I want to praise and thank our Lord Jesus Christ for making it possible for me to realize my desire in April 1987. At that time it was not easy to obtain a visa to enter China. In my application I had to write that my reason for visiting China was to study Chinese religious buildings. The Chinese Consulate in Houston checked out my occupation as an architect before approving my

application. I had to wait for more than six months for Brother Ling (fictitious name), a house church brother from China, to get to Hong Kong to act as my guide. I had to pay for all his expenses in Hong Kong and airfare back to the mainland. There was an agonizing three days flight delay because of bad weather conditions in China. Due to the sensitive nature of the house churches in China I have to skip all the details and go straight to the description of the house church that I visited.

The house church that I visited is situated in a village hidden deep inside a mountainous terrain. I had rented a van for a week and also had another house church brother to drive it. We came to the end of the paved road and could go no further because the paths were uneven and too steep. We had to walk uphill about five miles along winding paths before sighting the village. On entering the village Brother Ling pointed to a building on the crest of the hill and said, *"That is our Church."* As we approached the building I saw a prominently displayed signboard with the Chinese characters "True Jesus Church." I was excited and elated because I was told that church names could not be displayed in China. Brother Ling explained: "This is our village and we are separated from the outside world. We are amongst believers and friends. We can worship God the way He wants us to. The Communists don't bother us here." This is a house church in China that was unaffected by the Communists. My thought was that God would set up places of refuge for His people during the time of the Great Tribulation.

When it got dark I realized there was no electricity in the whole village. People were holding oil lamps on the streets. There was a Church service that evening. The chapel was on the attic floor because I could see the sloped ceilings and exposed roof trusses. As in most TJC chapels the platform was very small. Only two people could stand there. A kerosene lamp was placed on the pulpit for Bible reading. I was told there was only one Bible in the whole church. That was considered very fortunate. Most house churches do not even have a single Bible. The minister introduced me to the congregation that I estimated to be close to 150 persons. The service format was very similar to the ones that I had been used to in the outside world. After the hymn singing and prayer I was invited to speak. After my short address of encouragement the local preacher also spoke. After the sermons they had a closing prayer, then everyone stood up to sing the choruses. The service that lasted about one and half hours ended with a benediction given by the elder of the church. HalleluYah, Amen! May God bless you.

Paul Wong is a minister of the True Jesus Church (Houston), a Pentecostal Sabbatarian denomination. His ministry ARK International also serves as an architectural service company in Houston, Texas. The ARK Forum on the Internet is international and nondenominational. Web Site: http://www.geocities.com/ark_pw E-mail: ark@pdq.net. Readers wishing to contact ARK International may write to: P.O. Box 19707, Houston, Texas, 77224-9707, U.S.A.

Christian Gets Another Shot in Suit Against Car Dealership

By

Susan Borreson

Courtesy of

Texas Lawyer—January 31, 2000

Following is an article from Texas Lawyer's January 31, 2000 edition. Since the article contains a ruling that affects the religious freedom of a citizen, we felt it important to share this information with all Sabbath keepers. Our thanks go to Texas Lawyer for publishing the details of this case.

Texas' 14th Court of Appeals in a novel ruling found in favor of a woman who claimed a Houston car dealership refused to hire her after she objected to materials used in a training seminar, saying they conflicted with her religious beliefs. Peter Costea, who represents Bobbie Grant, says The Rutherford Institute, a conservative civil liberties group that paid the court costs of the sexual harassment suit filed by Paula Jones against President Bill Clinton, paid for the expenses of the appeal. The 14th Court sided with Grant, reversing a no-evidence summary judgment in favor of Houston car dealership Joe Myers Toyota.

On Jan. 20, a three-judge panel in **Bobbie Grant v. Joe Myers Toyota Inc.** remanded Grant's suit to 127th District Judge Sharolyn Wood, saying that Grant presented more than a scintilla of proof that the dealership refused to accommodate her religious beliefs.

The ruling is the first time a Texas court has addressed substantive issues of religious discrimination under the Texas Commission on Human Rights Act, says Costea.

"The most important point the court made in this appeal, in the opinion, was really courts have limited jurisdiction to examine, review or determine what somebody's religious views are," says Costea, a Houston solo.

"The Supreme Court has emphasized this over and over again, and I was pleased a Texas court of appeals has emphasized that point as well," he says.

Grant, an evangelical Christian, was an office worker who had no sales training or experience when she applied for a clerical job at the dealership in 1997. No clerical positions were available, and dealership employees told her there were openings in sales, but training or experience was mandatory, the court wrote.

Grant alleges the employees gave her the name of Automotive Sales Training Inc., a group that provides a course taught by Dick Smouse, an ordained minister, who required students to read Og Mandino's book "The Greatest Salesman in the World," the opinion noted.

The book is a fictional tale set in New Testament times and centers around the birth of Christ. The book recounts how a Middle Eastern merchant becomes wealthy after being given 10 scrolls containing the secrets of life and the principles of how to become a good salesman. The merchant meets Paul, an apostle of Christ, who incorporates the teachings of the scrolls and becomes "the greatest salesman in the world," according to the opinion.

After reading the first scroll, Grant objected to certain passages, which Smouse required the students to memorize and

recite aloud three times a day, the opinion said.

For instance, Grant says a passage that stated "the only difference between those who have failed and those who have succeeded lies in the difference of their habits. Good habits are the key to all success," did not reconcile with her Christian beliefs.

After telling the instructor that she could not read the rest of the book because it offended her religious beliefs, he dismissed her from the class, Grant alleges.

Grant alleges she then told a dealership official that she was a Christian and that the book "was against everything she believed as a Christian."

According to the opinion, Grant contends the official told her she would have to read the book if she wanted to take the class and must take the class to be hired. Grant did not return to the class and was not hired.

Jill Arntz, of Houston's Burck, Lapidus & Lanza, who represents the dealership, says dealership officials never required Grant to attend the seminar, but simply told her she would not be hired without sales training or experience. "No one is," Arntz says.

The dealership had no business relationship with Smouse, and did not control or have any say-so in the contents of the course, Arntz says. The dealership, which does not provide on-the-job training, simply agreed to pass out Smouse's brochures, she says.

"He [Smouse] has a similar relationship with several dealerships in this city besides us, and so there's no evidence tying that requirement to read that book to my company," Arntz says.

Arntz also alleges that Grant never articulated how the course offended her religious beliefs, saying only that she was a Christian. Grant made no effort to get other training or experience, Arntz maintains.

"It wasn't our obligation to find her training," Arntz says. "But the court is basically telling us, you need to find her someplace where she can get training that comports with her religious beliefs. But we wouldn't do that for anybody." Arntz says her client has not yet decided whether to appeal.

But Chief Justice Paul Murphy, writing for the majority, said Grant provided more than a scintilla of evidence that Grant held a bona fide religious belief, as required by law.

In a concurring opinion, Justice Harvey Hudson said the court is not required to determine whether a plaintiff's religious beliefs fit within the accepted parameters of a particular religious faith. Rather, the test is whether the religious belief is truly a deeply held conviction, he wrote.

"New age' training programs have been highly controversial for more than a decade," Hudson wrote. "It should have been anticipated that at least some persons would not be able to participate in the [t]raining class due to bona fide religious convictions, yet no reasonable accommodation was planned, made or offered by Joe Myers Toyota."

An Introduction to Divine Law

by
Max Mader

Few people will doubt but that we live in a lawless and violent age where moral standards, once held sacred, are being abandoned with impunity. Drug abuse, sex abuse, violence, murder and rape plague our cities. Most will agree that lawlessness is a growing problem. People are becoming ungovernable. The rising cost of crime (for which it is the taxpayer ultimately footing the bill) is causing concern throughout society, and there seems little that the civil authorities can do to curb it.

An even more sinister trend is developing in the churches of Christianity. Here too we see lawlessness being preached and practiced. Millions of ministers and their congregations are now turning their backs on the law of God, and condoning behavior which, only a few decades ago, would have been openly condemned from the pulpit. This is a serious trend—for the church is supposed to teach true law and order. Yet, today we see prominent church leaders openly attacking the commandments of the Almighty God.

On TV, in the press, on radio, and now on the Internet, self appointed prophets, prelates, and priests openly admit to breaking divine commandments—held sacred since time began. Shocking sexual misbehavior is now openly flaunted as so-called “new light,” “new wine,” and “liberating faith” mock the sacred commandments of the **Almighty God!** Millions of Christians believe that they are **ABOVE THE LAW!**, misunderstanding the Apostle Paul’s words when he wrote, **“Ye are not under the law, but under grace”** (Romans 6:14).

Strange as it may seem, this upsurge in immorality and lawlessness is not new; it has all happened before. What is new is the worldwide publicity lawless churchmen receive. Never a week passes but another **“spiritual outlaw”** is seen in the pulpit or on TV decrying the commandments of God. “The church” is in the grip of a **“lawless depression”** where blatant sin is rampant.

Speaking many centuries ago, the Almighty said this about the disregard for His law by professed spiritual leaders: (Isaiah 24:5-6) **“The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate...”**

Zephaniah 3:4, **“Her prophets are light and treacherous persons: her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law.”**

Does it really matter how people behave in private or public? Do God’s laws still exist and are we expected to obey them—or, are **Yahweh’s** commandments obsolete, fulfilled and done away with by the death of His Son **Jesus Christ?**

Millions of Christians would answer: **“Yes, we are no longer under the law. We’re under grace! The law has been done away with and we are no longer expected to keep it.”**

Is this the case? Does being **“under grace” cancel the need to obey the Ten Commandments?** This is a vital question, the answers to which will determine how we behave and how we will stand on the fast approaching **Day of Judgement**. For, make no mistake, according to Jesus Christ we will have to answer for all our actions—yes, for every idle word—on that awesome day. Ignorance will be no excuse.

Matthew 12:36, **“But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.”**

Revelation 20:12, **“And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.”**

Are Moral Laws Necessary?

Yes, moral laws are necessary. No society can function properly without rules and regulations. Without laws people soon revert to the level of brute beasts and the **“law of the jungle.”** Human society needs rules and regulations. Where there is no law there is anarchy. This fact applies on the road, in the air, the home, the classroom, the office and the factory. To avoid chaos, law and order is absolutely essential.

Yes, moral laws are absolutely necessary! Every Christian, indeed every believer of all the major religions on earth, will agree that society must have moral standards if we are to avoid anarchy. But who defines moral standards? Certainly we humans cannot. The answer is that God alone has the authority to define moral standards—because He created us.

Where does God define moral standards? The answer is that He defines moral standards in His law. In other words, **Yahweh’s law, as recorded in the Bible, identifies the moral standards He wants humanity to live by.** If Yahweh’s law didn’t exist no one would know right from wrong. The Bible says, in 1 John 3:4, **“Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.”**

Romans 7:7 **“What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.”**

Our Schoolmaster

The law of the Most High also points the sinner to the Savior. It is a **schoolmaster** guiding the guilty one to the **Savior**: His blood alone can cleanse the sinner. In other words the law not only identifies sin—that is its initial purpose—but it also points to the remedy: **Yeshua the Messiah**. He alone can cleanse and empower a sinner not to sin again.

To use another analogy, we might say that Yahweh's law is like a **signpost on the highway of life**, pointing the way to the Kingdom of Heaven. Once you know what sin is, repent of it, and receive God's power to keep from sinning, you no longer need to constantly look at the signpost to tell you the way—because you now know the way.

Knowledge of the way, however, does not do away with the signpost. It is still there should you or others begin to sin again and get lost. Removing signposts and attacking schoolmasters are serious crimes against society. The Bible says, in Galatians 3:24, ***“Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.”***

Are Yahweh's Laws Imperfect?

The simple answer is No. Every one of the Eternal's Commandments is perfect. All are Spiritual, pure, good and complete. They are all faultless. It is unthinkable that the Most High even wrote one imperfect instruction. To harbor such an idea is unworthy of a true believer.

Here are a few texts about Yahweh's perfect Commandments which we would do well to study and remember—because blindly rejecting or attacking the law of the Almighty is courting disaster—to say the least.

Romans 7:12, ***“Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good ...”*** verse 14, ***“For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.”***

Psalms 19:7-8, ***“The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.”***

Yahweh's Laws are Multilevel

This means that the high Spiritual realities (to which God's laws point) are prefigured by low-level shadows, illustrations, models, and dramas. At their high-level, every single Commandment of God is eternal. (More about this point later.)

At their low level, some Divine laws are limited to periods of time called “dispensations.” When a dispensation expires, then, in **some** cases, the physical low-level illustration, the blueprint or model of the **high level principle**, which the law is teaching, is no longer needed: Just as a signpost is no longer needed when you have arrived

at your destination. In a similar way, a schoolmaster is no longer needed when you have learned the lessons he was teaching. But the “spiritual requirement,” the “high-level principle” to which the shadow points, continues to be in force throughout eternity. ...

Allow me to explain this twin-level concept with the help of an example....

Animal Sacrifices

The book of Leviticus contains scores of passages about various sacrifices and offerings made in the worship of the Most High, such as the following: sin offerings, meat offerings, peace and thank offerings, trespass offerings, meal offerings and wave offerings. Every transgression,

however small, called for some kind of offering to gain forgiveness. All those rituals—and they were obviously expensive and time consuming—pointed to the enormous price the Almighty paid for the redemption of mankind. Those sacrifices of lambs, rams, he-goats, bulls, pigeons, etc., all pointed to **our Savior's death**.

Since His death, we believers do not need to sacrifice animals to gain forgiveness from sin. The death of **Jesus Christ** cleanses the repentant believer from sin. This means that the low-level requirement of the law (the blueprint, the model, the illustration—the part which involved the slaughter of farm animals) is no longer necessary: it has passed and is over. It has fulfilled its instructional purpose in pointing the sinner to the Lamb of God and in teaching him/her how costly (to Yahweh and His Son) the ongoing process of redemption really was.

The high-level requirements of the sacrificial laws, however, are eternal. They still apply. When a person sins in this day and age he/she must still come to the Almighty with the blood of a sacrifice, for ***“without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin”*** (Hebrews 9:22).

This mandatory parameter (that without blood there can be no forgiveness) is the very reason why those commandments concerning animal sacrifices were given: They were given to teach mankind that the penalty for sin is death; and that forgiveness is only possible if the sinner comes to God with the blood of a substitute. Prior to the Savior's death, literal lambs, goats and bulls were slaughtered to prefigure our real substitute—Jesus Christ. Those practical lessons mean that if a repentant sinner wants forgiveness from sin, he/she must approach the Almighty with the blood of a sacrifice.

In this dispensation (since the Savior's death) all that we need to obtain forgiveness—by faith—is the blood of the **Lamb of God**. In other words, before you can find forgiveness from sin, you need faith in the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus Christ. **You cannot receive remission (forgiveness, pardon, acquittal, absolution) for your sins in any other way!** This is what the Bible



teaches.

In short, the high-level reality of the law on sacrifices (that we need faith in the blood of the Messiah before forgiveness is possible) still exists. It hasn't been done away with. Hebrews 9:22, "**And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.**"

Colossians 1:14, "**In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.**"

Psalms 111:7-8, "**The works of his hands are verity and judgment; all his commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness.**"

New covenant believers **do not** need to sacrifice a lamb, a goat or a bull to gain forgiveness. All that they are required to do is to repent, confess their sins to God, and ask forgiveness in His Son's name. The blood of **Yeshua the Messiah** (the only born-again Son of God) cleanses us from all sin. Therefore, the law, which states that forgiveness is not possible without blood, still stands: it is still in force; it is eternal, and it applies today. If you want forgiveness now, you must still go to God the Father with faith in the blood of the substitute—Jesus Christ the Son.

Yahweh's Laws Are Eternal?

At their high-level, every one of Yahweh's laws is eternal: they will all last for all time. Unlike the animal sacrifice laws, **many** of Yahweh's Commandments still apply on both levels. For example, the law forbidding adultery still applies on the physical as well as the spiritual level. Physically sleeping with another man's wife is as wrong today as it was before the Savior died. On a still higher plane that same law forbids "**mental adultery**," and higher still, "**adulterating truth with error**." These acts are high-level adultery.

Other examples of laws that still apply on both levels are these:

Thou shalt not bow down to graven images.

Low-level: Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image....

High-level: Do not worship man-made systems, pagan gods, or alien ideologies—because they are as lifeless as stone or metal images and cannot help in times of real trouble.

Honor thy father and thy mother.

Low-level: Honor your earthly father and mother....

High-level: Honor your Spiritual, Heavenly Father Yahweh, and His Church, the mother of all believers.

Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

Low-level: Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. In it thou shalt not do any work....

High-level: Remember Yahweh's Sabbath is His everlasting covenant sign of sanctification, rest and true prosperity. It prefigures the Rest of God in the ages to come.

Psalms 111:7-8, "**The works of his hands are verity and judgment; all his commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness.**"

Matthew 5:17-19, "**Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.**"

When the Almighty writes His perfect law on the minds of His followers, it will be for all time, never to be forgotten.

Hebrews 8:10, "**For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people ...**"

Conclusion

Lawlessness is a growing problem throughout the world: That is so in the streets, in the classrooms, in the work-rooms, and alas, even in the churches! Many Christians incorrectly suppose that Paul taught that Yahweh's law is obsolete and that the Ten Commandments are a thing of the past. This monumental misconception is currently resulting in lawlessness throughout society. The church is no longer leading the fight against **lawlessness**; thus, it has become lawless itself—and violence is sweeping society.

The truth is clear: Yahweh's laws are necessary; they identify sin; they convert the soul! They act like signposts or schoolmasters pointing the way to the Savior Jesus Christ (Yeshua the Messiah). Without God's law no one would know right from wrong.

Yahweh's laws are all perfect—every one of them. Moreover, His laws are **eternal**. The high-level principles they embody will be inscribed on the true believers' mind and will be instinctively obeyed throughout eternity.

This is what the Scriptures teach. That is what every true Prophet, Priest, and Apostle of God taught in days gone by. So, let no one foolishly attack the law of the Almighty—the Commandments He wrote with His own hand.

The thought of the fast approaching Day of Judgement is not something to be lightly dismissed. I end here by quoting two of the wisest men who ever lived:

Solomon said, (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14) "**Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.**"

Jesus said, (Matthew 19:17) "**... if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.**"

Religious Freedom in the Workplace

by

Alan Reinach, J. D.

Joe Lieberman has one of the toughest jobs in America. For the next 10 weeks, Senator Lieberman will engage in a nonstop, 18-hour daily grind, campaigning in the highest stakes election in the nation. Yet each week, before sunset on Friday, Joe will take what all of us could use—a 24-hour break—a Sabbath rest. He will emerge from this rest revived and ready for the challenges of a new week.

Joe is lucky. He has a boss who knew he wanted Sabbath off, and agreed to “hire” him anyway. Thousands of Americans are not so lucky. When they tell a prospective employer they can’t work on the Sabbath, they don’t get hired.

Thousands more lose their jobs each year when schedules are changed to require them to work in conflict with their faith. These problems arise in every industry, especially those with around-the-clock cycles. They involve people of many different religions, Jews, Christians, Muslims, and others.

The suffering caused by such discrimination can be immense. Nydia Gomez was fired from her housekeeping supervisor job at a national hotel chain when, after 15 years, her schedule was changed to require Sabbath work. When prospective employers heard why she was fired, they shunned her.

Jeff Phillips worked in the warehouse of a multinational paper company for 18 years. For no apparent reason, he was put on the night shift and required to work on Friday nights, in violation of his faith. When he requested religious accommodation, they fired him; when prospective employers found out why he was fired, no one would touch him. Out of work for almost three years, at age 47, he had to move back in with his parents.

One of the most difficult employers is the United Postal Service. Mail carriers have lodged literally hundreds of complaints of religious discrimination. Even though the Postal Service has carriers who cover for those out sick and on vacation, they refuse to use these carriers: in other words, they refuse to give religious accommodation to Sabbath observers.

Thousands of Americans violate their faith each week by working on a day believed to be sacred. They bear a load of intense guilt, assuming that they have no other choice. From a legal standpoint, they are mostly right.

Many employers are committed to nondiscrimination, and do provide religious accommodation. Their actions prove that it can be done easily, and in most cases, without the company incurring substantial costs. Yet, it seems that this is not the route which most decide to take.

Many more employers are either indifferent or hostile to employees’ requests for religious accommodation. They respond to such requests as an affront to their authority, and summarily dismiss these workers. In many such cases, they have rejected accommodation proposals that could be implemented easily.

A coalition of faith communities, led by the American Jewish Committee’s Richard Foltin, have drafted the **Workplace Religious Freedom Act (WRFA)**, now introduced in both the U. S. House of Representatives and Senate. The bill would clarify confusion in the current law—whether a “*reasonable accommodation*” must actually remove the conflict with a worker’s faith.

Many companies believe that removing the conflict with a worker’s faith is only “reasonable” some of the time. This still leaves workers with a choice between their religion and their job. The bill would clarify that a “reasonable” accommodation must completely remove the conflict between a worker’s faith and the job requirement; yet, the requirement is not absolute.

Under the current law, a company is excused from accommodations that result in “undue hardship”; even trivial costs now constitute such hardships. The new bill would redefine “undue hardship” to mean “significant difficulty or expense.” This would insure that accommodations are required unless the cost to the company really is too high.

Contrary to objections from the business community, this would actually save employers money—since it clarifies a “gray area” that discourages speedy resolution of these problems, which often lead to higher cost litigation. By cutting down on the number of discrimination claims, the reduction in litigation costs will more than offset any marginal expenses of providing accommodation. Moreover, companies stand to reap a windfall in productivity gains from those appreciative employees who are now frequently demoralized.

America rightly celebrates the breaking down of barriers, and the spirit of inclusiveness symbolized by Senator Lieberman’s nomination. But this symbolic gesture needs to be supported with concrete action. Both parties need to act now to pass the WRFA and insure that Americans of all faiths will not be forced to choose between their religion and their job.

Alan Reinach is an attorney and minister who serves as President of the Seventh-day Adventist Church State Council for the Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. His email address is:

ajreinach@email.msn.com

Christian Worship & The Sabbath Day

by Wayne L. Atchison

Christian belief is manifested in what is practiced: Christianity is not just philosophy or speaking spiritual words, it is also the practice and life-style of good deeds which demonstrate our commitment to Jesus Christ. Being a Christian is a Way of life, based upon what is believed to be true. In order to not be misled into believing errors, it is important for Christians to always question what is taught to them.

The Scriptures remind Christians that it is not for them to make judgments about another Christian's Spiritual status: these questions and judgments are to be left to God. However, even without judging the person, it can be agreed that God tells Christians not to practice errors, nor to be unrighteousness (I John 3:7) and to be holy just as God is holy (I Peter 1:15). Therefore, what may be said is that a Christian is not supposed to practice errors, and should therefore earnestly avoid being deceived into doing so.

The Most Widely Accepted Error In Modern Christianity

Doing a little historical research into the Christian Sabbath Day, it becomes obvious that a major deception has been promulgated for multitudinous generations: For over 1,600 years the majority of the Christian world has been taught, and has accepted without question, that Sunday is the Christian's day of worship. Yet the Scriptures, historical records, and direct quotations from every major Christian denomination, all agree that this commonly taught belief is a blatant error. The truth is that God's Sabbath day has always been the seventh day of the week—which today is called) Saturday.

This deception regarding Sunday (as being the Christian day of worship) has been passed down since the fourth century A.D.; most people who believe this lie have themselves not questioned it by comparing the history and doctrines of their church with the teachings of the Bible. As both the Scriptures and historical records show, there have always been large numbers of Christians, found throughout the world, who worship Jesus Christ on the Sabbath day, rather than on Sunday. Even the great Protestant missionary movement of the last two centuries discovered previously established and thriving villages of Sabbathkeeping Christian congregations in China, Asia, South America, Africa, and the Pacific Islands.

The practice of going to worship services on the day of the Sun (Sunday) instead of on the Sabbath day is a deception that was **literally** forced upon the congregations which were within the Roman Empire. At that time, congregations outside of the Roman Empire were not influenced so directly, and continued to worship on the Sabbath day.

Even within the Roman Empire, the practice of Sunday worship was not part of the earliest Christian communities—including the Gentile communities. As historical records show, this deception was not made into a "Christian tenet of faith" until over 300 years (between ten to fifteen generations) after Jesus Christ's resurrection. Though some scholars claim to have found a reference a congregation holding worship Services on Sunday as early as 115 A.D, it is still admitted that prior to that all Christians everywhere, including Gentile Christians, worshipped Jesus Christ on the Sabbath Day.

The Sunday worship deception was proclaimed as "truth" by a decree of the Bishop at Rome (circa 325-333 A.D.). The record of historical documents shows that his purpose was to separate Christianity from the Jewish religion as far as possible. At the same time, it was decreed to keep the festival of Easter (Ishtar) instead of the Passover.

Most older encyclopedias describe these events under the title "Quarto-Deciman Controversy." These (and other) decrees by the Bishop of Rome were the cause of the first major (international) split in the church, whereby most of the other Bishops (there were 14 other major Bishops) refused to go along with the decrees. Their reply (also preserved in historical documents) declared that the Roman Bishop's mixing of Christianity with Sun-god worship was unacceptable; as a result, most outside Christian congregations (which were beyond the threat of Roman armies) rejected the Roman Bishop's decree, and continued as before—to worship Jesus Christ on Saturday.

Upon "all" other believers, the practice of going to church on Sunday was forced by decree—punishable by death or slavery—and was enforced by the Roman government's army and judicial system. Many Christians within the Roman domain lost their lives, or were forced into slavery as the Roman armies imposed the Sunday worship decrees. Later, this practice included forcing all businesses to close and everyone (whole villages) to attend Sunday worship in "mass."

Further, businesses were forced to be open on Saturdays, and work schedules had to include working on Saturdays. By the Crusades of the Middle Ages, the practice of Papal coercion included converting new members into the fold of the Roman Catholic Church by forcing them, at sword point, for confessions (oaths) and to submit to water baptism. This was often how mass groups of entire villages were "converted."

As a result of such severe enforcement, over the course of many years, the western culture was transformed to regard Saturday as the opposite of God's Sabbath day, believing it to be a day of business and labor. Likewise, Sunday is regarded as the opposite of the day of Baal—the day of the Sun-god; it is believed to be the day to worship Jesus Christ. Since our schools primarily teach history from the Roman point of view, people never hear about the much larger portion of Christians that remained faithful to the practice of worshipping God on Saturday—His memorial day of creation.

Even having these facts behind the Sunday worship deception (since circa 330 A.D.), this deception has been taught as being the unquestioned “sacred” truth in most Christian denominations. Most Christians today, are completely unaware that there could possibly be any problem associated with worshipping God on the day of the sun, rather than on His Sabbath day. After all, one day honors the god of the sun, while the other day is the memorial of the creation by the Creator God.

Creation Week

In the book of Genesis, verses 1-25, the earth has been prepared for five days for God's creation of mankind. On the sixth day God created the first man and woman:

“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth” (v. 26). “And God saw every thing that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day” (v. 31).

On the seventh day God created the Sabbath Day:

“Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all his work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made” (Gen. 2:1-3).

There are two Hebrew words in verses 2 and 3 that should be understood before proceeding, because they specify how the Creator God views the Sabbath Day:

The Hebrew word ‘quadash’:

The word translated as “sanctified”, comes from the Hebrew word ‘quadash’, and means “to be hallowed, holy, to consecrate, prepare, dedicate,” and is a denominative verb. The verb ‘quadash’, being a denominative verb, connotes the state of that which belongs in the realm of what is sacred. Thus, a “sanctified” object is distinct from the “common or profane” object. Therefore, the seventh day is distinct and set apart as being holy time, in the realm of what is sacred, in contrast to the other six days. It is a separated time, from the rest of time.

The Hebrew word ‘barak’:

The word translated as “blessed”, is the Hebrew word ‘barak’, and means “to kneel, praise or salute.” The word’s major function is to confer honor, worship, high esteem and acknowledgment. For God to bless, as in Genesis 2:2-3, means that God has taken notice of the seventh day, and has saluted it with His favorable esteem.

From these verses in Genesis it is apparent that the seventh day of the week has a very special significance to God, since He gave it a special blessing and then set it apart as being sacred time. From the very beginning of creation, God intended Adam and Eve, and all their children, to keep the seventh day as holy time. This is the one day a week specifically reserved to worship God and remember His creation.

Also of note is that God's sanctification of the Sabbath day had nothing whatsoever to do with the law of Moses, the Ten Commandments, or sacrificing animals. In contrast, it is important to note that the first day of the week (Sunday) was not sanctified by God anywhere in the Scriptures—neither in the old or the new covenant. Sunday worship was never introduced by God—but was, and is, a creation and institution of men.

The Seven Day Weekly Cycle

It is not by accident that all world governments use exactly the same seven day weekly cycle. Even though each culture has a different name for each day, different names for the months, or different numbers for the year, they all use the same seven day cycle, called a week. Of course men have invented other “weeks”, but the seven day week has always prevailed throughout history.

Upon checking the common Gregorian calendar [with the exception of some calendars which are numbered for banking or accounting purposes], you will find, looking from left to right, that Sunday is the first day of the week, followed in order by [second] Monday, [third] Tuesday, [fourth] Wednesday, [fifth] Thursday, [sixth] Friday, and [seventh] Saturday. Saturday is the seventh day of the week in our modern world wide culture. If you have an opportunity to check older calendars, dating back as far as you can find, even from other countries, you will find the same relationship between Saturday and Sunday. Sunday is the first day of the week, and Saturday is the seventh day of the week. Further, it has been established that this seven-day weekly cycle has never been disrupted or broken, even

back to the time of Adam and Eve.

Through archaeological digs, many ancient manuscripts have been found dating back to events occurring in each of the centuries between today and 600 B.C. These manuscripts provide recorded dates of astronomical events, dates of monumental battles, dates of weddings, dates of business transactions, and some even include references to the Sabbath day. In every instance where a date is specified, and also provides reference to a Sabbath day, that date and the Sabbath day match exactly to demonstrate that the seven day weekly cycle has never been disrupted. Calendar systems have come and gone, but the seven day weekly cycle has perpetuated throughout history.

One example is found in "The Talmud the Steinsaltz Edition", Volume XIV Tractate Ta'anit Part II (© 1995 by Israel Institute for Talmudic Publications and Milta Books), pages 205-206. It says the following regarding the destruction of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem—built by Solomon, and destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar's army:

Page 205: "Then late on the day of the ninth, close to nightfall, they set the Temple on fire, and it continued to burn the entire next day, on the tenth."

Page 206: "When the Temple was destroyed for the first time at the hands of Nebuzaradan [captain of the guard], that day was the ninth of Av, and it was the day following Shabbat, and it was the year following the Sabbatical Year.... And similarly when the Temple was destroyed a second time at the hands of Titus, the destruction occurred on the very same day, on the ninth of Av."

In II Kings 25:8-9 we learn that this event occurred in the nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar. These ancient records provide a clear example of reporting both a known event, the destruction of Solomon's temple, and that event happening relative to a Sabbath day. The ending of the Sabbath day would be at sunset, as the Babylonian / Jerusalem calendar's day ends at sunset. For this same reason, the ninth of Av would start at sunset, extending for about 24 hours after that, through Sunday afternoon, to the next sunset. Therefore the first temple was destroyed starting on Saturday evening, in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar.

By other analysis, Nebuchadnezzar's nineteenth year can be calculated to be in 587 B.C. In that year the ninth of Av unmistakably began at sunset on Saturday night. Thus, two historical records reference a weekday Sabbath, relative to a month, day, and specific year. The fact that they match demonstrates that the identification of which week day is the Sabbath day has not been corrupted for the last 2500 years, between now and 587 B.C.

As a related historical note, the second temple was likewise destroyed by the Roman army under Titus in 70 A.D. In 70 A.D., the ninth of Av also began at sunset on Saturday night, just as with the first destruction.

Since God, after the exodus circa 1450 B.C., used the laying out of the manna to demonstrate which days were work days and which day was the Sabbath day of rest, it is certain that the weekly seven-day cycle has not been interrupted throughout most of the Bible's historical time frame, from Moses to Jesus.

The History Of Sun Worship

Attending worship services on Sunday did not begin with the advent of Christianity. Sunday, the first day of the week, has been a religious day of worship throughout history. The activity of worshipping 'god' on Sunday was intentionally used to distinguish those who worshipped "the Mother and Child", in contrast to those who worshipped the "Invisible Creator God" on the seventh day of the week. This alternative worship system began over 4300 years ago with Nimrod (Osiris), a man who rebelled against God, and was deified by Semiramis (Isis), his sister and wife.

Shortly after the great flood, during the life time of Shem, a son of Noah, Nimrod and his sister, named Semiramis, founded the great religions which have survived to this day. Nimrod rebelled against God, and set himself up as a 'local' deity. He married his sister, Semiramis, and together they started an underground (hidden or occult) priesthood with worship ceremonies. This was done in rebellion to the priesthood sanctified by God, represented through Noah and Shem.

Shem, upon hearing of Nimrod's activities, and after repeated warnings, gathered an army and sought to capture him. Nimrod fled, but was eventually captured and executed for his rebellion. The execution included the cutting of Nimrod into many pieces, whereby each piece was sent to a specific region of the world as proof of his death and as a warning against following his rebellious religion.

Semiramis, upon hearing of the death of her husband, sought after and gathered each piece of Nimrod and reconstructed his body. She then had sexual intercourse with the body of Nimrod (more probably with her high priest) who allegedly became alive again long enough for her to conceive. Later, Semiramis bore "Nimrod's only Son" called "Ninus (Horus), the savior", and claimed that she supernaturally conceived the child. As proof that the child was the reincarnated Nimrod, only taking the form of a child, Semiramis claimed that she witnessed an evergreen branch grow out of a dead log in one night, the same night the child was born. (This is the yule-log as it is known today.)

Later, Semiramis was deified into the title of "The Mother, The Queen of Heaven", and the child-savior was portrayed as a child-god held in her arms. The first "mother and child" nativity story was told over 4300 years ago, 2300 years before Jesus the Messiah was born.

Incidentally, Ninus is listed as being the second Pharaoh of Egypt, and started the practice of believing that the

King is also 'a god', and sun-day-worship. The concept of a god-king has prevailed many times throughout history, and is still held to be true in Japan, believing that the emperor is a god.

Today, archaeologists find remains of temples and idols all over the world having the same common religious theme, the theme of the "Mother and Child" being worshipped as the "Queen of Heaven, and her child-god the 'savior'".

For instance, in Babylon they worshipped a "Goddess Mother" and a "Son of God", who was represented as an infant in his mother's arms. In Egypt the Mother and Child was worshipped under the names of Isis and Osiris. In India they still are worshipped as Isi and Iswara. In Asia they were worshipped as Cybele and Deoius. In Rome as Fortuna and Jupiter-puer, or Jupiter the boy. Other eastern nations worshipped Rhea, the "Great Goddess Mother". In Greece as Ceres the "Great Mother" with "the babe" at her breast, or else as Irene the "Goddess of Peace" and the boy Plutus. Even in the Orient the Jesuit missionaries were astonished to find the counterpart of the Madonna and her child being worshipped as Shing Moo, the Holy Mother and the "child in her arms". (Reference: "The Two Babylons", by Rev. Alexander Hislop. 1916. Loizeaux Brothers, Inc. Reference: "Babylon Mystery Religion", by Ralph Woodrow. 1981.)

It is well known by Bible scholars and archaeologists that the gods and goddesses of the ancient civilizations prior to Christianity were all started by one and the same false religion. In these false religious alternatives, "The Lord" was represented by the sun, and therefore those who worship "The Lord," worship him on his day, or sun-day.

Israel And Sun-Day Worship

By studying the Bible Christians know that one of the main false religions that the Israelites followed, when they departed away from God's way, was to practice the worship of Baal. Baalism is known to be a religion of sun worship. The word translated as "Baal" is from the ancient Hebrew language and means "The Lord." When ancient Israel worshipped Baal they kept Sunday, because Baal-worship was sun-worship, and sun-day is the day when the sun is worshipped. As sun-day was Baal's day, or the Lord's day, the ancient Israelites began to keep the first day of the week as their day of worship, in contrast to God's worship day, the seventh day of the week.

The contrast between Sunday worship and Sabbath-Day worship is not confusing. It is historical and straight forward. Readers of the Bible do not become confused when they read the scriptures and find that the Israelites rebelled against God by worshipping "The Lord." They do not become confused by thinking that "The Lord" (Baal) is just another name for "The invisible Creator God," and then begin to wonder why God is all upset about a simple name variation? The worship of Baal, whether you call it the worship of "The Lord" or call it something else, is distinguished from the worship of the true Creator God by what they did, not the words they used to describe their deity. What they did was worship "their god" on sun-day, called it worshipping "The Lord," and thereby denied the Creator God who decreed that He is to be worshipped on His Creation-Day, Saturday.

History Of The Authority Of The Pope

As part of the doctrine of the sun-worship religion, they believed that the king, or emperor, was the direct representative of the sun god on earth. As such, the king was more than just mortal, but was king-god, or god-king. He was the only one in whom the highest level of the spirit of the sun-deity resided. This 'spirit' was not the Holy Spirit of God, but the 'spirit' of the sun. This is why the pagan emperors were worshipped as god. The religious center representing sun-worship was transferred from Babylon, after the death of Belshazzar, to the city of Pergamos in Asia Minor, about 575 B.C.

In Revelation 2:13, Pergamos is called "Satan's seat," and was the headquarters of the original Babylonian sun-worship until Imperial Rome began to take over the leadership around 50 B.C. This began in the person of Julius Caesar when, as emperor, he had supreme civil and religious rule.

"... When Julius Caesar, who had previously been elected Pontifex Maximus, became also, as Emperor, the supreme civil ruler of the Romans, then as head of Roman religion, all the powers and functions of the true legitimate Babylonian Pontiff were supremely vested in him, and he found himself in a position to assert these powers" (From Sabbath to Sunday, Samuele Bacchiocchi, 1977, p. 241).

In the year 46 B.C., Julius Caesar was made "Praefectus Morum" (supervisor of morals); that is, he was made head of Roman religions. In the year 44 B.C., he was made dictator for life (see Langer's Encyclopedia of World History).

It is essential to understand that from that time forward, the Emperor of Rome was also head of the state religions. This did not change until Emperor Justinian, who reigned from 527-565 A.D., submitted to the head of the Roman Catholic Church. From that time forward, the Pope was acknowledged by the Emperor to be Pontifex Maximus over all religion. The Pope now had supreme authority in religious matters and the Emperors had control of the political power of the state.

(... End of first half...Part Two next issue!)



Sabbathkeeping in the Heart of Africa

The Mission of “the Quiet Man from Kenya”

by Jeff Henderson

When you first meet Joseph Kimani your initial impression is that of a quiet, reserved, and even shy individual. Yet, the normal demeanor of this gentleman from Nakuru (a city 100 miles NW from Nairobi (the capital of Kenya) comes with one major exception: Get him on the topic of God and Spiritual matters and he is truly transformed!

Joseph becomes more than talkative. He burns with great zeal to expound on the Scriptures and of the Way of Salvation through Jesus Christ. This is just one of the simple reasons why the Nakuru congregation of the Apostolic Church of God 7th Day call him “Pastor Joseph.”

This last August, my wife Cathy and I had the pleasure of receiving the gifted Pastor Joseph as a house guest during his recent swing through the San Francisco Bay area. We were glad to help him in this part of a nationwide visit to Sabbatarian groups and churches. His goal has been to raise money for an expanded evangelical outreach in his native Kenya and surrounding African countries.... Such a noble mission is easier said than done.

Equatorial Kenya is quite different than our back door. Though a Commonwealth of Nations member, life in this former British crown colony and protectorate is a lot simpler, and yet far from easy. Even in the cities, most people walk, and the rest either ride bicycles or use public transportation. Kenya has 42 tribes, each with its own dialect—and the average daily wage is 80¢ (one U.S. Dollar is equivalent to 75¢ Kenyan money; ... so, a loaf of bread costs about 20¢).

Agriculture has been the backbone of Kenya. Yet, a lack of rain in the last few years has brought a turn for the worse. According to an Associated Press report: “Struck by the worst drought in 30 years, reservoirs around East Africa’s largest city are drying up. The low water levels mean hydroelectric dams can generate little electricity; the most precious commodity in Nairobi is water.”

Again according to AP, as recently as August, to children that were wearing red and navy blue school uniforms, the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture handed out bowls of boiled corn kernels mixed with beans—supplying them with possibly their only meal for the day. (Corn and beans had usually been one of the staple crops of Kenya.)

What had been just a railway outpost in 1900, the municipality of Nakuru is now an urban development (situated in the Rift Valley, squeezed between Menengai Crater and Lake Nakuru) which has grown quickly since Kenya’s Independence (1963). Yet, here, the only thing certain is change. The United Nations Centre for Human

Settlements (Habitat) website states, “Known for its flamingos and once dubbed ‘the cleanest town in East-Africa,’ Nakuru, Kenya, has lost a lot of its past glory. Particular environmental concerns are caused by the inter relation between Lake Nakuru National Park and the residential and industrial expansion. This situation is aggravated by the fallen standards of urban services, requiring a new approach towards urban planning and management....”

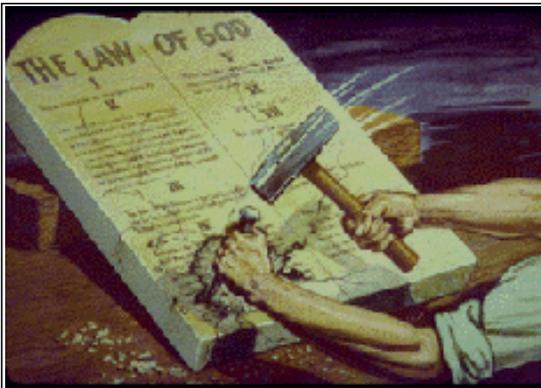
While impressed with the radical contrast in living standards between Kenya and the United States, Pastor Joseph nevertheless noticed another stark difference between the two countries. As he put it—in a very telling statement, “The American people need true repentance and a return to God. Simply put, the U.S. needs salvation.” But, the “quiet” man from Kenya did not stop there: “The spiritual condition of Sabbath churches is lukewarm and needs revival.”

In the view of Pastor Joseph, American Sabbath keepers need to preach the full gospel of Jesus—not simply the “gospel” of the Sabbath and particular pet doctrines. His strong words need our echo: “The true gospel is what Jesus did on the cross and the power we receive when we believe. The whole gospel—salvation from sin, the power of the Holy Spirit, keeping the commandments by the power of the Spirit, and living a Christian life—these are the real spiritual issues.”

Kenya is unique, with 3% of the Christian population embracing Sabbath observance. Still, according to Pastor Joseph, there is much work to be done. “We must work while it is day, for night comes when we will not be able to preach the gospel—and we don’t know when that time will come.”



Kenya’s Apostolic Church of God 7th Day



Grafted-In Ministries maintains a substantial reference website at "<http://www.GraftedIn2Torah.org/>" that documents the move away from the teachings of the Apostles and the original followers of THE WAY and their keeping of the Biblical Sabbaths to the present apostasy of Sunday-keeping. Berean study e-mail forums are maintained on the internet and can be joined by sending an email to "Feasts-subscribe@egroups.com" AND/OR FOR WOMEN ONLY "MessianicSisterhood-subscribe@egroups.com".

Grafted-In Ministries also holds a Beit Midrash on the third weekend of the month in Port Angeles, WA. which starts just before Sunset Friday and lasts til approximately 3PM Sunday. Family-style accommodations are provided during this weekend retreat while we earnestly contend for the "faith given the saints". All participants are required to lay down their denominational baggage and rely on Scripture for answers without a denominational interpretation. Gifts and tax-exempt donations are gratefully accepted but there is no cost for the weekend. Info: (360) 452-5699 or "www.GraftedIn2Torah.org/Wrshp/BMIntro.htm" Withdraw from the world for one full weekend feasting on HIS Word in the fellowship of other believers and see if your life isn't changed forever! email: "GraftedIn@saintmail.net".

How can one preach the gospel to a hungry and thirsty people? Our faith needs to work in Kenya. (James 2:14— ***"What doth it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but have not works? can that faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister be naked and in lack of daily food, 16 and one of you say unto them, Go in peace, be ye warmed and filled; and yet ye give them not the things needful to the body; what doth it profit? 17 Even so faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself. 18 Yea, a man will say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith apart from thy works, and I by my works will show thee my faith."***)

Monies raised by this U.S. trip will be used to help Saints in need, to purchase a van with which to generate funds for spreading the gospel, to purchase a video projector and "p.a." equipment for use in reaching remote villages with gospel presentations, for the building of new church buildings, and to (hopefully) help defray the cost of American ministers coming to Kenya for evangelistic campaigns.

Joseph and his wife Esther have four children ages 9 through 16. The Kimani family last saw their father in May when he left on this mission. He plans to return to Kenya in October.

The most important thing that Pastor Joseph requested was for the earnest prayers of all the Saints—that God might heal Kenya and bless their Kenyan ministry with success in reaching that part of Africa with the saving message of Jesus Christ!

Editors Note: The BSA President, various BSA Board Members, and the Editor of TSS were recently in attendance at a conference dealing with the subject of how to preach the Gospel to the world and the forming of an Evangelistic Association for just such a purpose (see Sept/Oct TSS). The preaching of the Gospel in African countries was among the various similarly focused topics of conversation. While we are all still just talking, "the quiet man from Kenya" is working—helping to fulfill this mission.

Letters and donations may be mailed to Pastor Kimani at this address in the USA:

Pastor Joseph Kimani
c/o Association for Christian Development
P.O. Box 4748
Federal Way, WA 98063

Any gifts or offerings of support may be made out by check to "Pastor Joseph Kimani." The ACD will deposit all of these in his Bank of America account, which is directly accessible in Kenya. All letters will be forwarded to him in Kenya. Those wishing to reach Pastor Joseph Kimani directly can e-mail him at:

Joseph_Kimani@Yahoo.com

{Jeff Henderson pastors the Believers in Christ Church of God, Redwood City (San Francisco Bay area), California. Comments can be sent through their website at: <http://www.biccog.org>}

The following are new items recently added to the BSA Order Blank:

"*Sabbath Roots: The African Connection*," by Charles Bradford, traces the history of African Sabbath-keepers (\$15).

"*Primitive Christianity in Crisis*," by Alan Knight, documents the chaotic collision of religions in the First Century, and the continuing influence of Gnosticism and Nicolaitan Christianity today (\$15).

"*The Seventh Day: Revelation from the Lost Pages of History*," Part 1 of a 5-part series, VHS (NTSC) video (\$25, or \$5 for a 14-day LOAN; see the review—below).

Note: Please add 10% for postage (20% international).

Sabbath Video Project Part One Released

The late James Arrabito, lay Seventh-day Adventist evangelist, had a vision to document the history of the Sabbath and Sabbath-keepers on video for television. Ellen G. White, founder of the SDA Church, likewise felt that "The Sabbath History has been kept from the people too long. They need this precious work, even if they do not have it in all its perfection. It never can be prepared in a manner to fully silence unreasonable opponents, who are unstable, and who wrest the Scriptures unto their own destruction. This is a busy world. Men and women who engage in the business of life have not time to meditate, or even to read the word of God enough to understand all its important truths. The Sabbath History should be given to the people. Our success will be in reaching common minds." Ellen G. White, Testimonies vol. 3, pp. 38, 39.

James' widow Pat, through LLT Productions, has continued to work on the project her husband began. Now, Part One of a projected five-part video series entitled "The Seventh Day, Revelations from the Lost Pages of History," has been released. This professional video is 52 minutes long, narrated by Hal Holbrook, and covers "The Sabbath, BC." Here is an outline of the contents:

- Origins of the Week and the Sabbath - Biblical
- Creation and the Sabbath
- Fourth commandment/Creation link
- Origins of the Week and the Sabbath - non-Biblical
- Alternate Creation myths
- Seven-day cycle outside the biblical record
- Significance of the weekly cycle as a supernatural, rather than natural, division of time
- The week and names of the days
- The Creation Sabbath: A day for all mankind
- Quotes from Jewish, Moslem, Catholic, Protestant, Chinese, etc., sources

- Sabbath and the worship of the Creator
- Paganism and alternate days of worship
- Purpose of God in establishing the nation of Israel
- Preserve the knowledge of the Creator-God
- Stand as a continual challenge to false systems of worship
- Demonstrate God's character to the nations of the world
- Attract others into a relationship with the God of heaven
- Sabbath blessings available to "strangers"
- Pre-decalogue week/Sabbath in Biblical record
- Manna
- Israel's pollution of, and neglect of, the Sabbath
- Sabbath symbolism in the term of the Babylonian captivity
- The Sabbath among other peoples
- Restoration of worship system in Jerusalem and new innovative Sabbath laws
- The Sabbath among the Jews during the inter-testament period
- Government of occupation opposes Sabbath
- Religious authorities impose detailed regulations regarding Sabbath observance]

Summary of Part One: Created for all mankind as a continuing celebration of Creation and a perpetual invitation to a relationship with the Creator, the Sabbath has always been a primary target of Satan's attacks. In the pre-Christian era the enemy has had a two-pronged strategy: 1) To promote creature/nature worship; and 2) Under the guise of true religion, to bury the Sabbath in a formal, legalistic, ritualistic system of worship.

The Seventh Day: Revelation from the Lost Pages of History, *Part 1 of 5-part series, VHS (NTSC) video, is now available from the BSA for \$25, or \$5 for a 14-day LOAN.*

Here is a description of future releases in this series:

PART TWO: The Sabbath Among Early Christians;
PART THREE: The Sabbath from the Council of Laodicea to the 11th century;

PART FOUR: The Sabbath through the years of awakening, reformation, and revival (12th through 19th centuries);

PART FIVE: The Restoration of Creator Worship During Earth's Final Years.

Part 2 is due to be completed in 2001, and the entire series finished by mid-2002. We hope to deliver these exciting videos to you just as soon as they become available.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Greetings in God's grace through Christ Jesus.

After reading the few issues of T.S.S. I've received and especially the last (May-June), I believe all involved are putting forth their best effort to provide a wide range of topics and be a conduit for Sabbatharians.

Your editorial "An Appropriate Topic?" gave me something to think about in earnest...love!

Of course, we're not speaking about the hugs and kisses and outward show many of us may have experienced in worldly Christians, but that agape' love that is rooted in the moral standard set forth by Christ's example through obedience and service.

Being in prison brings me in constant contact with the incorrigibly wicked daily and I'm a definite outcast from all Christian groups, due to my rejection of Sunday worship and priestcraft.

However, from time to time someone of little religious affiliation will comment that I myself can be better trusted than others, because I maintain the principles of God's Law.

To them, this code of ethics is positive and to be respected, but in truth, it's more of a right response towards God's love for us. It's how I've come to see God's commands in relation to His concern for our welfare and those who we come in contact...reciprocal concern.

So, yes, I agree, Christ has given us tools to overcome our prejudices and demonstrate that His way is the only right way (John 4:16).

To God be the glory!

Ron Ilchyn

I had the blessing of meeting the President of the BSA, Dr. Sidney Davis at a Sabbath observing church in Huntsville, Alabama.

He handed me a copy of the Sabbath Sentinel...I have not been able to put it down. Blessings of information and the confirmation of the fact that there are many, many Sabbath keeping groups and denominations under the umbrella of Christianity thrilled my soul.

I am a volunteer prison chaplain who keeps the true Sabbath and teaches the same. The resources I have been guided to in your publication and more thoroughly in your website will greatly assist my efforts to share the Sabbath truth with the inmates and others God has brought before me.

Michael Delaney

You've rattled my beliefs about women in the Church with your current article in the Sabbath Sentinel. I'm just wondering what your perspective is on the man as the spiritual and/or physical head of the family and home. Do you agree with the current secular view that marriage is always a 50/50 partnership? I can tell by your writing that you have done a lot more Bible study than I have. I generally only read on the surface and I sometimes get confused when (original Greek and Hebrew meanings) come into play.

Paul Barnes

Thank you so much for your kind words. It is our great privilege to write and publish articles designed to help the Sabbatarian community consider scriptures in different lights. Such was the intent on the article about the role of women in the Church. I hope that it did not so much rattle your beliefs as give you pause to consider whether something that we believed might be in error.

I certainly do not support the idea that marriage is a 50-50 proposition. We all have different gifts and talents. Some of us are better organizers than others. Some do a better job of handling finances.

As partners in a marriage, we ought to develop the talents and gifts God has given us so that we may better serve our mate, our "helping counterpart." If that means that our wife is a better bookkeeper, then we men ought to get out of her way!

Some men are excellent cooks. Why should they not cook then? The answer is that they should not only cook, but develop that talent to the benefit of the family.

There are certain roles that each partner can not fill for the other. Certainly, no man can bear a child. No man can bring his wife to salvation. Neither can a wife bring her husband. But, beyond those roles, the idea is to contribute to the marriage in the ways that we are strongest, and to defer to our partner in the ways that they are strongest. Sometimes that is going to mean that the wife directs the husband. Sometimes it will mean that the husband directs the wife. But, the direction will come from mutual understanding of each other's strengths, and not from the mistaken understanding that the husband has to call the shots in everything.

As husbands we have a duty to help our wives develop their talents, and vice versa. That is why there is no such thing as a 50-50 relationship. But, Godly people help their mates become all God made them to be.

Ed.

SABBATH ROOTS - EVERYBODY'S CONNECTION!

*There is an Important conference coming! Not only will it provide a meaningful historical corrective for many of us, it will also answer profound questions that have troubled and divided men and nations for centuries. And of supreme importance, it will lift the dark clouds of self-contempt and Divine suspicion that has plagued so many. **Africa**-enigma to the West, continuing challenge to the church, cradle and crucible of mankind! How have the paths of African and Jew been so intertwined in sacred and secular history? What does it mean?*

One inescapable fact of the Genesis creation story is that we all come from a common stock. It is a fact barely in evidence today.

What happened to us? Is our fractured world just an accident of history? Is God concerned or involved? And finally, what can we the faith community, God-seekers of every background, do to help ourselves? Come and hear! You may be part of the solution!

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(Write: "**Hands Up CA**" 1535 East Chevy Chase Drive Glendale, CA 91209)

Explore the common threads of African, Hebrew and Christian History with a "blue ribbon" panel of speakers:

1. Dr. Charles E. Bradford Author: **Sabbath Roots**-The African Connection
2. Dr. Gardner C. Taylor Pastor Emeritus, Concord Baptist Church, Brooklyn, N.Y.
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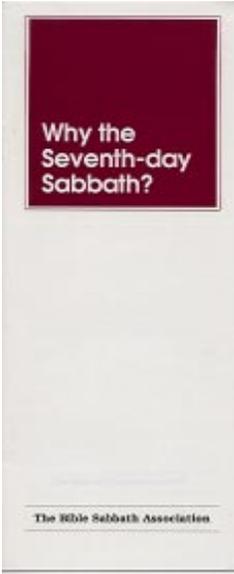
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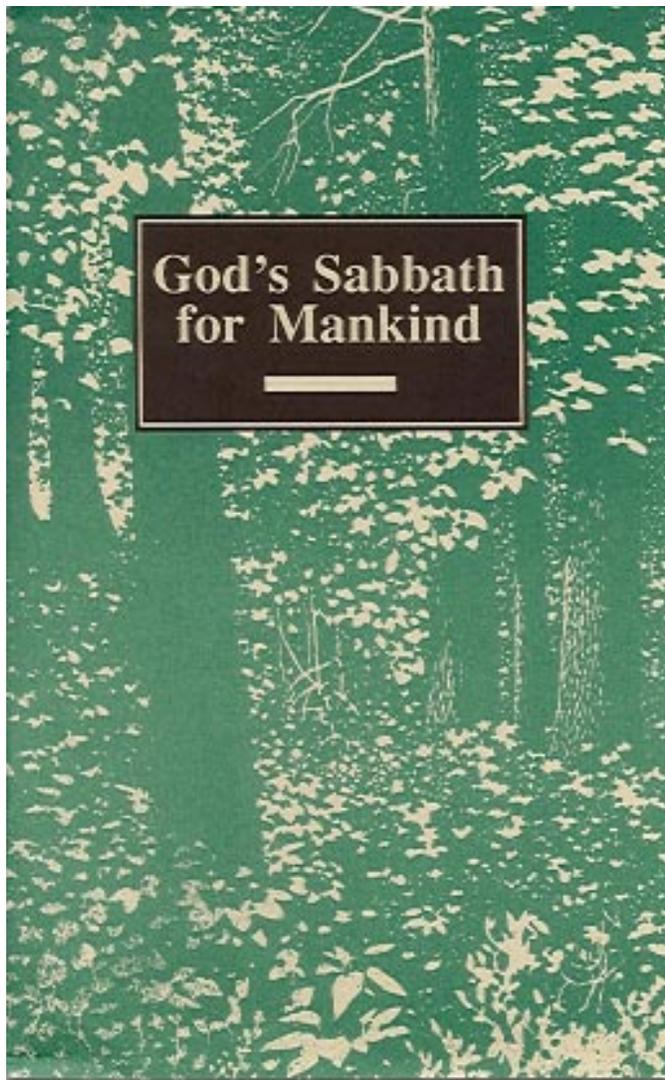
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