

The Sabbath Sentinel

September–October 2008



Election 2008

The Road to the Capitol.

What Christians should consider.

BSA — The Bible Sabbath Association

Jesus said, "the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath"

The Sabbath Sentinel

September–October 2008 Volume 60, No. 5 Issue 533

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Our Cover:

The U.S. Capitol Building.
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This and That



Would You Please Help Us?

I try to limit these requests to about once every four years, so I hope not to mention this again until about 2012. As you probably already know, summer is a time when donations to ministries fall off. Well, that is true for the BSA also. This year, because of the normal slowdown in summertime donations in addition to our weak economy, we are well behind our normal income, yet the bills continue to arrive. If you have some extra cash lying around that is not going toward your regular tithe, we would appreciate it if you would consider the BSA as a worthwhile destination for that pile of cash. We could really use it to keep up with our bills.

Thanks, and I hope this will be the last you hear from me on this subject for a while.

Our Sabbath

Over the years our Sabbath keeping has changed. You may have noticed this as well. In the early years I would spend Friday evening in intense Bible study. On Sabbath morning I would get up early, pray, eat breakfast, study my Bible for a while, and head off to church with my family. After church we might spend time with friends and then return home for more study and prayer. After the sun went down, we would often go out to a movie or get together with other church members for some function. Late Saturday night we would fall into bed completely exhausted. That was our "Sabbath rest." It was as much a duty as it was a joy.

Nowadays at midweek we start counting the days until Sabbath. Because of our work and other responsibilities, we are generally so exhausted by the time Sabbath rolls around that we can hardly wait to throw our regular duties aside and enter into our Sabbath rest. Maybe it's the fact that we are older and have less stamina, but I just don't have the energy to script each hour of the Sabbath as I did when I was younger. God bless the people that can do that, but I don't even want to do that anymore. It seems counterproductive and even somewhat contrary to the real meaning of "Sabbath," which is "to cease."

I think the closest scriptural comparison that I can think of is the story of Mary and Martha. My Sabbath keeping during my early years was like Martha—constantly preoccupied with trying to do everything and doing it all "the right way." Now I am more content

simply to sit at the Master's feet and leave the duties of the day for tomorrow. As Jesus said to Martha when she complained about her sister, "And Jesus answered and said to her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her' " Luke 10:41-42.

Our Upcoming Elections

You can't have missed the constant drumbeat of election-year politics. Of course, campaigning started much earlier this time around, and I am just about sick of the vacuous, inane pronouncements of our wannabe political hopefuls.

In spite of all that, this is a very important election year for the country. Over the past several decades our politicians have succeeded in convincing many Americans that a lot of the tasks that we used to assume were our individual responsibilities are better "controlled" and "managed" by the aspiring politicians and bureaucrats. We have forgotten that we were "endowed by our Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." Our rights do not derive from politicians or government; they come from God.

The more anyone is controlled by the state, the less he is controlled by God. That is why Christianity has always been the enemy of politicians. Just look at the communist states of the past and present. They spare no effort to destroy the influence of Christianity on their people. The state is Caesar, but we are obliged to follow God, not Caesar. We render to Caesar his due, but it is very irritating to our political Caesars that we should look upon them as servants and not as our masters and benefactors. We are often dazzled by their rhetoric and magnanimous promises, yet we must always keep in mind that the ultimate source of our blessings is God in heaven, not the state. God's blessings uplift, encourage, and enhance. They never binds us with chains of increased obligation.

We should not forget the story of Elijah and the priests of Baal. The priests were a tool of the chief politicians of that day, King Ahab and Queen Jezebel. The duty of the priests was to bind the people down with all sorts of rituals and obligations that kept them from the freedom they needed to worship the God of

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Tonic for Sluggish Christians



Christian couch potatoes don't move much. They like sitting and watching, being served, offering opinions, criticizing what others are doing, and occasionally rising to stretch and let others know that they are good Christian people. For them, Christianity functions much like a spectator sport. Pick a comfortable church, ministry or charity to root for, but don't get too involved. Avoid commitments. Take it easy.

by Kenneth Westby

A good couch within easy reach of a low side table is a great way to enjoy TV. Remotes let you flit from channel to channel without moving your carcass out of reach of the chips and Coke, or pizza and beer. I've logged time—too much time—in that all-American position. When I see my grandkids assuming the same posture, I think those sluggish kids need some chores or to go outside and get some exercise.

You know a slug when you see one and words like apathetic, indolent, ambivalent, passive, unmotivated, ambitionless, slothful, tired, bored, and just plain lazy might be used to further describe a person in a near static state.

But are there sluggish Christians? Sure, I know plenty. I think I was one for a while. How might they be described? What factors might contribute to their sluggish profile? Is there anything typical about them from which we could formulate an antidote for the condition? If the condition is real, is it dangerous?

Slip Sliding Away

The New Testament writers clearly regarded spiritual sluggishness—either by church group or individual—a serious threat to finishing the race, enduring to the end and entering the Kingdom of God. Paul cautions Christians, "The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber..."¹ John passes on the warnings of Jesus to the churches in Asia that are losing zeal and dying: "Wake up!" Cease being "lukewarm" or I'll spit you out; recapture your "first love."²

But the most sustained and powerful attack against spiritual sluggishness is given us by the writer to the Hebrews. He³ saw spiritual fatigue and lassitude corrupting the Hebrews' initial commitment to

God. He saw it as red-zone dangerous and a mere step or two from falling into apostasy and spiritual shipwreck.

His letter to the Hebrews is regarded as the high water mark of literary composition, elegant, sophisticated, but powerful in its argument. It is held as the masterpiece of early Christian rhetorical homiletics,⁴ or in its own terms a "word of exhortation" (13:22).

Scholars acknowledge that the author of Hebrews, himself a second generation Christian, is writing to second generation Christians who have had a lot of exposure to the Word of God and who were dependent on the testimony of earlier eyewitnesses (2:3-4). In that sense they are typical of all who have become believers through the word of others, written or spoken. Among the several issues he addresses in his letter perhaps the most important was the community's waning commitment to their confessed faith.

The Burned-Out Syndrome

What was their problem? The Hebrew community's situation was complex with a number of factors contributing to their waning commitment. Some factors could well have involved Jewish or Judaizing pressure, pagan opposition and social stigmatization, which would be felt whatever the ethnic affiliations of the addressees. Add to that, doctrinal doubts of various sorts, doubt about the significance of Christ's work, and most importantly, discouragement over the delay of the *parousia*, or return of Christ bringing the Kingdom age.⁵

Time was moving by, but things seemed no closer to the promised Kingdom with its glorious rewards.

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Sacred Rhythm

by *Whaid Guscott Rose*



God is a Sabbath-keeper. On the seventh day of Creation week, He rested from His labors (Genesis 2:2, 3). God did not rest because He was tired. The work of creation caused Him little sweat; He simply spoke, and it was done. Rather, God kept Sabbath to highlight the weekly rhythm of work and rest.

Looking down through history, He saw a restless twenty-first century culture in desperate need of pause at the end of a busy week, so He rested as our example.

But more than just for physical benefits, God set the seventh day apart as a memorial of creation. The Sabbath says no to evolution and atheism. It reminds us that everything began with God and that out of love, not necessity, He created us. The Sabbath provides a weekly twenty-four hour time completely set aside to focus on our Creator.

Finally, God rested on the Sabbath to foreshadow the rest of redemption that would come through Christ. As the weekly Sabbath gives physical rest from our labors, so redemption — our spiritual Sabbath — provides rest from our sin. The intimidating work of trying to please God now ends; we rest in the finished work of Christ. "There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his" (Hebrews 4:9, 10, NIV). This explains why among the most beloved verses in the New Testament are these:

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30, NIV).

This invitation was given to a people burdened by the yoke of Moses' law. Jesus offered His yoke in exchange and suggested that in it, they would find rest. No to-do list or self-help program; just rest, plain and simple. There is something of great intrinsic value in rest for those who embrace it.

We see, then, that rest is central to who God is and to the relationship He desires to have with us. Hebrews 4:3 suggests that God has rested from creation labor since that first Sabbath and that He beckons us to join Him in that rest.

Sabbath is referred to as "a sanctuary in time" and "the sacred rhythm of rest and delight." The busyness

of modern culture robs many of that sacred rhythm, one that sustains all of life. After waking for a time, the body requires sleep. Our lungs rest between breaths, as does the heart between beats. Day is followed by night in the same way that the aliveness of spring and summer eventually gives way to the dormancy of fall and winter. This is the rhythm of life — the way things work.

Sadly, however, many in our culture are more at ease working than resting. They suppose that doing something is better than doing nothing. Misguided by the belief that the blessings of this life come only through self-effort and determination, they view rest primarily as a future experience, evidenced by speaking of people being at rest when they depart this life.

Thankfully, others have always understood and appreciated the gift of Sabbath. Many in our culture are awaking to the essential quality and value of rest. Serving a church with strong Sabbath traditions, I am excited about new vision to point our tired world to God's gift of rest in the Sabbath and to their spiritual rest in Christ, to whom the Sabbath points.

Many in today's culture are becoming increasingly aware of the essential value of Sabbath rest. They're discovering that the reason God rested on the seventh day of Creation is not that He was tired but rather that, looking down the annals of history, He saw a tired world desperately in need of rest. By resting, God underscored the sacred rhythm of life: work, followed by rest and delight. By following the example of our Creator, we improve both our quality of life and the meaning of our work.

It is intriguing, therefore, to observe this fresh awakening to the concept of Sabbath. It is quickly becoming a subject of much interest in health journals, in-flight magazines, books, seminars, and conferences. Setting aside a portion of time for rest, reflection, and relationship is a new wave in our culture. The concept is so simple, yet so profound. I like to refer to it as "the rest of the story" — the story about a God who is real, wise, and interested in the details of our lives, including our schedules and our physical and emotional well-being.

This trend provides a unique ministry opportunity, particularly for Christians with a strong Sabbath tra-

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Actions Speak Louder

“Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?” (Luke 9:46)



By Brian Knowles

“I yearn for the day,” writes Dennis Prager, “when Christians will emphasize ethical monotheism as the most important part of their commitment to Christianity,” (*Think a Second Time*, p. 211). He’s got a point. How we live is vastly more important than what we say, think, or believe.

Prager believes that the Christian notion that God saves people no matter how they act toward each other undermines the principle of ethical monotheism. He writes, “Millions of Protestants hold that believers in Jesus, no matter how many cruel acts they perform, attain salvation, while nonbelievers in Jesus, no matter how much good they do and how much they may love God, are doomed to eternal damnation,” (*ibid.*).

If one studies the history of the larger Church, it is clear that at many junctures in history, Christians of all types have felt justified in murdering fellow Christians, Jews and Muslims in the name of God. The reverse is also true — almost all religions have murdered competitors in the name of God, or of their gods. Anti-religious author Sam Harris writes, not without justification, that “A glance at history, or at the pages of any newspaper, reveals that ideas which divide one group of human beings from another, only to unite them in slaughter, generally have their roots in religion,” (*The End of Faith*, p. 12).

Of course we can also attribute many such slaughters to secular ideologies like Nazism and Communism—but religious homicide and cruelty have a much longer history. During his earthly ministry, Jesus warned his original disciples, “They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me,” (John 16:2-3).

Those who murder in the name of God don’t really know God. Those who kidnap, torture, rape and otherwise abuse their fellow man in the name of religion do not represent the way of ethical monotheism in the world. In historic times, Christians have practiced forced conversion, wrongful extraction of tithes, confiscation of property, unjustified imprisonment, torture, burning at the stake and other evils, all in the name of our Lord. None of this is of God. It originates in the dark side — in the pits of hell itself.

No godly person—no truly ethical monotheist—does evil in the name of God. The fact that someone is religious does not automatically make them a good person.

Some of the nastiest people in the world are deeply religious.

Nor do the outward trappings of religion make its adherents spiritually noble. All of the religious institutions, buildings, flowing beards, austere black or ornate costumes, or the platitudes of piety, do not a godly person make. A godly person is one who simply lives a godly life.

Jesus taught, “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown in the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them,” (John 7:15-20).

What kind of fruit is born in a given religious person’s life? How does he or she treat his or her family and neighbors? Do we see in that person’s life the fruit of the Spirit of God? Do we see love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Gal. 5:22)?

Such traits characterize a truly good person — an ethical monotheist — whose behavior is influenced not by the dark side, but by the Spirit of God. Conversely, a person who is still enslaved to the pulls of his own flesh and the devil’s influence will manifest the “bad fruit” of a “bad” tree: “...sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy, drunkenness, orgies and the like,” (Galatians 5:19-21a).

Here we see contrasted the carnal (fleshly) and spiritual person. As you read the above words, take inventory. Which traits characterize your life? Which side — the dark or the light — has the greatest influence in your life? What kind of “tree” are you?

The Myth of True Belief

Many Christians live as though belief alone is enough to save them. After all, did not Paul write, “...if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved,” (Romans 10:9)?

And did not Peter say of Jesus, “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved,” (Acts 4:12).

Unfortunately, simply quoting these two verses, along with John 3:16, is as far as some Christian's personal theology goes. They've made their confession, they believe the above verses, and that's all there is to it. End of story. But it's not really the end of the story — there's much more to it than these few terse verses. These verses need to be qualified and elaborated on by the rest of the documents of the original believers.

But we know "The Truth!"

Other Christians have confidence in the notion that because they adhere to "doctrinal truth" they are therefore members of the "true church" and therefore they have salvation in the bag. As they view it, all other "Christian" churches are bogus, counterfeit or "pagan." They believe that because they observe the seventh day Sabbath, keep the annual holy days of Israel (Leviticus 23) and avoid unclean meats, that they are somehow more spiritual, more authentic, and more truly Christian than those "pagan" Sunday worshippers.

The point is what we believe about doctrine and liturgy means nothing if we are not living right. Israel and Judah, throughout their history from Moses' day forward, kept the holy days sporadically at best. When they kept them, they gained a false sense of security in so doing. It made them feel more religiously "authentic." But when God sent his prophets to correct them, they said things like this: "New moons, Sabbaths and convocations — I cannot bear your evil assemblies, (Isaiah 1:13b). Why would God say this of observances he had commanded? — because for all their liturgies and religiosities they were not living right. The nation was full of murders (verses 15c & 21c); evil deeds (v.16); injustice (v. 17); oppression of widows and orphans (vs. 17b); political corruption and bribery (vs. 23) and so on. In this context, their Sabbath keeping, festival observance, and knowledge of the truth meant nothing.

There's a principle here: No matter what we believe, and no matter how right it is or how liturgically correct we believe it is; it means nothing if we are not living right and bearing fruit to the Holy Spirit. Even in the New Covenant writings, Paul excoriated Christians who were observing the Lord's Supper while not living right (I Corinthians 11:17 ff.). By behaving in ungodly ways while observing a valid liturgy, they were eradicating the value of it (vv. 27-32).

We don't live right to earn salvation. No amount of *ergon nomos* — works of law — can undo the effects of our past sins. Only the grace of God manifested through Christ can do that. That being said, God still expects his Jewish and Christian people to live a certain way — the way of ethical monotheism. How we live is vastly more important than what we espouse, believe or express liturgically.

The "Good Attitude" Standard

In a denomination to which I once belonged, and served as a minister, much was made out of people

having a "good attitude." A good attitude meant smiling, being courteous, compliant and respectful toward the ministry. Good attitude people said, "Yes sir!" a lot — and they did it with enthusiasm and much kissing up. They adopted postures of apparent humility.

There were those who had politically correct attitudes, and who believed and espoused "orthodox" doctrine. They were typically viewed as being "in good standing." To them went the gifts or responsibility, status and material rewards. They were the good attitude loyalists.

People with "bad attitudes" argued a lot. They didn't show sufficient respect. They openly challenged dogma, doctrines and the dictates of the ministry. But in none of this — good attitude or foul — was it taken into consideration how they lived. Did they manifest the fruit of the Spirit in their lives? Were they kind and considerate, or were they hard-nosed authoritarians? Did they quietly and unostentatiously (Matthew 6:1-4), perform good works? Did they live in conscience toward God, or were they merely politicians milking the system to their own advantage?

Every denomination includes a full spectrum of human types: authoritarians, politicians, sycophants, good attitude people, phonies, con artists, exploiters, the truly pious, servants, good time Charleys, neurotic dependents, people with bad attitudes, folks with religious spirits, mindless zealots, sensualists, and truly converted, fruit-bearing Christians. What we are in this context is a matter of personal choice. The wheat and the tares grow together until the harvest.

What God wants, even more than correct belief and good attitudes is simple obedience. For Jesus, actions always speak louder than words. This is illustrated by one of his parables found only in Matthew 21:28-31:

"What do you think?" asked Jesus of his disciples, "There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, 'Son, go work today in the vineyard.' 'I will not,' he answered, but later changed his mind and went. "Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, 'I will sir,' but he did not go. "Which of the two did what his father wanted?" 'The first,' they answered.

God is pleased with children who actually do his will, no matter what kind of attitude they display. On one occasion, Jesus asked his own admittedly loyal (exception: Judas) disciples, "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46). It isn't enough to know about Jesus, to "confess Christ," and to "believe on him." Our Lord requires obedience to his teachings — teachings that could be classified as ethical monotheism. He went on to say, "I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation of rock. When a flood came, the torrent

struck the house but could not shake it, because it was well built," (Luke 6:48).

If we call ourselves "Christians," our lives will be solidly anchored in the ethical monotheism of our Lord. On an ongoing basis, we will be actively seeking to better understand Jesus' teachings and example, and how to implement them in our personal lives. We will embrace the Lord's world view and seek to live as he lived. We will care about what he cared about. His priorities will be our priorities, his concerns our concerns.

On the other hand, we can choose to be mere nominal Christians, believing in Christ, espousing some denominational version of the Christian faith with its distinctives while living what amounts to a basically carnal or secular lifestyle. We can claim to have saving faith while being devoid of the works that demonstrate it (James 2:14–26). Study these verses carefully.

Jesus himself illustrated the vacuity of empty, workless faith, when he said, "But the one who hears my words and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete," (Luke 6:49). Jesus was a carpenter; he knew what he was talking about.

Summing Up

The point of all this is that belief and faith in Christ and the tenets of Christianity without obedience to Jesus' teachings is empty faith. To say one is a Christian because one believes something about Christ, about faith, is relatively meaningless if one ignores the teachings of the one we are supposed be following and emulating. Paul wrote, "Follow my example as I follow the example of Christ," (I Corinthians 11:1).

Earlier in the same letter he wrote, "Therefore I urge you to imitate me. For this reason I am sending to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church," (I Corinthians 4:16–17).

To be truly authentic Christians, no matter our personal theologies and doctrinal distinctives, our way of life must be consistent with our Lord's teachings. We can make truth claims till we're ultramarine in the face, and it will mean nothing unless we live the life — the life of ethical monotheism.

Brian Knowles is a professional artist and writer and is a former magazine editor. Brian is an avid student of the Bible and a frequent contributor to the Association for Christian Development website (www.godward.org).

Sabbath Morning Companion

The Kingdom

Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). Of course it isn't. If it were, we wouldn't have among other things a protracted and painful presidential election campaign that further exposes the fault lines in our national landscape.

No candidate is the perfect combination of the patience of Job, the wisdom of Solomon, and the fighting spirit of David. Nor should we expect such. The best we can hope for is a government that provides us with security, some basic services, and fair adjudication of laws while not infringing upon our freedom to pursue our God-given purpose and talents.

Sadly, not everyone sees it that way. Some theories of government emphasize redistribution of wealth. Some look at government as a means of ordering the masses through central planning and control. Most theories of government today have almost a utopian tinge about them. Whether it be a thousand year Reich or a workers' paradise, a world safe for democracy or a new world order, the governments of men have always been long on promises but short on delivery.

Yet at the heart of the gospel is something that Jesus called the Kingdom. Mark refers to the gospel of the Kingdom (Mark 1:14). The thief on the cross asked Jesus to remember him when he comes into his Kingdom (Luke 23:42). John the Baptist demanded repentance, "for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand," and so did Jesus (Matthew 3:2, 4:17).

One day the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ (Revelation 11:15). The Old Testament prophets tell us about that Kingdom and how the world will be ordered in those days.

In the last days the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths."

The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. (Isaiah 2:2-4)

That's a promise the benefactors of our world can't come close to keeping.

—Lenny Cacchio

Lenny Cacchio lives in Lees Summit, Missouri, and is very active in the Truckers' Bible Study in the Kansas City, Missouri, area. The Sabbath Morning Companion is now available as a devotional and journal through the Website of the Church of God, Kansas City (www.kccog.org/literature.htm).

A Critical Election

by Bryant Buck



It's election time again here in the U.S. Since there were no elections in the Bible other than the selection of deacons in Acts 6, the Bible does not give us much direct guidance on how we as Christians should behave in the electoral process. However, the Word of Yahweh does teach us to stand up for righteousness. Moreover, the Almighty does not leave us up to our own devices as to what is righteous and what it is not. The precepts He has left us in His Word make it very clear what He considers righteous and what He deems unrighteous. So when it comes time to vote, we need to line up the candidates' stands on the various issues against what the Bible has to say on these same issues. The candidates who have the most positions in agreement with what Yahweh says is righteous should be the candidates we vote for. Conversely, the candidates who have the most positions in contradiction to what Yahweh says is righteous should be the candidates we vote against.

What I am saying simply is that we should be values voters—specifically, Bible values voters. The national news media makes fun of values voters, but that should not bother us. The national news media promotes homosexuality, abortion, living in sin outside of marriage, and many other values in direct conflict with the values Yahweh upholds in His Word. We are in the world, but we are not of the world. So the unrighteous national news media should have no influence on how we as Christians vote.

Let's take the current national election. Besides promoting wrong values, the national news media repeatedly directs our attention to matters that should be irrelevant in how we decide to vote. For example, the national news media has made a big issue out of the race of one candidate. Yet the Bible is silent on the issue of race. So for us as Christians, the race of the two candidates should not be a consideration. Similarly, the national news media has made a big issue out of the age of one of the candidates. Again, Yahweh's Word has nothing to say about the issue of age other than that we show respect for our elders. Race or age should never have a bearing on how we vote as Christians.

The candidates' stands on particular moral issues, however, give us a much better idea of how we should vote as Christians. We should look at how closely each candidate aligns his political position with what God approves of in His Holy Word. Does

one candidate actively promote an agenda that places homosexual couples on the same level as traditional married couples? There is no such thing as "gay rights" in the Bible. If we truly believe God's word, then we should embrace the pronouncement of God that He made them man and woman and that the two shall be one flesh. The Bible is clearly against homosexuality and gay rights (see Romans 1:18-32).

What about the subject of abortion? Is one candidate in favor of abortion? Abortion is a direct attack on the family. It is a declaration that one human being can decide whether another is worthy to live, grow up, and become a child of God. There is no question that Yahweh is clearly against abortion (see Psalm 139:13-16).

What is each candidate's position on the defense of the nation of Israel. Is one candidate "softer" on the enemies of Israel than the other? The Lord is clearly against the enemies of Israel (see Genesis 12:1-3).

If you don't know about these issues, then it's time to do some research and find out which candidate supports God's views. No candidate will support God's views perfectly. After all, these men are politicians, but you can find out for yourself which has the better moral stand and will align himself with God's morality more closely.

We often listen to the promises of a candidate and his views about the other candidate. How well one speaks and how one appears on television often make up our minds, but we should forget about the flowery oratory and the attractive appearance. After all, the news media will always show you the best side of the candidate they want, and the worst side of the candidate they oppose. Oratory and attractive appearance are not measures of righteousness. The devil has delivered effective oratory to the human race throughout history; because we have listened to his smooth talking so often, look at the mess our world is in. What we need in our president is a stand for righteousness—nothing less.

The world votes their own self-interest—whether it be political, economic, or social. There was a time in the early history of this country when many of our leaders tried to rise above their own self-interest for the greater good. This is rarely the case today. As believers in Yahweh, we find the greater good in His Word. Pray about your vote and search the Scriptures to see what God is looking for in a leader. Let His opinions be the decisive influence in how you vote.

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Creation and Evolution: An Interview With Phillip Johnson

*Law professor Phillip Johnson has examined the evidence for and against evolution in three books, including **Darwin on Trial**. He discusses the theory's underlying flaws and the impact on society of accepting evolution.*

by Jerry Aust

The Good News: Concerning evolution and its effects on modern educational systems, you mention intellectual superstition. What is that?

Phillip Johnson: What we get as science in the Darwinian theory of evolution is not based on science. It's based on a prior commitment to materialism and philosophy. Facts take second place to that philosophy, and therefore what we're getting is what I call a materialist mythology. That's what I mean by intellectual superstition.

GN: As a lawyer and law professor, how did you become interested in writing a book that analyzes Darwinism?

PJ: I was in England on sabbatical in 1987-88 and began reading on the subject. I found it fascinating and began looking into it further. I found out many interesting things. For example, some scientists at the British Natural History Museum were saying things that were completely contrary to the Darwinian theory, and they were being told to shut up and keep quiet. I looked into it to find out what was going on. While there, I bought all kinds of scientific books and read the scientific journals at the University of London, where I was a visiting professor. In retrospect, it's perfectly logical that I should get into this subject, because fundamentally it's all about the relationship between assumptions and proof. Specifically, people aren't always forthright about their assumptions.

Evolutionary biologists state their assumptions as fact. They state their assumptions emphatically, then treat them as proof. One of the first things I noticed was that some evolutionary biologists I talked to couldn't appreciate the difference between what they'd proved and what they'd only assumed. They didn't really understand the difference. Thus I wrote *Darwin on Trial*, which is really a critique of bad reasoning presented as legitimate science.

GN: Would you briefly identify the themes of your books *Darwin on Trial*, *Reason in the Balance* and *Defeating Darwinism*?

PJ: *Darwin on Trial* is my book on evolutionary science. It goes into the scientific detail fairly thoroughly to show that the evidence is against the theory [of evolution] at every point. This leads to the conclusion that what is driving the evolutionary-science community is not the evidence but a philosophical position that they endorse

in spite of the evidence. So that's the book for people who want to go deeply into the science of it.

The second book, *Reason in the Balance*, is mainly about the cultural implications [of belief in evolution]. It has several chapters on the scientific background, but the main theme is to show that the philosophy behind Darwinian evolution—which is materialism, or naturalism—has become in effect the established religion of our country.

This has great consequences for subjects like law and ethics, because, if God is dead and a mindless process of evolution is our true creator, then God's moral authority is also dead. That means that all questions of value are up to us and we can change the rules at any time that we like. So that's the foundation for the moral relativism that we seek out throughout society.

The third book, *Defeating Darwinism by Opening Minds*, is specifically addressed to graduating high-school students, beginning college students and their parents and teachers. It is basically intended to prepare these students for the kind of indoctrination that they will receive in college, not only in the science curriculum but throughout the curriculum.

They will be presented material which presupposes that nature is all there is, that there has never been any supernatural influence from the ultimate beginning to the present and that God belongs in the category of what they call religious belief, which is to say subjective fantasy.

So this book is to prepare them for what they'll be hearing and to understand the thinking behind it, because these subjects are not presented straightforwardly. The professors don't say that they're going to convince you that naturalism is true; they start out with that assumption and everything follows from there. You have to understand where they're coming from to have an understanding of what's wrong with this whole system.

GN: How will these high-school students, who are going into college, be exposed to what you are saying about defeating Darwinism? Apart from discovering your book, how can more people be made aware that modern education will automatically teach them the effects of naturalism?

PJ: This is what families have to take responsibility for. The public-school educators are not going to teach students something that undermines the philosophy they're trying to inculcate in them, that they've been taught to believe themselves. So it has to be a very high priority for Christian families to make sure that their children learn.

This is one of the things that has energized the home-schooling movement to such an extent. But it isn't necessary for parents to go that far. They can read up on and learn these ideas themselves and make sure they're taught in the home or in church or in some kind of educational, supplemental program.

The Christian community has all the resources it needs to do this kind of educating, whether the public schools like it or not. The limitation here has been that the parents and the ministers and the youth workers and teachers haven't understood the issues. They have been misled to believe that the kind of secular education we're receiving is compatible with a Christian belief system and that the theory of evolution in particular is only about minor scientific matters that don't touch the larger issues of life.

However, this is fundamentally untrue. So the real problem is that the parents, teachers, youth workers and ministers—everybody—need to learn to understand this and develop some kind of a program to communicate that to our young people. It's very much within our resources; the problem is simply one of understanding.

GN: As a tenured professor in a major university, you've seen how the commonly accepted educational belief system has been assumed as true by many academicians and how this notion has had its affect on young students' minds.

PJ: It does, and it molds the thinking of the whole culture. What is really insidious about it is that people don't realize that their thinking is being molded. It comes in through the assumptions, and that's where the effective indoctrination and propaganda work.

The way to put something across to people so that it gets into their minds is not to tell them something straightforwardly, because then their defense is up. Then they can recognize it and make counterarguments. What you do is to assume it and smuggle it in in the unstated assumptions behind the stuff that you are teaching on the surface. This is what occurs in the educational system, and this is what I teach people to be able to spot.

GN: This approach you're taking is revolutionary, isn't it?

PJ: Yes, this is a peaceful, intellectual revolution.

GN: You advance the notion that 90 percent of Americans believe in God.

PJ: They say they do. They'll answer a poll question that way. How deeply that penetrates into their thinking is quite a different question. People answer poll questions by giving the answer they think they are supposed to

give. So you have to do a lot of interpreting do get truthful results.

GN: This leaves us about 10 percent who, to some degree and on some level, are agnostic or who at least promote naturalism, even unwittingly. Is it possible that 10 percent can dominate the 90 percent in this area, and, if so, how?

PJ: Sure, they can, especially if they take the high ground, the high intellectual ground. You see the education at every level. Government, lawmaking and all those things presuppose the viewpoint of the 10 percent. Now, this is masked because the viewpoint of the 10 percent is not inconsistent with religious belief. So people can have a naturalistic worldview and accompany it with a lot of God talk—that is to say their understanding is that God belongs in this category of religious belief, and so, effectively, everybody has their own God. The whole thing is part of their imaginative life. In their view, God is not real in the sense that the theory of evolution is real, which is to say that it's taught as true for everybody. Their view is that God is real if that idea works for you.

So that's the viewpoint on God which is taken throughout public life in the United States, and it's why somebody can say with some sincerity I'm a very religious person and yet they will have a fundamentally naturalistic understanding of what that means. This kind of understanding is presupposed in public life, and that is why the idea of tolerance has become central. In this way of thinking, true religion means that you never interfere with somebody else's belief system and that all of these are relative systems good only for the person who holds that belief, so government should presuppose none of these beliefs.

That means, effectively, that the agnostic position—which says we have no knowledge of God—becomes the neutral position which governs the country. This is what the Supreme Court has effectively enacted and imposed in its religious-liberty decisions. So, whether that is ever changed as a governmental matter, it's really important for people to understand what is going on and why the laws have changed in the direction that they have. That's the subject that I explained in Reason in the Balance. I want people to realize that, although 90 percent of the country says they believe in some sort of intelligent Creator, the opposite is what is being taught and proclaimed as fact. It isn't because the evidence supports that, but because a small minority believe in the power of blind chance and naturalistic forces.

Public education is no longer under public control. Now the teachers' unions, curriculum planners and government officials have established control over education in general. The public doesn't like a lot of what goes on in the schools, but they're told it's none of their business.

GN: What plans do you have to get your information out to the public, electronically or otherwise?

Continued on page 20

dition. In fact, I believe that the Church of God (Seventh Day) has been divinely poised for this moment. God has confirmed this by inspiring us to a new project called the Sabbath Experience. Its focus is two-fold. First, it helps Sabbath observers fully embrace the blessings and benefits of Sabbath rest. Second, it points the restless world around us to God's gift of physical rest on the Sabbath and thereby to His gift of spiritual rest in Christ, whom the Sabbath symbolizes.

The Sabbath Experience is designed to help people enter more fully into the rest of God: loving God through time set aside for worship and prayer, uninterrupted by schedules and activities; loving others through service, outreach, and authentic relationships; strengthening marriage and family connecting with others; loving ourselves by resting, celebrating the gift of life, and caring for our bodies; pointing people to the God who made them (creation), to the Christ who died for them (redemption), and to the promise of ultimate rest from a world broken by sin (eternity). The Sabbath Experience toolbox will include materials that explain Sabbath from the perspective of grace. Bible studies, Sabbath school curriculum, sermon notes, DVD's for church use, sample television ads, links to Web pages, and weekly e-mail testimonies from worshippers about their Sabbath Experience will be part of the package.

This opportunity comes with its challenges. First, we will need to intelligently answer objections from without. Despite the culture's awakening to it, some object to Sabbath observance because of supposed legalism and other concerns. Second, we will address issues from within. Celebrating our Sabbath heritage without speaking to the misguided notions that often surround it would be to our detriment. Third, we will develop a clear Sabbath theology, consistent with the new covenant. There is more to Sabbath than rules. Our hope is not in observing a day; it is in Christ.

Finally, we must find creative ways to package and share the gift of the Sabbath with a tired world in need of rest and redemption. To that end, I commend the Sabbath Experience to you. The General Conference is pleased to present this age-old truth in a new and fresh way. If you've observed the Sabbath for any length of time, I invite you, as in the cornflakes commercial, to "Try it again for the first time." If Sabbath is new to you, I pray you'll discover "the rest of the story."

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Whaid Guscott Rose is the General Conference President of the Church of God, Seventh Day.

The Privilege of Worship

by Donald Mansell

The sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King, and my God. Ps. 84:3.

March 19 is the day the swallows return to San Juan Capistrano in southern California. For the past two hundred and five years they have, with a few rare exceptions, arrived at the old Franciscan mission on this date and departed for their winter home on the 23d of October. In 1939 the swallows broke this schedule for the first time. They departed two months earlier than usual. Many naturalists wondered whether or not they would return the following year. But the day before their scheduled arrival in 1940, a group of "scout birds" flew in, and the next day the main body winged its way to the mission.

The amazing regularity with which certain birds migrate has been observed by man as far back as his records reach. We read in Jeremiah 8:7: "The stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times: and the turtle[dove] and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord."

Psalms 84, from which our verse is taken, was written by David probably while he was exiled from his homeland by King Saul. His words express his longing to attend the worship services of God's house with his fellow Israelites. The nostalgic appeal of the psalmist's words is said to be one of the most beautiful in all literature.

Man seems to have a basic need to worship. He needs regular periods when he can come apart from the routine of life to commune with his Maker and have fellowship with his fellow believers. But man also has a tendency to neglect these seasons of worship, especially when his life is going too well and sometimes when it is going too badly. It is for this reason that the writer of Hebrews admonishes against "forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Heb. 10:25).

Some think that by "day" Paul was referring to the approaching destruction of Jerusalem foretold in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21. However, it is more likely that he was thinking of the day of Christ's second advent. Inspiration predicts that as we approach this day it will become more and more difficult for God's people to assemble for worship on the seventh-day Sabbath. However, such difficulties are no excuse for unfaithfulness or lack of punctuality in church attendance now. Sabbath worship with God's people is a precious privilege.

Donald Mansell, *New Every Morning*, page 84. Review & Herald Publishing Association. 1981.

Fix my Kid, III

Have you ever run into a Christian who can't seem to get victory over a sin in his or her life? Even though they pray for strength, they can't seem to overcome their problem. Why isn't God answering their prayers? I'd like to share something with you that completely changed my prayer life.

When I first started my ministry—in the early 1970s—groups like Black Sabbath, Blue Oyster Cult, and others were openly into witchcraft and Satanism, so I frequently spoke out about demonic activity. One day while talking with another speaker who was an expert on that subject, I asked why we weren't being bothered by demons even though we were so outspoken about its influence. His response shocked me. "How do you know we're not?"

Well, I wasn't rolling around on the ground with foam coming out of my mouth, so I didn't see any evidence. Then he asked me a question that sent chills up and down my spine. "Do your children ever wake up screaming in the middle of the night?"

How did he know that my young daughters—who were three-and-a-half and five at the time—had been waking up screaming almost every night of their lives? My wife and I were suffering from sleep deprivation, which was having a negative effect on our relationship. We just figured it was part of being a parent. We hoped that they would outgrow it. My friend asked me if I had ever prayed against Satan in the name of Jesus. This was a new concept to me, but I was willing to try anything.

He pointed out that if we resist Satan, he will flee (1 Pet. 5:9). We have the right to command Satan to flee because, as Christians, we possess the same power that raised Christ from the dead (Rom. 6:4-9). Eph. 6:13 commands us to put on the whole armor of God (truth, righteousness, faith, the gospel of peace, the assurance of our salvation, and the Word

of God) so we can resist the evil one. My friend pointed out that the Greek for "Word" (rhema) in that passage refers to the "spoken Word," whereas the "written Word" of God is the Greek word *logos*.

I realized that although my wife and I had often prayed to God for our daughters to sleep through the night, we had never resisted Satan with a spoken prayer. That night, my wife and I prayed and verbally resisted Satan in the name of Jesus, commanding him to flee. That was the first night that both my daughters slept through the night in their whole little lives. And they've had normal sleep patterns ever since.

Is there a problem in your life that you just can't seem to overcome? Have you prayed about it, but it still seems to hang on? Have you tried praying against Satan? I'm not saying that Christianity can be reduced to a simple formula. God is not a formula to be manipulated. Nor I am suggesting something unbiblical. When Jesus was tempted by Satan (Matt. 4:1-11), He addressed him directly with Scripture. He didn't go to the Father first. He didn't simply ask God for strength. He addressed the problem: Satan.

Could I suggest that every Christian needs to examine their life for sin that could become a foothold for Satan? And if there is, we must confess it and turn away from it. But as we do this, we can also verbally tell Satan that he has no right to bother us, because we belong to the One who shed His blood for us. We have the right to tell him to "Go to Hell!" Literally! Praying in this manner has changed my life and my family, and it could change yours as well.

—Al Menconi

Reprinted from "Perspectives," at OneNewsNow.com. Al Menconi is considered a leading expert on the influence of today's entertainment on the Christian family, and has written extensively on the entertainment media and Christian parenting. He founded Al Menconi Ministries in 1982. The ministry website houses one of the world's most extensive collections of video game reviews from a biblical worldview.

California Court: Homosexual rights trump religious freedom

Jeff Johnson - OneNewsNow - 8/19/2008

The same California Supreme Court that created a "right" to homosexual "marriage" earlier this year has now ruled that the state may force healthcare professionals to provide services that support an immoral and physically dangerous lifestyle.

California's highest court was unanimous in its decision on Monday that Christian doctors may not refuse to perform artificial insemination for homosexual patients. (See "California court says no religious exemption for doctors") Attorney Brad Dacus, president of the Pacific Justice Institute (PJI), reacts to the ruling.

"This is a clear violation of the fundamental rights of individuals to live and practice their faith," he states bluntly. "Forcing doctors to have to choose between being a doctor and being a Christian in the State of California is an outrageous violation of the fundamental rights of every American to be able to practice their faith and not to have to leave their occupation because of it."

In the case in question, the Christian doctors refused to perform artificial insemination on a lesbian patient, but did refer her to another doctor who would perform the elective treatment. Dacus says that proves this suit was not about guaranteeing "healthcare" for homosexuals, but instead about punishing Christians for obeying God's Word.

The doctors are planning to appeal the ruling.

The routine of living life as a Christian was becoming more habit than passion. The first love and honeymoon of conversion was a distant memory no longer able to excite. Motivation was compromised by various doubts about what was true and what the future held. They had lots of biblical knowledge and seemed to be grounded in the basic doctrines, yet they lacked any push to strive for more truth and to more fully understand the truth they knew.

This keynote warning is given upfront:

“We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away” (2:1).⁶

Their motivation to grow and mature in the Faith, which had been strong earlier, was now ebbing. They had become static in their learning and growth. And what was worse, they seemed to have adjusted to that static status even finding it comfortable.

Dim Bulbs Give Little Light

The manifestations of this spiritually sluggish state were evident in many ways. The writer of Hebrews draws attention to their spiritual, mental dullness (5:11-14) that was making it difficult for him to teach them the weighty truths he so passionately wanted them to understand.

“This material [I’m giving you] is difficult because you are slow-witted.”

Strong stuff. He wanted them to respond back, “no, we are not dullards, we are ready to hear what you have to say.” He was patiently chiding them to get off their spiritual butts, wake out of their lethargic state, and get on fire. They had been given great honors and gifts from God, gifts which lay idle with their idleness. With God’s gifts comes responsibility. He warned them:

“You have been enlightened, tasted the heavenly gift, have shared in the Holy Spirit, have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age...” (6:5).

The profound spiritual material the writer wanted to present required mental engagement and sharpness to grasp. He was about to embark on a thorough christological reflection that would answer their doctrinal doubts, and if internalized, provide the needed motivation to endure to the end. He would step-by-step illustrate the significance of Jesus’ ministry in the big scheme of things, placing the temple,

priesthood, sacrifice, faith and believer’s reward clearly where they fit in that big picture.

This was heady stuff for mature Christians to ponder, relish, and be inspired by. It would require mental agility to fully comprehend the complexities presented in chapters seven through ten. They couldn’t sleep or daydream through this sermon.

It seems these Hebrew folk were satisfied with the “milk” (5:12-6:3), but their teacher is telling them to go beyond what you already know and move forward. Maybe they thought they had doctrine down and had a handle on things. They had ceased seeking to know God and his plan more fully.

The author’s instruction involved a demonstration of how Christ, as the perfected High Priest, will in turn perfect his followers. The word “perfect” can be used in several senses and is here commonly used for being “mature.” Knowledge alone doesn’t equal perfection. The perfection the Hebrews needed to be pursuing was the maturity and stature of Jesus. What was it and how does one take on the image of Christ who is the image of God himself? This needed to be their focus and passion.

To follow Christ means to be perfected as he was through total submission and obedience to God, with prayers, tears, energetic learning, and even suffering.

The mature Christian is expected not only to “ingest” solid food but also to follow Christ on that path to final perfection, whatever the cost. The author is certainly not suggesting his audience move away from those basic teachings he lists in 6:1-3 (repentance, faith, baptisms, etc.), but to join in the present work that Christ is now doing. The author isn’t specifically suggesting some “higher” or more “enlightened” doctrine like the Gnostic heretics peddled; he is saying the purpose of Christ’s ministry was that we follow him into the Kingdom of God—with all that that implies.⁷

To follow Christ means to be perfected as he was through total submission and obedience to God, with prayers, tears, energetic learning, and even suffering (5:8). It means constantly exercising a mature spiritual mind to distinguish good from evil, to develop sound judgment and the righteousness of God (5:14).

Following in Jesus’ footsteps requires engagement, exercise, running the race, habituating obedience, grappling with life’s challenges, growing in knowledge and spiritual discernment, and in oneness with God. These are the very activities to which the Hebrews had lost commitment. Their teacher laces his writing with action verbs to challenge and motivate.

“We earnestly desire that each of you show the same zeal for the fullness of hope until the end,

so that you might not be sluggish, but might be imitators of those who through faith and perseverance inherit the promises" (6:11-12).⁸

The English proverb, *Sloth, like rust, consumes faster than labor wears*, is fitting for this community of second generation Christians. Their loss of first-love zeal, stagnation, lack of spiritual energy, growth and passion was moving them dangerously close to apostasy. Were they aware of the seriousness of the present danger? Apparently not.

Apostasy and the "Unpardonable Sin"

Twice in this epistle to the Hebrews the so-called "unpardonable sin" appears (6:4 and 10:26). In no other New Testament book is it so featured. Why? I believe it had to do with their sluggish spiritual state, a state not uncommon to second generation Christians and "old timers" in the faith. Tired Christians are Christians who have lost their commitment, lowered their spiritual horizon, settled into a comfortable corner of the culture, claiming the title "Christian," but no longer compelled to running the race.

Instead of progressing in the Christian walk, the author describes his slow-to-learn readers as becoming spiritually sluggish and mentally lazy (5:11; 6:12). Given what I see and know in my church universe, the author of Hebrews could be writing the same letter to many of us twenty-first century believers. Given its place in the biblical canon, I guess he has.

Can it be said of you and me that we are no longer as excited about spiritual learning and discovery as we once were? That we are no longer eager to share our faith with others, no longer willing to financially and prayerfully support those who are actively preaching and teaching the Word, no longer committed to fellowshiping with others, no longer even attending a church—which fault our author directly links to the road to apostasy (10:25).

Some I know have explained their general abandonment of past religious zeal with the trendy, jocular mantra, "been there, done that." Being flip about one's spiritual sluggishness is evidence the slide toward falling away is already in progress.

Sure, we've all had our disappointments with church organizations, ministers, church politics and gossip, hypocrites, phonies and frauds. So what. What does any of that have to do with the Creator, his Son, or the eternal Kingdom of God? What do disappointments with others have to do with your calling by God? Do human failings eliminate your calling, or your responsibility to glorify God, or your invitation to become Christ-like?

Often we play the blame game to avoid answering for our own lethargy. We use phrases like "I'm burned out with organized religion," and similar declarations to justify our lack of spiritual passion and zeal. We point to bad examples of certain Christians as a subtle device to lift ourselves above them without actually producing spiritual fruit.

A Slug Test

Let's take a test of our current state of spiritual activity by asking a few questions.

How many years have you've been a Christian? Since you first believed have you increased or lessened in the following areas:

Am I more or less passionate for the things of God?

Am I more or less curious about what God is like, his plan, and spiritual things?

Am I praying to God for help and guidance more or less?

Am I fellowshiping with other Christians more or less?

Am I sharing my spiritual hopes and faith with others more or less?

Am I serving others more or less?

Am I more or less hospitable?

Am I more or less generous with my money in supporting ministry and charities?

Am I pursuing learning by studying the bible and spiritual books more or less?

Am I thinking of and talking to God more or less?

Am I dreaming of the Kingdom of God more or less?

Am I resisting temptation more or less?

Am I seeking to have the Divine nature more or less?

Am I following Christ's example more or less?

Am I manifesting the fruits of the Spirit of God more or less?

All of us, especially we old time Christians, need to pay attention to the message of Hebrews. Overcoming inertia or the lack of it takes effort. The world is full of willing people; some willing to work, the rest willing to let them. God is calling the former.

If we're been resting on our oars we need to put them back into the water, move forward, and work up a sweat. God wants action, action, and more action. He wants and expects us to produce. Produce what? Good works and good fruit.

Our Hebrews' preacher, after warning of apostasy and the "unpardonable sin," gives us this picture:

"For land which drinks the rain which often comes upon it and which produces vegetation beneficial to those for whom it is cultivated partakes of blessing from God, but if land brings forth thorns and thistles, it is worthless and well-nigh accursed. Its destiny is the fire" (6:7-8).

Later in his letter he calls his readers to,

"Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering" (10:32).

After years of holding fast now is not the time to go slack and let go.

"So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised" (10:35-36).

The High Horizon

The heroic men and women featured in chapter eleven were anything but sluggish, anything but dullards, anything but apathetic. These towering examples were regular people but people with the high spiritual horizon of God's Kingdom. They were fired with passion and moving, moving, moving Godward.

Humans were designed by God to grasp what they reach for. This is also true of spiritual things. We follow our eyes whether driving a car or walking a path. We also are goal-seeking creatures that follow our mental visions and dreams of what we want to achieve or to become.

Where there is no vision we wander, go in circles, or even stagger backward. Having our eyes on the high horizon of God and his Kingdom is key to our arriving there.

The writer of Hebrews so artfully presents a winners' circle of men and women, with their life stories, (ch. 11) who because of their high horizon have secured the prize and safely await the resurrection. Their goal was forward and upward. They were "looking forward to the city with foundation, whose architect and builder is God" (11:10).

Astronomers speak of two basic horizons: the *sensible horizon* and the *celestial horizon*. The sensible horizon is the one viewed with the sense of sight; the celestial horizon is beyond sight and must be "seen" with the help of powerful instruments.

The heroes of faith were normal people who had uncommon faith and were sure of what they hoped

for and certain of what they could see on their celestial horizon (11:1). Our community of Hebrews needed to lift up their eyes to see the future God has in store for them; to see the reason and purpose for their lives.

Their spiritual horizon of sight was fixed on the things of God, his Way, his promises, and his coming Kingdom.

"They only saw them and welcomed them from a distance...They were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, and he has prepared a city for them" (11:13, 16).

For the Hebrews, this vision of the Kingdom was the motivating tonic that could bring them out of their spiritual stupor. It is also God's prescription for his people today—for you and me.

Sluggish No More

The writer of Hebrews uses an assortment of action verbs through his letter to challenge these beloved Christians to assess the seriousness of their spiritual drifting. The loss of God's gift of salvation is about as serious as things can get. The writer could see what was ahead for these folk if there wasn't spiritual renewal.

He challenged them to be risk takers with hope in God who would see them through to the end. As Paul put it: "Being confident of this, that he [God] who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."⁹

These Hebrews had been faithful, had done good works, had sacrificed, had loved, but with the passing of time had become tired and spiritually lazy. After warning them to produce good fruits that won't be burned up he gives this stirring appeal of encouragement and challenge:

"Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are confident of better things in your case—things that accompany salvation.

God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them. We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end in order to make your hope sure.

We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised" (6:9-12).

Before introducing the heroes of faith, who endured to the end and await their great reward, the writer of Hebrews gives this powerful dose of reality, this spiritually bracing slap in the face, this shaking to

wake up! He includes quotes from God recorded in Habakkuk.

“For in just a very little while, ‘He who is coming will come and will not delay. But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him.’ But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved” (10:37-39).

We, like them, are so near victory. We must not “grow weary and lose heart”¹⁰ but fix our eyes on “the kingdom we are receiving that cannot be shaken.”¹¹ Jesus said to seek the kingdom first and foremost.

The tonic, the elixir of life to cure spiritual sluggishness, is so beautifully painted into a picture by the psalmist.

“As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go to meet with God?”¹²

It’s all about going to meet God. Will we go like a slug or a deer?

END NOTES

1. Romans 13:11
2. Revelation 2 & 3
3. The writer of the book of Hebrews is unknown although most scholars are certain it was not Paul. It is assumed to be a “he” given the author’s masculine singular self-reference at 11:32 seems to preclude a female writer (some have added Priscilla to the roster of possible authors).
4. Hermeneia—A critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible, The Epistle to the Hebrews, Harold W. Attridge, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1989, P. 1.
5. Ibid, p. 12-13
6. “Drift away” literally means to “flow by” in the sense of a river flowing aside and escaping its normal channel. Metaphorically, it means to drift, to wander from the true path, to transgress. Thus, the son in Proverbs 3:21 was warned, “Son, do not drift away,” which means, “Observe my counsel and intention.” See the Anchor Bible Commentary Vol. 36 on Hebrews by George Wesley Buchanan, Doubleday, 1972, p. 24
7. Ibid, p. 162-163
8. Ibid, p. 166, author’s translation
9. Philippians 1:6
10. Hebrews 12:3
11. Ibid, 12:28
12. Psalm 42:1-2

Ken Westby is the founder and director of The Association for Christian Development (ACD) and is a director emeritus of the BSA. The ACD Web site is located at www.godward.org.

Editor’s Note: *One of our BSA board members, Dusti Howell, is on sabbatical from his normal job of teaching at Emporia State University in Emporia, Kansas, to work with the Legacy Institute in Thailand (Legacy-institute.org). Below is a short report of a recent trip that Dusti, some students, and his family took in South-east Asia.*

Hello everyone.

A few Emporia State University students, my family, and I just returned from trips to the border of Burma, to Laos, to the hill tribes of Thailand, and over the last few days, to Cambodia’s killing fields and one of the wonders of the medieval world, Angkor Wat, on the Cambodian-Thai border. When I taught English to Buddhist monks here in Thailand, 23 years ago, I really wanted to visit Angkor Wat. But Pol Pot controlled that area. He had just killed a third of his people (nearly 2 million Cambodians) in his bid for a Utopian communist system that was free from corruption and bribes. He emptied the huge cities into the villages under the pretext that the Americans were going to bomb the cities. It worked. When everyone left the cities he put them to work in the rice fields, eliminating money, schools, and nearly everything else in a bid to be the top rice exporting country in the world.

I was sent by the *Plain Truth* magazine to a refugee camp on the border of Thailand to do an interview with the Killing Field survivors, and thanks to 23 cans of Tuna and sardines I had with me, I was able to exchange these for an amazing experience. It has been 23 years since that time, and I was finally able to visit the country. The movie “The Killing Fields” doesn’t do a great job of showing how brutal the regime was but then it would probably take an R rating or worse to show that type of gross material. At the age of 46, I’ve waited half my life to get into Cambodia, and what I saw was amazing. This is a country that is very positive, but it is really hurting. Every family lost someone to the killing fields, many of them tortured and killed mercilessly. Educators were slaughtered ruthlessly for being corrupted by the former system. The communist leaders wanted blank slates to work with because they are easier to teach and follow more obediently. So the brains of the country were slaughtered between 1975 and 1979 before Vietnam overthrew Pol Pot and he moved his forces into the jungles of Cambodia for another two decades.

—Dusti Howell

Dusti earned a PhD major in Educational Communications and Technology and a PhD minor in Educational Psychology from the University of Wisconsin. He is an Associate Professor of Instructional Design and Technology at Emporia State University in Kansas. He has written over a dozen books on technology and academic success. This summer, while on Sabbatical in northern Thailand, he is teaching Bible, study skills, and technology classes to hill-tribe students at Legacy Institute (a Sabbatarian school).

The Failure?

by Julia Benson

Sure, I've been wanting to do the work of Christ for a long time. I've been wanting to serve Him bad. Sure I occasionally help with the children's Sabbath School at church. Sure I'm a witness to my family. Sure I write occasional articles for *The Sabbath Sentinel* share my personal insights of life as a Christian. But, for a long time, I've been wanting to go out into the world and preach the Gospel of Christ, and I finally figured out just how I could go about it.

The Story of Loveheart.

The Story of Loveheart is a children's illustrated book that I wrote a couple of years ago. Loveheart is a homeless dog who meets a family that counts on God's strength to see them through a dramatic change in their lives. Elizabeth, the little girl in the family, befriends Loveheart and convinces her family to take in the dog that nobody wants.

The story began as a bedtime tale for my daughter one night. Both Kiersten and I really liked it, so I developed the plot a little more and drew a few sketches to go with the story. Both Kiersten and I kind of liked the sketches, so I challenged myself to illustrate the book. For about one year I worked hard on the illustrations, first sketching, then tweaking, and then painting. Many times Kiersten was at my side, asking if she could "help," so I printed off some of the scanned images and let her paint them herself. Finally, after the sketches were done, I scanned them, taught myself how to use InDesign, a layout program, and I designed the book myself with the idea of someday self-publishing the book.

It is now three years later, the book isn't published yet (that is another story) and I have really been moved to DO SOMETHING WITH THIS BOOK. That is when I decided that it doesn't matter whether or not I have a bound book or not, I have a story, pictures, and a lot of ideas for children's activities to tie into the book. I really felt, and still feel that I am being drawn to a children's ministry through my children's stories. I love to write, so I would love to find a way to make writing the vehicle to honor God and honor my family. That just hasn't quite happened yet, but... there is no reason for me not to start sharing my relationship with Christ with others. And what a better way to do that than through sharing *The Story of Loveheart*.

I was both scared and excited about the story hour. I had taken out an advertisement in the local newspaper, offering the story time at my church. I had e-mailed everyone I could think of who might be interested in coming and who have children in their lives, I made sure there wasn't anything going on at church

that day, so that I could use the church basement, and I prayed that God would use me to do his work. I offered myself to God as a servant and asked Him to provide the people to come.

It was 2:30 p.m., the starting time of the story hour. Nobody came. At 2:45 I realized no one from the general public was coming, but I still had hope that some of the people I e-mailed would come. At 3:00 I wiped away a few tears as I tried to tell my daughter that I didn't think anyone was coming. Then I sat down on a piano bench and it all came out. I cried hard. Kiersten came and put her arms around me and as she was crying, she hugged me and told me everything would be all right. We sat and cried. We were both disappointed that nobody came. We felt lonely, like we lost new friends we hadn't even made yet. I felt like a failure. I had let God down.

As Kiersten and I sat on the piano bench we sobbed and sobbed in disappointment that nobody came to hear the story and receive the Gospel of Christ. Then it hit me. Could this be how Christ feels when we ignore him? Maybe I'm being foolish to attribute my earthly, simplistic emotions to my infinite, all-knowing Creator, but is it possible that He feels this way? That gave me a new perspective.

So then I started thinking about how Christ preached. Yes, he preached in the Synagogue, to the people who were already there, but he also went out to the people. HE WENT OUT TO THE PEOPLE. He didn't hide in the church basement of the Prairie du Chien Seventh Day Adventist church, hoping that the general public would be so moved by a 2 column by 2 inch ad in the paper, that they would flock to a church they know very little about to attend a children's story time. He didn't send out an e-mail to his friends and family and hope that they would show up at a church they've never really showed any interest in. HE WENT OUT TO THE PEOPLE!

So, here is my next step. I'd like to go out to the people. Because of this "failed" event, the librarian in my writer's group would like me to conduct a story hour using my book at the library. A friend who goes to a different church would like me to come to her church to share the book. An acquaintance would like me to share the book to her daughter's kindergarten class. So, although people didn't come to the Prairie du Chien Seventh Day Adventist church basement that Sunday afternoon, God was working in my life by showing me what I need to do to get the work done. He has provided people for me to GO OUT TO and share Christ's love.

Julia Benson is a freelance writer who lives in a small town in southeast Minnesota. A former school teacher, Julia now works part-time at a local newspaper. Julia has a husband and a young daughter. She attends an Adventist church in Wisconsin.

Editorial: Continued from page 3.

Israel and keep them loyal to the king and queen. It was up to Elijah to demonstrate to the people that their only path to freedom from Ahab and Jezebel and their bloodsucking priests was to renew their loyalty and obedience to God. Their return to God was their liberation from the political oppression of their day. As Christians we stand in the same place as Elijah. Our society is bound with the chains of many types of slavery. Our obligation is to reawaken the people to the realization that our elected officials are the guardians and sentinels of our freedom. They are neither the creators nor the providers of it.

Here's a rule of thumb when you consider how to cast your vote. Choose the politician that offers the most freedom within the bounds of good moral behavior. Reject those politicians that promise to give you the most out of the public treasury. These sociopathic vampires will weaken you to make you dependent on their beneficence and then make you a slave to the bureaucracy that they have set up to cater to your wants. In actual fact, they are using your money and your neighbor's money to buy your vote. They tie you down and steal your freedom by restricting your behavior and limiting your options by taking more of your income. As a Christian you need the most freedom possible to display the love of Christ toward your fellow citizens and preach the gospel without governmental interference.

Regarding the defense of the nation, one of the principal functions of government is to "secure" our liberties by maintaining a strong defense against enemies both foreign and domestic. In other words, it is the government's responsibility to protect us against foreign enemies and local criminals. This allows us to practice our liberty within the confines of the law without having to worry constantly about our safety.

Any candidate who is weak on crime and defense puts our liberty and our lives at risk. As Edmond Burke once said, "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing." We have the most to fear when our leaders vacillate in the face of evil. Either the leader has a weak moral base, or he fearful. Neither option inspires our confidence, but it is also true that such conduct by our elected leaders is an open invitation to aggressors and criminals to push forward with their unchecked behavior. Bullies thrive in a climate of weakness and vacillation, but they back down quickly in the face of strength and resoluteness.

There is a very real spiritual counterpart to a politician's approach toward international aggression or crime. When Satan perceives weaknesses, he immediately exploits that weakness in order to gain control of the person. The only defense against Satan is strength through the power of Christ. When we are strong in

Christ, trusting in Him and living the kind of life He approves, we have peace. Our peace comes through strength—His strength in us. In the same way, political leaders who are strong in dealing with crime and aggression tend to repel and dispel the ambitions of hostile foreign leaders and domestic criminals. Make no mistake about it, unscrupulous leaders and criminals have no sense of morality, but they often use the vacillation and uncertainty of weak and compromising leaders for the purpose of gaining the upper hand.

Recently Rick Warren, pastor of Saddleback Church in California and author of *A Purpose-Driven Life*, hosted a forum for the Republican and Democratic candidates for president. Social commentator Star Parker commented on the event: "For whatever good intentions Pastor Warren may have, by posturing as a neutral broker between different points of view, many of which have profound moral and religious implications, he contributes to the moral ambiguity we'd expect a pastor to be combating."

Miss Parker's comments highlight a point that needs to be remembered when evaluating candidates for election. Every candidate has a moral foundation. Some are straightforward in expressing their views; others are ambiguous about what they believe. With the spiritual discernment of the Holy Spirit that is in us, we should be able to judge these candidates with righteous judgment and know whether a candidate's moral foundation is shaky or solid.

Let me elaborate on the above comment. When a candidate speaks on moral issues without having to stop and figure out what to say about questions of right and wrong, good and evil, true and false, or life and death, that is a candidate who has a moral foundation. However, we often hear candidates expound at great length on subjects such as abortion, euthanasia, or infanticide in a way that confuses the listener into believing whatever he or she wanted to believe about the candidate in the first place. Yet the candidate never really answers the question. This is called a "nuanced answer." Nuancing often betrays the complete lack of moral conviction of the candidate, or it displays the candidate's desire to make his audience believe something that he really does not believe. Beware of such people, especially if they are politicians.

Christians have to be values voters. That is our part in politics. When politicians stray from positions that strengthen and uplift the people, they need to be called into account. Our society was built on a foundation of biblical principles, and it is up to us to demand that our political leaders not deviate from good, commonsense biblical positions. By doing so, we uplift all of society and guarantee the continuance of our God-given liberties.

—Ken Ryland

Interview: Phillip Johnson—Continued from page 11

PJ: That's what I've written about in my latest book, *Defeating Darwinism by Opening Minds*. That book really answers the question, especially in chapters six and seven, where I explain what I call the web strategy. This is the building of an intellectual movement and includes the combination of a strategy aimed at legitimating the critique of evolutionary naturalism in the secular universities and in bringing a common understanding of this issue to the Christian world.

GN: How would you like to see the subject of beginnings approached in science classes?

PJ: First and foremost, the subject should be approached with honesty and candor. I agree with the Darwinists that students should learn more about evolution. The difference is that they want to indoctrinate students, and I want them to learn the flaws in the theory. I want them to see why the fossil evidence is so inconsistent with Darwinism and how they point to a few isolated examples and ignore everything that doesn't fit their premise.

If science is going to deal with the question of whether there is a Creator, they ought to openly and honestly deal with both sides of the issue rather than just one. They say they stay away from religious issues, but that is false. They deal with them constantly by trying to persuade people that there is no intelligent Creator who had a hand in the creation, that purely physical, material mechanisms were the only thing at work. They refuse to deal with all the compelling evidence for an active, intelligent Creator.

GN: Regarding the Bible's view on truth vs. deception, Revelation 12:9 speaks of Satan, who deceives the whole world. In a much larger spiritual context, could the biblical account of an unseen god of this world deceiving mankind fit into this paradigm of naturalism, which you show undergirds and pervades our assumed educational relativism?

PJ: Yes, it certainly does. However, I prefer not to go to the book of Revelation because that makes a lot of people very nervous. When I'm speaking on this subject, the scripture I prefer to start with is Romans 1:20-21, which states that since the creation of the world, God's invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made.

We see the reality of the created through the creation, but then we see that, even though men knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible

man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

So what the Bible is saying is that, to avoid the reality of a Creator, people have exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator.

Evolution is another form of nature worship, which is what the Bible is talking about here. It's a way of getting God out of the picture, by replacing the true God with the god of the human imagination. The proposition is, effectively, that God didn't create man. It's the other way around: Man created God out of human imagination. Of course, what man has created man can command. That's the key point. So Romans 1:20-21, which bears this out, is the scripture that I prefer to emphasize.

GN: Are you ever able to use this scripture when arguing your points with the scientific community?

PJ: When I'm speaking to a secular university and a scientific audience, I stay completely away from anything to do with the Bible. In that context, the fact that something is in the Bible is considered to be a reason not to believe in it. You're not going to persuade those people with scriptures. That's the kind of subject that comes up with a Christian audience, the ones who want to find out how this ties in with the Scriptures. Unless some people have some initial respect for the Scriptures, there's no point in trying to use it as an explanation.

GN: Thank you, Professor Johnson, for discussing with our readers the subject of evolutionary naturalism, as it relates to our educational system, sound reasoning, and Christian faith. GN

Phillip Johnson bio

Phillip Johnson is the Jefferson E. Peyser professor of law at the University of California, Berkeley. He has written three books relating to the creation-evolution debate: *Darwin on Trial* (second edition, Intervarsity Press, 1993); *Reason in the Balance* (1995) and *Defeating Darwinism* (1997). Dr. Johnson is a graduate of Harvard University (1961) and received his law degree from the University of Chicago (1965). He was law clerk for California Chief Justice Roger Traynor (1965-66) and for U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice Earl Warren (1966-67). He has also been a visiting professor at the Emory University School of Law, Atlanta (1982-83), and at University College, London (1987-88).

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Needs vs. Wants

I have been a financial planner for a long time, working with affluent and high net worth people. When I first got into the business, I was surprised to learn that “high income” does not necessarily translate into “high net worth.” One of the first clients I worked with was making more than ten times what I was making, the equivalent of over one half million dollars per year in 2008 dollars. Yet in doing his financial plan I discovered that I had more money in the bank, and not to mention less debt, than he did!

I pondered how this could be. Many reasons can account for a sick financial statement, but certainly one reason is inability to know the difference between needs and wants.

A few months ago I stood before a middle-aged Kansas City audience and asked a couple of questions. “How many of you in this room grew up in a house with central air conditioning? How many grew up in a house with more than one bathroom?”

The response might have been unique to my audience, but not a hand went up to either question. So, I asked, is air conditioning a luxury or a necessity? Is it a need or a want?

My point was not to say that it’s wrong to have air conditioning or 2-½ baths. If you can afford such comforts in life, enjoy them! The point is to know the difference between needs and wants in order to allow for wise financial decisions. “Wants” can be a good way to spend your money if you can afford it and take care of your “needs” at the same time. The task is to discern the difference between the two, and that’s often the challenging part.

It’s like the story about a man approaching his preacher asking for assistance from church funds to pay the rent. The preacher asks him, “How do I know if I give you the money that you won’t just gamble it away?” Whereupon the man responds, “Well, I got gambling money.”

Helping people reach their financial goals is often too much like dealing with that man. He felt that he needed the bigger house, and then the second house, and then the boat, and the three vacations each year while at the same time thinking that retirement and funding the kids’ college would somehow take care of themselves. I wouldn’t tell such people to give up their air conditioning and the extra bathroom, but I would ask them to set some priorities about what is important and what is not. We all have limited resources and have to make decisions on how to allocate those resources.

You might not have the same level of luxury as that man, but we all have areas where knowing the difference between needs and wants can be a lifesaver during difficult economic times. Remember these proverbs:

“If you find honey, eat just enough—too much of it, and you will vomit.” (Proverbs 25:16 NIV)

“The eye never has enough of seeing, nor the ear its fill of hearing.” (Ecclesiastes 1:8 NIV)

“Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. As goods increase, so do those who consume them. And what benefit are they to the owner except to feast his eyes on them?” (Ecclesiastes 5:10-11 NIV)

From time to time I’ll be writing columns related to personal finances from a scriptural perspective. I’ll address questions such as this, but also such diverse areas as taxes, estate planning, insurance, investments, and a dozen other financial planning topics. But good planning begins with how you much you spend and how much you save. Sounds like a good place to start today.

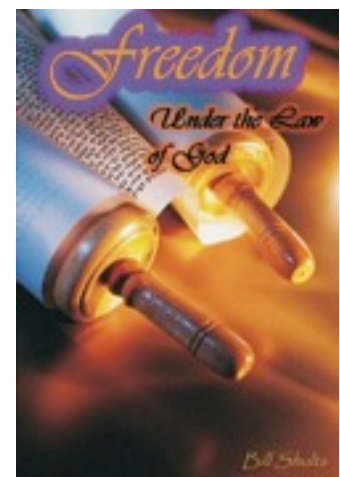
—Lenny Cacchio

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“Bind up the testimony and seal up the law among my disciples” (Isaiah 8:16 NIV).

The Church in the World

Persecution against Christians in India Continues Unabated

Since the present wave of violence against Christians started in Orissa state in eastern India, there have so far been 4,000 houses in 300 villages destroyed, 50,000 Christian adults and children hiding in forests, a nun raped, a woman burnt alive, and two pastors among 24 have been killed.

By Michael Ireland

Chief Correspondent, ASSIST News Service

Thursday, September 4, 2008

NEW DELHI, INDIA (ANS) — At least 18 people are confirmed dead in 92 incidents of violence against Christians since suspected Maoists murdered Hindu leader Swamiji Laxmanananda Saraswati and four others on Saturday (Aug. 23) in Orissa state, says Compass Direct News.

With Hindu extremists inciting hatred by heated accusations that Christians killed Saraswati, the national newspaper Hindu reported yesterday that nine people had been killed in Orissa violence, and a Compass Direct source near the state capital of Bhubaneswar confirmed an additional nine people slain.

The death count by the Hindu included four people killed in the Barakhama area. News agencies had earlier confirmed three dead in Raikia and two others, including a woman, killed in Bargarh, where a missionary-run orphanage was set on fire yesterday. The figure of 92 incidents thus far comes from the Global Council of Indian Christians.

Additionally, the Compass source said that Hindu extremists today killed pastor Samuel Naik of the Bakingia Seventh-Day Adventist Church at Kandhamal, and Jacob Digal and Gopan Naik of Damba village were slain this morning. Also killed today was Golok Naik of Pidinanju village (under Mondakia police station), and yesterday pastor Mukunda Bardhan from Mukundapur, Gajapati was burned to death.

Three other people whose names have not yet been verified, said the source, were killed in Katingia village of G. Udaygiri, along with a pastor belonging to Operation Mobilization from the same area. In Badimunda, about 12 kilometers (seven miles) from G. Udaygiri, nearly 25 Christian homes were burned down.

Compass Direct says there were many reports of Christians being pulled from their homes and killed or beaten, with many homes of Christians torched in Baliguda. According to reports by the Evangelical Fellowship of India (EFI), the East India office of Compassion International in Bhubaneswar was ransacked.

According to Compass Direct, Saraswati and four others were killed by suspected Maoists in the swami's ashram, or religious center, in the Jalespata area of Kandhamal district's Tumudiband Block in Orissa state. A warning letter found at the Saraswati religious center and use of expensive arms suggested Maoists were behind the attack.

In a state with a strong Maoist presence, Compass Direct says police reportedly said they have evidence to link the communist rebels to the murders of Saraswati and his four associates.

Authorities in Denial

CND also says Orissa Police Chief Gopal Chandra Nanda downplayed the violence, telling Reuters that incidents were only "sporadic" and that "some prayer houses have been attacked and vehicles have been burnt."

Likewise, local authorities and media have painted the shutdown as "peaceful," denying that organized attacks took place. The state is ruled by a coalition of the BJP and the Biju Janata Dal party.

At the same time, Compass Direct says that Hindutva (Hindu nationalist) extremists have continued to incite hatred against Christians and criticized the local government. VHP Secretary General Pravin Tagodia accused the state government of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik of acting like a "eunuch" and demanded his apology for the killing of Saraswati and his companions.

"Christians murdered Swamiji, but the government is lying and giving it a Maoist color," Tagodia said. "Naveen as an individual and police, in particular, are responsible for this attack orchestrated by the church on Hindu dharma."

"Kill Christians"

According to the Compass Direct report, Hindu extremists paraded the body of Saraswati throughout nearby villages, whipping up anger and mobilizing crowds against Christians, in uncontested defiance of a Kandhamal district administration prohibition against the gathering of four or more people. Among the slogans shouted was, "Kill Christians and destroy their institutions."

In its report, Compass Direct stated that in spite of an Orissa state-imposed curfew, crowds violated restrictions and proceeded to attack Christian communities throughout the state. Compass has received reports that the violence has spread to the districts of Gajapati, Phulbani, Nuaparha, Kalahandi, Rayagada and Koraput.

The Orissa Legislative Assembly was disturbed for the second consecutive day at the various calls for the resignation of Chief Minister Patnaik.

Christians make up 4 percent of Orissa's population, or about 900,000 of the total 37 million people.

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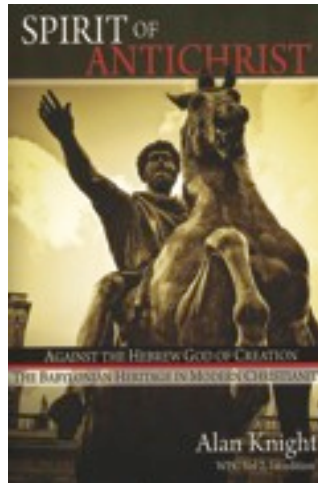
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Spirit of Antichrist is the long awaited sequel to author Alan Knight's very popular ***Primitive Christianity in Crisis***. In Revelation chapter 17 the apostle John presents a view of religious apostasy in his day that he connects with ancient Babylon. Scholars debate whether this should be understood as symbolic or literal. From the groundbreaking research that underlies this book,

author and historian, Alan Knight, presents evidence that, in addition to the symbolism, much of it was surprisingly literal. John's description of a harlot "with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication," is a reference to an exotic yet literal religious ritual performed in the ancient Near East.

This historical background provides a dramatic new understanding of the prophecies of the book of Revelation, including the precise identity and significance of the mysterious eighth king described in chapter 17 as "was and is not, it is an eighth but it belongs to the seven."

This book is available from the BSA for \$17 (nonmembers add \$3 for S&H). If you would like ***both Spirit of Antichrist and Primitive Christianity in Crisis***, send \$30 for both volumes (nonmembers add \$4 for S&H).

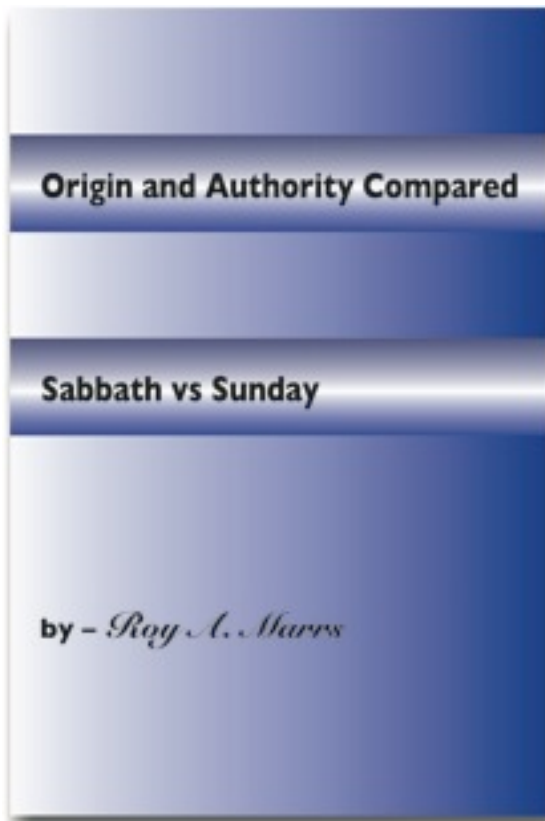
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This book, **Origin and Authority Compared, Sabbath vs Sunday**, by Roy A. Marrs is a 339 pages. It is printed in easy to read type size.

Marr's book traces the origin and authority of both celebrations, but shows the amazing contrast between God's way of initiating celebrations such as the Sabbath and Feast days, and man's way of initiating celebrations with never a hint of them in the Bible—no commands from God, no instructions on how, and even giving pagan names to them in violation of God's specific command not even to mention such names!

It also contrasts the Catholic method of justifying Sunday rather than Sabbath observance with the Protestant effort to justify keeping Sunday by claiming the Ten Commandments were abolished and that the Apostles observed the First Day of the week.

This book is not just a rehash of the usual presentations of the subjects treated. It delves into the question whether the "Early Church Fathers" deserve serious attention as authoritative sources on the subject of the origins of "Lord's Day Observance," and illustrates their divisive confusion of the matter.

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