

THE Sabbath Sentinel

May–June 2002



**Flamingo tongue snail
on a coral reef:
Did it evolve?**

BSA – The Bible Sabbath Association
“The Sabbath was made for man...” – Jesus, the Christ

The Sabbath Sentinel
May–June 2002 Volume 54, No. 3 Issue 495

FEATURES

- 4** **President's Message — The Mind of Christ**
by Dr. Sidney L. Davis
- 6** **Things You May not Know about Evolution**
by John D. Morris, PhD
- 9** **Spiritual Maturity: How Can We Achieve It?**
by Brian Knowles
- 13** **The Story of Patrick and The Celtic Church**
by Ulrike Unruh
- 17** **An Invitation to Sabbath: Rediscovering a Gift**
Report to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

DEPARTMENTS

- 3** **Editorial — The Ministers of God**
- 20** **The Church in the World**
- 21** **Letters to the Editor**
- 23** **Classified Ads**

Cover Photo: Flamingo tongue snail
The Coral Kingdom Collection
Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary
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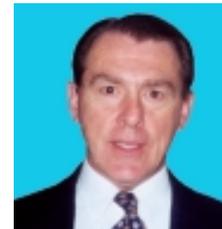
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The Ministers of God



What comes to mind when you think of a “minister of God?” Is it someone standing in a pulpit railing against the sins of the congregation, or perhaps someone kneeling beside a hospital bed praying for a desperately sick person? If the images in your mind are only those of a church leader, someone we like to call “elder,” “minister,” or “pastor,” then your image is like a partially completed portrait.

Of course, these days it’s very popular to say, “I have a ministry doing ...” (You fill in the rest.) There is nothing wrong with people having their own ministries, but the type of minister of God I am thinking of has nothing to do with anything I have described so far. In fact, to many the idea that I am going to present is very foreign and to some, it borders on heretical, but it is biblical nonetheless.

I would like to present to you, Judge Roy Moore of Alabama, Chief Justice of the Alabama Supreme Court and minister of God. Now, before you write this idea off and turn the page, read what the Apostle Paul had to say about civil authorities in Romans 13:1-6: “Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God’s minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God’s minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience’ sake.”

It is not my intention to do a detailed exegesis of this passage; that has been done many times. I only want to point your attention to the words, “he is God’s minister.” It is very important for Christians to understand the role of civil authorities in God’s overall plan. During the early years of American colonization and the American Republic, it was common to refer to Christ as the “Supreme

Ruler of the Nations” or the “King of all Nations.” Our founders took literally the words of the prophet Daniel: “... he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings...” (Daniel 2:21), and the description of Christ in Revelation: “Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth...” (Revelation 1:5).

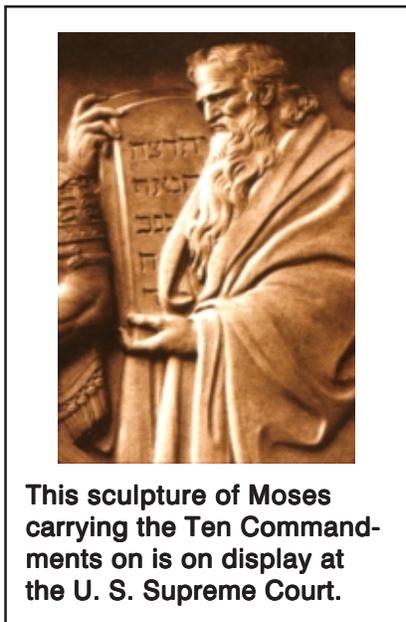
Somewhere along the way we lost sight of the fact that civil authorities are answerable to the Supreme Ruler of the Universe. We like to segment our lives into neat, little compartments: We speak of our “religious life,” our “social life,” our “work” or “business life,” etc. What our

founders seem to have grasped is that Christ must touch every aspect of life (including and, perhaps especially, government), and it is the Christian who must bring the impact of Christ to those areas of life that remain untouched by Him. When Jesus told His disciples to “teach all nations” and preach the gospel to “to every creature,” He was telling them that such a thing was possible because, “All power [including civil and judicial power] is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Matthew 28:18). That means that He is now and forever will be the final authority over all nations: “He removeth kings, and setteth up kings.” This is why the founders of the American Republic expected civil authorities to honor God and make the way of those preaching the gospel of

Christ as smooth as possible. This is also why they believed that they had a right to overthrow any civil authority that was betraying his God-ordained ministry.

This brings us back to Chief Justice Roy Moore of the state of Alabama. Judge Moore, both as a circuit court judge and chief justice, has courageously defended the public display of the Ten Commandments. The result has been an unrelenting attack on him personally and upon his integrity as a judge by those who champion the phony, modern, secularized version of the “separation of church and state.”

As an Alabama circuit court judge in 1992, Judge Moore began his sessions with a voluntary prayer. He



This sculpture of Moses carrying the Ten Commandments on is on display at the U. S. Supreme Court.

Continued on Page 12



The Mind of Christ

or

The Need for a New, More Christ-like Relationship between Jews and Gentiles

by Dr. Sidney L. Davis

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." Philippians 2:5

What may come as a shock to many is the proposition that Yeshua (Jesus Christ as many call him) was a Jew and that to be more "Christ-like" means to be more Jewish, i.e., having "the mind of Christ" means having a "Jewish mind." By the "Jewish mind" I mean a mind that reveres the Torah and applies its precepts to every area of life. The Messiah and the movements which gave rise to Christianity were completely Jewish in their origins and outreach. The importance of apprehending the beginnings of the Christian faith as completely Jewish cannot be overstated.

We only become capable of understanding the Jewishness of Jesus and His Jewish disciples of the New Testament Scriptures as well as the original character of Christianity when we begin to educate ourselves about Jewish life, thought, and faith as they existed in the life and faith of Yeshua (Jesus) and of the early Christian church. As a Sabbath school teacher and a speaker before Sabbath-keeping Christians, I often hear remarks of incredulity and cynicism about the fact that not only is Jesus Christ *still* a Jew, but that the New Testament is *still* a Jewish Testament about Him.

We have to completely divest ourselves and unlearn (no easy task for anyone nurtured in the creed and traditional views of the Gentile Christian church) every consideration that Jesus and His followers represented anything other than a Jewish perspective. Even the very origin of "the church" in the New Testament is a wholly Jewish concept. It is used in connection with God's faithfulness and irrevocable covenant with Israel. In the Old Testament the expression *Yom haQahal* the "Day of the Congregation," refers to the day when God made a covenant with Israel at Sinai, and made them into His holy people. This expression is rendered in the Septuagint as the *Hemera Ekklesia*, the "Day of the *Ekklesia*," or the "day of the *Church*" (see Deuteronomy 4:10;9:10;18:16). Israel, the Covenant People, was the "*Ekklesia* of the Lord"

(Deuteronomy 23:1-3,8). The word "*church*" was not something new that Christians invented in order to differentiate themselves from the Jewish "Synagogue," indicating thereby that a new and different religion had appeared. Rather, it was of common usage among the Jews of the time and belonged to the vocabulary of the Synagogue that Jesus Himself used. In Matthew 18:15-17 Jesus gives direction on what to do about a brother who will not be reconciled by the testimony of two or three witnesses. "If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church [*ekklesia*]." Jesus not only speaks from the Jewish perspective (Deuteronomy 19:15), but the "church" He speaks of here is the local Jewish congregation following the procedure set out in the Mosaic law, the Torah. The Christian "Church" did not exist yet! Stephen used the word "church" to apply to "the church [*ekklesia*] in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him [Moses] in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us" (Acts 7:38).

In other words, the Christian must, as much as possible, become a Jew in comprehension, sympathy, and spirit before he can truly address himself to anything genuinely Christian from the biblical point of view. ("...he is a Jew who is one inwardly..." [Rom. 2:29]) While there lingers any sense of alienation or hostility toward what it means to be biblically Jewish, it is not possible to get Christianity into correct perspective. In this quest, scholarship and book learning are not enough, because scholarship and book learning do not necessarily involve commitment and identification with the Jewish mind and soul.

The "Christian" religion as it is commonly understood today by many professed Christians is the culmination of the long held Jewish hope that is said to be misunderstood by those (the Jews) to whom and for whom the promises were originally made. Instead of being properly understood within the context of four thousand years of Jewish hermeneutics, interpretation, commentary, schol-

arship, and tradition, instead of being a religion whose true fulfillment was foretold in the Jewish (Old Testament) prophecies, the “Christian” religion has become a religion whose true fulfillment has been marked by a progressive replacement of the distinct Jewishness or Jewish origins of “Christianity” with a pagan derived Gentile tradition. Many even among Sabbath-keeping Christians look with self-righteous disdain upon Judaism, its traditions, and customs and justify such disdain with the blanket condemnation of “the commandments and traditions of men.” Thus, they recklessly slander the Jewish people with the imputation and presumption of “evil intent” and ascribe it to “the perfidy of the Jews.” While we look back with horror at the physical terror of the holocaust, we perpetuate the spiritual legacy whose logical conclusion gave birth to it.

The religion that began in the Jewish synagogue intact with its customs and liturgy has been substituted with a religion derived from pagan customs and liturgy. This is a well-documented fact (perhaps little known but nevertheless a very significant fact of history) that illustrates the distance of Christianity from its Jewish roots (i.e. the pagan substitution or usurpation of “Christianity”). Some of the greatest monuments and institutions of the Christian church rest *literally* upon the foundations of the greatest heathen temples of antiquity. Also, note must be made of the history and practices of the sect of the Nazarenes [or Netzarim] (Acts 24:5), referred to in historical documentation and in the New Testament Scriptures as a legitimate and recognized sect of Judaism. It was the practices of this sect that was successfully defended by one of the greatest and most revered Rabbis and teachers in Judaism—Gamaliel, grandson of the Rabbi Hillel and the teacher of Saul who became Paul the Apostle (Acts 5:34).

Today with the amount of information and history that careful scholarship has been able to uncover from the ancient and credible witnesses of archeology including that from the “Dead Sea Scrolls” and the primary sources of the “Christian” church fathers, we stand at a certain vantage point where we can better see where the trail of the truth of church history has split into two recognizable paths, “Jewish Christian” and other “Gentile Christian.”

The European Reformation was able to start the magnificent exposé of how much and to what extent heathen ways and superstitions had found their way into the “Christian” church because of the atmosphere of the new age of enlightenment and reason. Unfortunately, what Protestants then and now have been reluctant to recognize is how much of what are considered “fundamental doctrines” of the “Christian” church are derived from an anti-Judaic interpretation of the New Testament Scripture. This anti-Judaic bias has affected the liturgy and theology of the Protestant Church just

as much as the more recognized and most blatant paganism of the Catholicism it attempted to reform.

In fact, many Christians are just beginning to understand that the changes in the Church due to anti-Judaic, Gentile influences that were believed to have taken place in the fourth century actually began in the early part of the second century. So what has been done up to now as a result of the European Reformation is to revert from the most obvious forms of Gentile intrusion into the church to a less contaminated Gentilization which, for some reason, cannot entirely break away from the anti-Semitic and anti-Judaic prejudices which have governed the “Christian” interpretation of the Scriptures. Paradoxically, the Catholic Church was the first to recognize this and has made significant advances in scholarship and biblical research in addressing the problem of this prejudicial anti-Judaism since the papal encyclical “Nostra Aetate” and the 2nd Vatican Council.

There is a growing movement in many Christian churches across denominational lines (at the very least among some chosen individuals in various churches and fellowships) that is coming to terms with the Jewish roots of the Christian faith. There is a great investigation that seeks to examine the progressive movement of Christianity away from its original inspiration, examining where, why, and how the Church began to diverge from its Judaic roots. This occurred not because of the inclusion of Gentiles into the covenant or by taking the gospel to the Gentiles, but by falling instead into the ways and traditions of the Gentiles.

Unfortunately, however, taken as a whole, the traditional Christian church is really unprepared to examine this issue honestly. The very nature of such an investigation calls into question dogmas, doctrines, liturgy, scholastics, and traditions that would require a reevaluation of fundamental beliefs and, in many cases, monumental changes as a result of an honest examination. Through traditions which are assumed to be true, the Church remains enmeshed in the gentilized faith of its own making and cannot readily free itself from it. This is the great dilemma that will challenge every thinking Christian who investigates it honestly.

It is the concerted efforts of Bible students and biblical scholars researching the Jewish roots of the Christian faith that are bringing to the forefront the factors and issues that have stimulated this great investigation. Such researchers have made it a point to bring this information to those who stand as the guardians of the spiritual interests of churches and people. Pastors, elders, and church teachers now have the privilege of having access to this scholarship and have the opportunity to examine the evidence that calls for an understanding of the Judaic roots of our faith in the context of the gospel message.

Continued on Page 8

Things You May not Know about Evolution

by John D. Morris, Ph.D.*

“Because (God) hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world ... by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead” (Acts 17:31).

Recently I had the privilege of addressing a gathering of state legislators and other influential political individuals. These gifted men and women are typically highly educated, most having been taught evolution and an evolutionary worldview extensively and exclusively. Now, they have the power to establish educational guidelines and societal norms. Sponsors of the banquet requested a talk both informative and evangelistic. What can one say in 45 minutes to a gathering of influential leaders that will make a difference? I don't pretend to know what would be best, but perhaps you would be interested in what I did say. My talk was entitled, “Three Things You May Not Know about the Theory of Evolution.” I was speaking only from notes, but a summary of the talk, with a few alterations, appears below.

Introduction

I started with definitions for clarity. There is much misunderstanding of important words today, and some purposefully misuse words to confuse students and hide their true intentions.

Science has to do with careful observations in the present. Unlike true science, both evolution and creation are, at best, historical reconstructions of the unobserved past since no one can empirically observe either. In reality they are complete worldviews, ways to interpret all observations in the present, and a basis for all of life's decisions. In previous years, “science” was understood to mean “the search for truth,” but many now limit that to a search for naturalistic explanations, even if that search leads to hopeless conclusions.

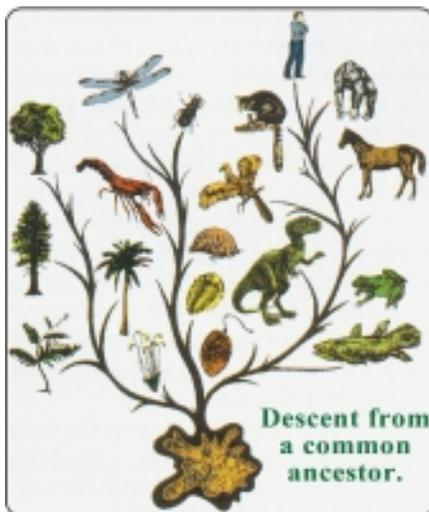
Evolution implies “descent from a common ancestor” with all of life related, consisting of modified forms of very different things, such as a person descending from a fish. Evolution does not mean merely “change,” for all things change with time. For clarity we must restrict this term to meaningful change, especially the descent of new types of organisms from earlier, different ones.

Creation denotes abrupt appearance of basic categories of life without any basic type having descended from some other category, and with no extensive change once the category appears. Lack of change is known as *stasis*. Fish have always been fish, ever since they first appeared, and dogs have always been dogs. Fish and dogs and all else may have varied a little, but did not come from a common ancestor.

The term *microevolution* is sometimes used for small, horizontal changes that are readily observed (such as the various breeds of dog), while *macroevolution* implies large vertical changes (fish to dog) that have never been observed. These big changes constitute evolution as Darwin used the term and as the general public understands it.

Furthermore, evolution, as understood by all leading evolutionists, textbook writers, and theoreticians, utilizes only *natural* processes, like mutation and *natural* selection. To leading evolutionists, only unguided random forces have been involved with no *supernatural* input allowed.

Following are three important points about real evolution—significant changes—the origin of new categories of life from older different ones. Even if one is highly educated about evolution, he may not know these things, but this knowledge is essential if intelligent decisions are to be made.



I. Evolution didn't happen.

A. Random forces cannot account for life.

The design we see in living things is far too complex, too designed, too engineered to be the result of mere undirected, random forces. Even the simplest thing we could call "living" is vastly more complex than a super computer and super computers don't happen by chance. Every cell is composed of many constituent parts, each one marvelously designed and necessary for the whole. Without any one of its parts, the cell could not live. All of it is organized and energized by the magnificent DNA code, an encyclopedia of information which, even though modern scientists can't read it, is read and obeyed by the cell. Surely some things need a Designer/Author.

B. Evolution (i.e., macroevolution) doesn't happen in the present.

If it ever happened in the past it seems to have stopped. Maybe environmental conditions don't change much, or selective pressures are too little, but everyone knows that real macroevolution is not and cannot be observed today.

Mutations, random changes in the DNA information code, are observed, but never do these "birth defects" add any innovative and beneficial genes to the DNA. Instead, mutations are either repaired by the marvelous mechanisms elsewhere in the DNA, or are neutral, harmful, or fatal to the organisms.

Likewise, natural selection occurs all around us, but this only chooses from among the variety that already exists; it can't create anything new. Evolutionists may talk of actual selection as if it had a mind of its own and does the work of evolution on purpose, but it is inanimate and unthinking, impotent to bring about more than micro-evolutionary changes.

C. Evolution didn't happen in the past.

When we look at the record of life in the past, we see no conclusive evidence that any basic category arose from some other category either. We see that some categories have gone extinct, like the dinosaurs, but the rest fit into the same categories that we see today. We see dogs in great variety, even some extinct varieties, but no half dog/half something else. Evolutionists have a few transitional forms that are commonly mentioned, but if evolution and descent from common ancestors really occurred we should see multiplied thousands of transitional forms. We do not see them.

The most famous living evolutionary spokesman, Dr. Stephen J. Gould, paleontologist at Harvard University, has made a career out of pointing out to his colleagues that the fossil record shows *abrupt appearance* and *stasis*. He is no friend of creation and yet as an honest scientist he must acknowledge this now well-known fact. He proposed the concept of "punctuated equilibrium" to account for the fossils in which life usually is in equilibrium, or stasis, and doesn't change at all. When a category of life encounters a sudden environmental shift, it changes rapidly into a different stable form, so rapidly in fact that it leaves no fossils. How convenient. Evolution goes too slow to see in the present, but it went so fast in the past it left no evidence. Gould is arguing from lack of evidence!

But lack of transitional forms is exactly what should be the case if creation is true. The fossil record supports abrupt creation of basic kinds much better than either slow or fast evolution.

D. Evolution can't happen at all.

The basic laws of science are firmly opposed to evolution, especially the Second Law of Thermodynamics which insists that all real processes yield less organization and information in their products than in the original. This basic law leads to devolution, not evolution. The presence of abundant external energy has never, as far as science has observed, produced beneficial mutations or added information to the genome as evolutionists claim. Instead, an abundance of incoming energy will hasten the deterioration of living things, especially the DNA. It will not bring about their evolution. Evolution is against the Law!

Evolution doesn't happen, didn't happen and can't happen, and is fully unable to account for the design that we see.

We've all heard the claim that "evolution is science and creation is religion." This oft-repeated mantra originated with the testimony of Dr. Michael Ruse at the 1980 Arkansas creation trial. The presiding judge, known for his prior bias toward evolution, entered it into his formal opinion, and this flag has been waved by evolutionists ever since. But Dr. Ruse, an expert on the nature of science and scientific theory has recently admitted that he was wrong—that "evolution is promulgated by its practitioners as... a religion, a full-fledged alternative to Christianity... Evolution is a religion." Which brings us to point two.

II. Evolution is a complete worldview.

Evolution is the religion of *naturalism*, the antithesis of *supernaturalism*. It purports to answer all the



“big” questions of life. “Who am I?” “Where did I come from?” “Where am I going?” “What’s the meaning of all this?” Claiming that science equals naturalism excludes a Creator from science by definition. Even if that Creator exists and has been active, such a notion is unscientific. This religion of naturalism, that we are merely the result of blind random forces, is logically compatible only with atheism. It has resulted in life without accountability to a Creator and has led to a licentious society full of great heartache, for evolutionary thinking underpins racism, abortion, infanticide, euthanasia, promiscuity, divorce, suicide, Social Darwinism, etc. While science and technology have accomplished great things, often by evolution believers, the concept of evolution itself has led to nothing useful.

III. The religion of evolution is the opposite of Christianity.

Evolution can be summed up by the phrase “survival of the fittest” and the extinction of the unfit. The death of the majority allows the few with beneficial mutations to continue. The strong thrive at the expense of the weak and helpless. The only things that matter are survival and reproduction. Evolution starts with small beginnings and over time, with volumes of bloodshed and disease, arrives at man. As Darwin concluded in the last paragraph of *Origin of Species*, death, carnivorous activity and extinction produced man.

Christianity poses a very different picture. It starts with a mighty Creator who created a “very good” (Genesis 1:31) universe, one in which was no pain, suffering, or death. He recreated His image in man, and graciously supplied his every need, including personal fellowship with Him. This perfection was rejected by man, and now all of man’s domain suffers the “wages of sin” (Romans 6:23), deteriorating and dying under the effect and penalty of sin. All things had been placed under Adam’s stewardship, and now all suffer under his penalty. Plants wither, animals die, people suffer and die. Even inanimate things deteriorate. The moon’s orbit decays. The sun uses up its fuel. The entire creation suffers (Romans 8:22).

Today we see extinction and survival of the fittest, but these are not creative processes, they are reminders to us to return to our Creator for His gracious solution to our sin penalty, for He graciously sent His Son to die as our sacrifice. The most fit of all died for the unfit. He gives us eternal life as a free gift of His grace.

Contrast these concepts with survival of the fittest and struggle for existence, and you will see them as opposites. While evolution offers nothing but struggle and ultimate elimination, Christianity offers everlasting life free from every struggle and death.

Both evolution and Christianity are complete worldviews. Of the two, creation is better supported by

scientific observation, and it alone makes sense out of life and eternity. □

* Dr. John Morris is President of ICR.

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Continued from Page 5

But time is revealing that many who sit in “*ekklesiastical*” circles are either unwilling or unable to respond to this great investigation. If circumstances remain as they are, a necessary and positive movement toward understanding our Judaic roots may be taken over by the laity.

It has long been the contention of old-school Protestantism that what it was pleased to call Popery was nothing else but “baptized paganism,” and there are many examples and much evidence to justify this designation. A good deal of this was collected by Alexander Hislop in his 19th century work, ***The Two Babylons***, in which he shows that the church of Rome derived her her objects of worship, her festivals, her doctrines, her rites, her ceremonies from pagan worship.

In the spirit of truth and in the tradition of onward progression of the Protestant Reformation, the Christian church now faces her destiny: address the issues that this article introduces and open them to wide-ranging discussion. Christians must challenge themselves not as to whether the Christian faith is valid, but whether the 16th century view of “replacement theology,” the 19th century view of “dispensationalism,” and similar theological paradigms are valid premises for understanding what is, after all, a Jewish Gospel—to the “Jew first” and to the Gentiles (Gal.3:8; Heb.4:2).

For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have “the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:16). □

“Question: Which is the Sabbath day?

“Answer: Saturday is the Sabbath day.

“Question: Why do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday?

“Answer: We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic Church transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday.”

Peter Geiermann, C.S.S.R., ***The Converts Catechism of Catholic Doctrine*** (1957), p. 50.

Spiritual Maturity: How Can We Achieve It?

by Brian Knowles



Any of us long-time Christians find ourselves victims of what appears to be arrested spiritual development. Despite the length of time we have been converted, we seem no farther ahead than when we first came to know Christ. We continue to throw temper tantrums and find it impossible to keep a lid on our anger. We still demonstrate faithlessness, jealousy, lust and myriad other works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19 ff.). At the same time, we display precious little of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22 ff.). In rare moments of introspection we may wonder, “What have I done with all of these years? I seem as carnal today as when I started.” We may even question the validity of our own conversion.

In a way, the very willingness to ask such questions is itself an indicator of at least some spiritual growth. It takes a degree of maturity and humility to recognize and acknowledge one’s spiritual shortcomings. If you find yourself thinking this way from time to time, you’re probably on the right path. None of us should ever be satisfied with the state of our spirituality.

On the other hand, those who believe that they have “arrived” spiritually, and that they are now fully mature in the Lord, may be in some trouble. None of us is as mature in the faith as we ought to be—at least not when measured by the standard of Jesus Christ.

For many Christians, spiritual maturity is an elusive chimera. It is something they know they should aim for, yet they have no idea how to achieve it. Perhaps some of the points in this article will help.

The Key Sign of Spiritual Maturity

The key indicator of spiritual maturity is one’s ability to love in a godly way. How do we know this? To be spiritually mature is to be like God. We have been called to imitate God. Paul wrote to the Ephesians, “Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly beloved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” The apostle John wrote, “Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love” (1 John 4:8). To know and be like God is to have developed a capacity for godly love. The Spirit of God influences us to love. It stands to reason then that the more of the Holy Spirit

we have, the greater will be our capacity and inclination to love in a godly manner. Paul wrote that the “love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us” (Romans 5:5 KJV).

Of course there are those who ridicule the notion that Christians should express love in any emotional way. They view it as mere maudlin sentimentality. They see it as an “unmasculine” feminized form of faith. They make fun of Christians—especially men—who openly express affection through hugging, verbal expression, or emotion. Several years ago, a woman who was a neighbor of one of my late relatives expressed revulsion at the fact that men at the local Pentecostal Church “openly hugged each other right out on the street in front of the church!” She seemed to believe that the church was encouraging, contrary to Scripture, homosexual relationships between men.

The well-meaning lady had no clue. In her mind, she was expressing righteous indignation, and the men were expressing perversion! She couldn’t have been more wrong. Yet, her life to date had been a story of good works and care for others. She could understand love so long as it was expressed in an unemotional way.

Jesus’ New Commandment

Jesus, in teaching his own *talmidim*—disciples—said, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:34-35).

Now ask yourself this: If Jesus’ disciples did not openly express their love for each other, then how would “all men” know that they were his followers? Of course the issue is how was this affection and love appropriately expressed? There truly were occasions in which the disciples of Jesus showed physical affection for each other. In John 13:23 (KJV) we read: “Now there was leaning on Jesus’ bosom one of his disciples whom Jesus loved.” This is not referring to a homosexual relationship, but to simple affection between teacher and pupil.

The way the first Christians treated each other in public was the visible sign that they were Christians. Their interpersonal relationships were wholesome, selfless, giving, forgiving, and mutually supportive. Unlike

much of the Church today, they were not competitive enemies. They were “in it together.” At the same time, they had their occasional disagreements. After appropriate prayer and haggling, they worked out their differences and moved unitedly ahead (i.e. Acts 15).

Love, like faith, without works or manifestation, is dead. If we say we have love, but we do nothing that demonstrates it, we have no reason to claim it. Love, to be love, has to have legs.

Now, here’s a little test. If you have concluded that I am talking about men hugging men as the demonstration of love, you missed the point. That may be a minor symptom, but it’s not the issue at hand here. The way Christians treat each other is.

The word used for love in the Greek Gospel that preserved Jesus’ originally Hebrew words is *agape*. Its basic meaning is “love.” Nothing in the Greek-English Lexicon suggests that it means primarily a display of emotion or affection, yet that need not be excluded. The word itself can mean “human love,” “the love of God and Christ” (toward men, or of Christ to the Father), or it can refer to the “love feasts” of the early Church (Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, pp. 5-6).

In short, Jesus taught that if one is a true Christian, one loves one’s fellow Christians. How this love is manifested is determined by the need of the moment.

Love is the antonym for hate. True Christians do not hate other Christians for any reason. If they do so, it is a symptom of spiritual immaturity. It is one thing to disagree on a point; it is quite another to hate. There is no room in the Christian’s emotional vocabulary for hatred.

Paul’s Vision of Maturity

The apostle Paul was concerned for the spiritual maturity of the churches under his care. In reflecting on his own spiritual development, Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish things behind me” (I Corinthians 13:11).

Consider the nature of a child. The smaller the child, the more self-centered it tends to be. A small baby thinks only of its own needs, comfort and wants. It is a black hole of self, sucking everything into it. It sees the universe as revolving around itself.

As the child grows, its awareness of things, people and needs outside of itself is heightened. Instead of seeing all toys as its own, it eventually learns that some toys belong to other children. Gradually, incrementally, the child’s world opens up. As it matures, it moves progressively outside of itself into the larger world of others. Over time, it becomes “socialized.” (For those who

wish to study the emotional development of children, you might consider the work of Piaget & Kohlberg.)

Arrested Development

Children who freeze their emotional and intellectual progress at certain levels are said to have become victims of arrested development. We have all known adult men and women who appear to be emotional adolescents. Such people can become “emotional vampires” sucking the energy of all who come in contact with them. Like children, they use emotion as a weapon. Sometimes such arrested adults use “emotional blackmail” techniques to manipulate and control others. Books have been written on this subject.

If an arrested or immature adult is not getting enough attention, he or she may, like a neglected child, seek “negative strokes” by doing something outrageous, creating a crisis, or accusing someone close of something of which they are not guilty. Now all attention shifts to the person generating the crisis. Everyone around them begins to appease and cater to the proverbial “squeaky wheel.” Some react defensively. Either that, or they become angry with them. The troublemaker now has what he or she wanted: attention and control. Such arrested people would rather receive negative attention than to be ignored.

Every family it seems has in it a gaggle of such people. They test the maturity of all of the other family members. They challenge us, stretch us, and force us to dig deep into our bag of emotional and spiritual resources. They try our patience to the max. Often they drive us to our knees in prayer.

The problem of arrested development occurs in people at both the natural level and at the spiritual level.

Arrested Spiritual Development

When we find Christians who have been baptized for decades behaving as though they were “baby Christians” we are probably looking at cases of arrested spiritual development. If we find ourselves fighting the same old problems we fought when we were first converted, we may be suffering from it ourselves. Here are some ways of testing for arrested spiritual development:

Do you still have just as big a problem with your temper as when you were first converted?

Do you feel spiritually powerless?

Do you have long dry spells in which nothing seems to be going on between you and God?

Are you unable to generate love, care and concern for others?

Do you live a fundamentally self-centered, self-seeking life?

Do you still seek to manipulate and control others through tantrums, emotional blackmail and negative stroke seeking?

Is it “all about you”?

Do anger, hatred and jealousy play an inordinately large role in the way you express your personality?

Do you put others down to make yourself look better?

Does your life reflect more of the works of the flesh than fruit of the Spirit?

Do you seek to get next to important church leaders in order to project “merit by association”?

These questions and their answers are revealing. They can be helpful in taking stock of where you are in a trajectory toward spiritual maturity.

How Spiritually Mature Love is Manifested

Let us now return to Paul’s discussion of it. We have already seen that one of the marks of immaturity as seen in babies is an utter preoccupation with self. Paul, after explaining that he had put away childish things, goes on to show that “love is not self-seeking” (I Corinthians 13:4). So the trajectory from immaturity to maturity leads outward from self. Mature love is selfless love. Immature love is self-love.

Furthermore, Paul goes on to explain that no matter what else we can do—speak in angelic or human tongues we didn’t learn, demonstrate the gift of prophecy, fathom mysteries as Daniel did, or even exercise mountain-moving faith—if we can’t express love spiritually, we’re nothing. Appropriate, godly love, then, is at the heart of spiritual maturity. Knowing that, isn’t it something we ought to be actively seeking to achieve and express?

Love is the first-listed fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22). As Paul also taught, every Christian should “Follow the way of love...” (I Corinthians 14:1).

When Paul describes to the Corinthian congregation the ways in which godly love is manifested, he is providing a treatise on spiritual maturity. Spiritual maturity is characterized by patience, good manners (civility), lack of envy, humility and a temper that is well under control. The spiritually mature person is not preoccupied with himself or herself. He or she has died to self. (There is a hymn that is appropriate here; it is called “Others.”)

Those who have reached a high level of spiritual maturity are no longer interested in keeping track of other people’s mistakes, sins and faults (verse 5). As Paul puts it, “they keep no record of wrongs.” They have no war chest of offenses to unload on those over whom they wish to gain a psychological advantage in an argument.

A mature Christian rejoices in every new discovery of truth. He or she actively seeks out truth and follows it wherever it leads. He is not ashamed to jettison old errors in favor of better understanding.

Those who have reached higher plains of maturity take no delight—vicariously or otherwise—in evil. They do not view other’s evil as a way of making themselves look good by contrast. (One of the standard techniques of an emotionally immature person is to provoke another person to anger, and then attack him for the anger. This perfectly reflects the mind of Satan.)

A spiritually mature person has no wish to participate in evil, and does not delight in, or take advantage of, it when others fall into sin. Such people have no appetite for scandal. *The National Enquirer* is not their favorite reading. They mourn when a new Bin Laden, Saddam Hussein or Adolph Hitler becomes an instrument of spiritual darkness. They take no delight in plotting evil, living vicariously in the evil of others, or in hearing about the evil that men do. They actively seek to drive back the toxic spiritual darkness that envelops this world.

Those who are spiritually mature seek to protect others who are vulnerable in a dangerous world (verse 7). Just as Jesus said to Peter, “Satan has desired to sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for you,” mature Christians spend much time in intercessory prayer for others (Luke 22:31; I Thessalonians 5:17). They are more “other-oriented” than self-oriented.

Those who are spiritually advanced are not paranoid. They “believe all things” and offer others the benefit of the doubt. They are not fearful and suspicious, always expecting the worst (verse 7).

A person who loves hangs in there and perseveres. He or she has hope and is optimistic about what God has in store for his faithful children. Mature Christians are not “fair weather friends.” They stick with you in your worst as well as your best moments.

One of the most important characteristics of mature Christian love is that it “never fails” (I Corinthians 13:8). Like the love of God itself, it is constant, unwavering, always there. A fully mature Christian has achieved a steady state of love. This kind of love is far greater than either faith or hope. It is the most concrete expression of spiritual maturity there is. Just as God never gives up on us (Philippians 1:6), we must learn not to give up on each other. We can’t “write each other off” simply because we disagree on a point of doctrine, or an interpretation of facts or acts.

The Holy Spirit is the Empowering Source

Spiritual maturity also involves sensitivity to, and powerful leading by, the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit that gives us the capacity to love as God loves (as we learned earlier in Romans 5:5). The influence of the Spirit of God in a spiritually immature person is at best but a flickering ember. In the spiritually mature, it is a roaring flame. As we move more deeply into obedience to God, the influ-

ence of the Holy Spirit grows greater. As Peter said, “We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those that obey him” (Acts 5:32).

At the same time, it is the Holy Spirit that gives us the capacity to obey God. Paul prayed that Christians might be “strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man” (Ephesians 3:16b). The Holy Spirit imparts the power of God to the people of God (Acts 1:8). It enables us to transcend our natural human capacities and limitations. The more of God’s Spirit we have indwelling, the more quickly we’ll attain to spiritual maturity. Since the capacity to love in a godly way is a product of the Holy Spirit, so spiritual maturity is also its fruit.

Note: *This article does not contain all that could be said about spiritual maturity. However, the pursuit of godly love is the pump-primer. If we actively seek the love as God loves, other aspects of spiritual maturity will fall into place.* □

What Spiritual Maturity is Not

Spiritual maturity is not:

- Being baptized a long time ago.
- Intimate knowledge of and belief in your denomination’s doctrines.
- Going to church services every week.
- Being old.
- Having a loud voice and a domineering personality.
- Being a “high ranking” minister.
- Being a deacon or deaconess.
- Having gray hair and dressing well.
- Being a master of the putdown.
- Being a great preacher.
- Spiritual pedigree.
- Hanging out with ecclesiastical big shots.
- Being excessively righteous (as in having a religious spirit).
- Being wealthy.
- Being highly placed in a church hierarchy.
- Being a former confidant of a now deceased denominational leader.
- Never having missed a feast of tabernacles since you learned about it.
- Knowing a lot.

also placed a woodcarving containing the Ten Commandments on his courtroom wall.

In 1996 Judge Moore was ordered by another Alabama judge to stop the prayers and either to remove the Ten Commandments from the wall or surround the plaque with secular artifacts. Moore defied the order, triggering a court battle. In 1997 another minister of God, Alabama Governor Fob James, pledged to defend Moore’s decision to defy the court order with state troopers and the National Guard, if necessary. Meanwhile, the U.S. House of Representatives rallied behind Moore by passing a resolution supporting the display of the Ten Commandments in public and government places (The Senate passed a similar measure in 1998).

In August of 2001, Judge Moore installed a four-foot-by-four-foot, 5,280-pound monument to the Ten Commandments in the Supreme Court building. He subsequently rejected a request by American Atheists to place a statue of the group’s symbol next to the Ten Commandments monument.

Most recently Judge Moore has come under heavy fire for his legal opinion rejecting a request by a lesbian mother for custody of her three teenage children. In his written opinion Judge Moore states:

“No matter how much society appears to change, the law on this subject has remained steadfast from the earliest history of the law, and that law is and must be our law today. The common law designates homosexuality as an inherent evil, and if a person openly engages in such a practice, that fact alone would render him or her an unfit parent.

“Homosexual conduct is, and has been, considered abhorrent, immoral, detestable, a crime against nature, and a violation of the laws of nature and of nature’s God upon which this nation and our laws are predicated. Such conduct violates both the criminal and civil laws of this state and is destructive to a basic building block of society—the family.”

Despite vilification in the press and from many anti-Christian groups, Judge Moore continues to support the laws of God in the Alabama courts because he understands that God’s Law, and more specifically, the Ten Commandments, are the basis of the civil codes of our nation.

The next time you think of “minister of God,” think of the term as the Apostle Paul understood it. A true minister of God is one who advances the knowledge of God and respect for His ways. Often such men and women who will never stand in a pulpit do more for the moral and spiritual health of society than a hundred ministers who will not challenge the adulterous or homosexual behavior of members of their own church congregations. □

The Story of Patrick and the Celtic Church

by Ulrike Unruh

The history of God's faithful people during the ages of Rome's supremacy are written in heaven, but they have little place in human history books. Rome endeavors to write history to show herself in the best light. But the stories can still be found.

Here is the story of St. Patrick and the Christianity he and his converts established in the British Isles.

The Irish "Celtic" people trace their conversion to Christianity to Patrick, who came to them early in the fifth century.

It all began when the great empire of Rome declined and its legions were withdrawn from the defense of the British Isles. From the north the Irish, then called Scots, began swooping down on the English coast, sailing up the rivers, raiding the settlements, and carrying off plunder and slaves. Among those captured was a young man named Patrick. So Ireland's patron saint was not Irish! Patrick had been reared in a Christian home. His father was a deacon. Yet Patrick did not take religion seriously until he was captured and sat as a swineherd in a foreign country. Here he began to pray for his freedom. His conversion dates from this captivity. "The Lord opened to me the sense of my unbelief," he says. After six years he managed to escape and found his way to the coast where he boarded a ship carrying a cargo of hounds.

He would have gladly remained in England had he not had a dream one night in which the babies of Ireland pleaded with him to come back to their country and tell them about Christ. Patrick decided to return, but first he had to learn more about Christianity. Ordained a priest, at length he was sent out to be a missionary to the people among whom he had once been a slave. He was appointed, sometime after 431 A.D., as successor to St. Palladius, first bishop of Ireland.

From this point we have only legends. We know, however, that a century later the entire structure of the church in Ireland was monastic. Presumably, the monastic community, maintaining itself on the land, fitted the agricultural communities of the Celts better than the parish-church system which was more common elsewhere.

We also know that Ireland became the base for the evangelization of Britain.

In fact one historian (Thomas Bokenkotter, ***A Concise History Of The Catholic Church***, p. 94), says that "these Irish monks were the leading missionaries of the age, and they carried their monastic ideal across the length and breadth of Europe in the sixth and seventh centuries."

Then in the 6th century the Roman pope sent Augustine (of Canterbury) to evangelize the Anglo Saxons. So the missionaries from Rome were working up from the south, while the missionaries from Ireland and Scotland were working from the north. As they worked, the papal missionaries and their converts met the primitive Christians from the north. There was a striking contrast between them. The northern Christians were simple, humble, while the papal representatives manifested the pomp and arrogance of popery. The latter demanded that these Christian churches acknowledge the supremacy of the sovereign pontiff. The Britons meekly replied that they desired to love all men, but that the pope was not entitled to supremacy in the church, and they could render to him only that submission which was due to every follower of Christ. They acknowledged no other master than Christ.

According to Merle D'Aubigne, in ***History of the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century***, b.17, ch.2, the Roman missionaries said, "If you will not unite with us in showing the Saxons the way of life, you shall receive from them the stroke of death."

Did you know that Patrick was a Seventh-day Sabbath keeper?

According to one historian: "We find traces in the early monastic church of Ireland that they held Saturday to be the Sabbath on which they rested from all their labors," (W.T. Skene, ***Adamnan Life of St. Columba***, p. 96).

Also Professor James Moffet says: "It seems to have been customary in the Celtic churches of early times, in Ireland as well as Scotland, to keep Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, as a day of rest from labor. They obeyed the fourth commandment literally upon the seventh day," (*The Church in Scotland*, p. 140).

This seems to have been the case until about 1066 when the Norman invasions of England took place. William II, Duke of Normandy (area in France bordering the English Channel) invaded England and established himself there as William I, King of England. The reigning pontiff favored William in his invasion, blessed his armies and consecrated his banners and took the opportunity to also establish his own spiritual authority. William permitted him to do so in order to more effectually humble the Saxon clergy and aggrandize his Norman prelates.

At this time the papacy was undertaking massive endeavors to gain control of all religious activities. Christian society, they maintained, must be organized under the pope, and guarded against all possibility of error by the presence of Peter, perpetually present in his successors, the bishops of Rome (Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language*, p. 182).

Pope Gregory VII (1073) successfully asserted the absolute papal power over the Church. It was he who declared that "the pope can be judged by no one, the Roman church has never erred and never will err till the end of time; the Roman church was founded by Christ alone; the pope alone can depose and restore bishops; he alone can make new laws, set up new bishoprics... he alone can revise his judgments; his legates... (*A Concise History of the Catholic Church*, p. 112).

The movement was to "free" the entire church from secular control and make everything subject to the pope. Gregory insisted that the church was above the state. It was Gregory who humiliated the German emperor Henry VI making him stand barefoot in the snow for three days begging for forgiveness.

During this time we see the Queen of Scotland, named Margaret, wife of King Malcolm III Canmore (1057-1093). Raised in the Hungarian court, she promoted, in conformity with the Gregorian reform, the interests of the church. She was later granted Sainthood by Pope Innocent IV in 1250 for her great benefactions to the church.

In the book *Life of Saint Margaret* by Turgot (p. 49), we read: "It was another custom of theirs [people of Scotland] to neglect the reverence due to the Lord's day, by devoting themselves to every kind of worldly business upon it, just as they did upon other days. That this was contrary to the law, she [Queen Margaret] proved to them as well by reason as by authority. 'Let us venerate the Lord's day,' said she, 'because of the

resurrection of our Lord, which happened upon that day, let us no longer do servile works upon it... Her next point was that they did not duly reverence the Lord's day, but in this latter instance they seemed to have followed a custom of which we find traces in the early Church of Ireland, by which they held Saturday to be the Sabbath on which they rested from all their labours," (See also Skene, *Celtic Scotland*, Vol. 2, p. 349).

Barnett, in *Margaret of Scotland: Queen and Saint* (p. 97), writes: "In this matter the Scots had perhaps kept up the traditional usage of the ancient Irish Church which observed Saturday instead of Sunday as the day of rest." Lewis states in his work, *Seventh Day Baptists in Europe and America* (Vol. 1 p. 29): "There is much evidence that the Sabbath prevailed in Wales universally until A.D. 1115, when the first Roman bishop was seated at St. Davis's. The old Welsh Sabbath-keeping churches did not even then altogether bow the knee to Rome, but fled to their hiding places."

But the worst was still to come for Ireland. The total ruin of Patrick's church.

In 1156, Pope Adrian issued to King Henry II of England a bull authorizing him to invade Ireland. It was Dermot of Leinster, a man from Ireland itself, that carried out the dreadful order. Because of his cruelty as a chief, the people of Leinster had driven him out of Ireland. Blinded with revenge he aligned himself with the Norman King of England, Henry II, and the Pope of Rome who had already resolved upon the destruction of Ireland.

Why would Rome want the invasion of Ireland?

We will refer frequently throughout the remainder of this article to *Historical Studies*, by Lawrence (pp. 360-392) written in 1876, in which we find the full story.

The chief boast of Ireland was its independence... Christianity, in its purer form, came to Ireland about the middle of the fifth century... In the year 432 there were no images, nor crucifixes, no pompous ritual, no spiritual despotism, no moral corruption emanating from Rome... Patrick, therefore, the humble slave and missionary, brought to Ireland the simple elements of an apostolic faith...not the Romish practices..Ireland became a Christian country renowned for its intelligence, its pious genius, and its missionary zeal... Avarice and priestly pride were unknown to the successors of Patrick. Their doctrines were from the study of the Scriptures...

The Irish bishops firmly maintained their independence against the constant menaces of popes or councils; would consent to hold no intercourse with the Court of Rome; denied its claim to the right of ordination and consecrated each other by a simple laying on of hands; rejected the worship of images, the adoration of Mary, the infallibility of the pope, and in all their schools and colleges persisted in a free study of the Scriptures. They inculcated and

exercised a general liberty of conscience founded upon the wide education of the people. The honesty, simplicity, and pious zeal of the Irish teachers were recognized by their opponents.

But bitter was the hostility with which the Roman Popes and the Italian conclaves viewed the people of Ireland, where their maledictions were treated with neglect, where there was a general refusal to bow to mandates of Rome.

Its apostolic usages, its Scriptural doctrines and its ever-open Bible were arguments so strong against the fabric of Romish superstition that the Popes felt that they could never be secure until they had swept from their path, in fire and blood, the schools, the churches, and the native bishops of Ireland. To accomplish this inhuman aim. Pope Adrian IV., in 1156, sold Ireland to the Normans.

The sale of Ireland to its foes is the guiltiest of all the evil deeds of the Italian priesthood. It produced a succession of St. Bartholomew massacres; worse than what happened to the Huguenots; it has proved more fatal to the Irish race than the Inquisition to Spain (*Historical Studies*, Lawrence)

Dermot Macmorrough, with the permission of Henry II, enlisted Richard Strongbow, and Robert Fitz-Stephen to join his enterprise. But impatient at their slowness Dermot, with a small group of men attacked his country. The Irish drove him back and had they pursued him, they might have saved the country a lot of trouble. But Dermot swore fealty to Ireland and they accepted his treacherous submission.

In May, 1169, Robert Fitz-Stephen with his army landed in Ireland, and Dermot joined him with a group of warriors of his own. City after city was destroyed. Ireland roused into action and resolved that the whole force of the nation be gathered to wage war against the traitor Dermot. They rallied a great host, led by the Roderic King of Ireland, and Dermot and the Normans, dismayed and disheartened fled and hid themselves in the marshes and forests. Roderic surrounded the Normans in their secret hiding place, and by his immense superiority might have forced them to surrender. But Roderic, perhaps misled by priests or bishops, perhaps fearful at the thought of being assailed by England and exposed to the anathemas of the Roman Church, for some reason unknown failed to press the battle and accepted another oath of allegiance from the traitor Dermot.

But the traitor continued his plans and set about building a larger army. Three years of skirmishes which caused much suffering for the Irish people and in which Dermot himself was killed, finally resulted in the English king sending an armada of four hundred ships filled with knights, soldiers and supplies to Ireland. The war-

ravaged, bleeding land was a helpless victim and yielded to the authority of Henry II.

When any Irish chief ventured to ask by what authority Henry had taken possession of Ireland, he was told that the Pope, as vicar and head of the Church, had given it to the king; and that he who resisted the generous donation of St. Peter to his favorite son was a heretic, condemned to everlasting reprobation. It was ever the aim of the Roman Church in those ages—nor does the policy seem yet to have been abandoned—to set nation against nation, and from the horrid discord and general woe to add to its own growing strength. Henry, conscious of the claims of his Italian masters, hastened to lay Ireland at their feet. A council was summoned at Cashel professing to represent the Church of St. Patrick. The Norman king ordered the bishops of Ireland to assemble. A motley group of Norman priests, of martial monks, of the papal archbishops, and a few trembling presbyters, natives of the South, gathered at his command; but it was noticed that none of the bishops of Ulster or Connaught assisted at the destruction of their national faith. They still adhered to the usages of Patrick, and of Columba, that the Irish Church, amidst bogs and forests, still defied the ambition of cruel Rome.

Every trace of independence was abandoned by the Council of Cashel. The Romish ritual was enjoined on every priest; the worship of Mary, of images, and of saints was to extend throughout the Island; the priest was forbidden to marry; his hair was to be cut after the exact fashion at Rome; the clergy who failed to observe the new customs were condemned with indignant solemnity; tithes were to be paid by the laity; and Ireland for the first time was made tributary to the Romish Pope (*Ibid.*).

The conquered lands were divided among the victors while the freedom-loving Irish were reduced to the condition of slaves and paupers, driven to live in caves, huts, and forests, outcasts and beggars amidst the lands that once belonged to them.

But even this is not the end. Henry returned to England and for a few years took care of duties assailing him there. In Ireland the old church may have been formally replaced by the Roman approved bishops. But Irish presbyters rejected the authority of the unpatriotic synod.

At length Henry, when his affairs were somewhat settled in England, resolved to... launch the thunders of the Romish popes against the Irish patriots. He had procured from Alexander III a confirmation of the bull of Adrian excommunicating all who opposed his authority over Ireland, and he now prepared to publish the two solemn decrees, in their full enormity, to all its schismatical Church. 1175 the two bulls were read by John of Salisbury,

who had come from Rome bearing the final decree of Alexander, recited the doom of Ireland... Under a florid profession of Christian zeal it contained a bitter denunciation of the Irish Church... and promised Henry the favor of Heaven and an illustrious renown should he succeed in planting true religion in the home of Patrick and Columba. Alexander's bull was still more effective, for it excommunicated all who resisted Henry's authority or that of his heirs...every Irish patriot was converted into a child of Satan; every aspiration of freedom was an impious defiance of the Roman Church.

Now began that perpetual conflict of races, the saddest in the history of Europe,... a mournful wail has never ceased to ascend to heaven and blight the charms of Ireland... when the papal decrees were proclaimed they still retained a sentiment of independence... in defying the authority of the Italian priests... Centuries of fatal discord followed, during which the Normans strove in vain to extirpate the accursed race who refused to obey the decrees of the Popes or submit to a foreign lord. Papal legates launched new excommunications against the Irish, and Romish priests urged on that work of extermination which alone could secure the supremacy of the Romish See. The papal monks declared that it was no crime, no sin, to kill a Celt (*Ibid.*).

Things did not get better with the Reformation. The chief leaders in the English reformation were Henry the VIII and his daughter Elizabeth I. The English had become protestant, but they showed no disposition to abandon control of Ireland which they had received from the Papacy of Rome. Elizabeth I continued the conquest to reduce the Irish to a passive subjection to her power.

The cause of this fresh assault upon the liberties of Ireland was the restless intrigues of the Jesuits. Elizabeth was waging war against the Pope and the Jesuits, the most active and most dangerous of her foes were ever the disciples of Loyola. To ruin and break down every Protestant government, to cover with discord and slaughter every Protestant land, and from the wreck of nations to build up a spiritual empire tyrannical and severe was the secret or open aim of every Jesuit. To wound or destroy Elizabeth the society began its disastrous labors in Ireland. The Jesuits, in various disguises, penetrated to the courts of the native chiefs. They roused the fires of national antipathy; they scoffed at the British as heretics; they allured the Irish to abandon forever the usages of St. Patrick and to ally themselves with the Roman Church; they promised the natives the protection of St. Peter, the shield of Mary, the blessing of the Pope, and the military aid of all Catholic Europe, if they would rise once more in a crusade against the English.

The Irish accepted the offers of Rome, threw themselves at the Pontiff's feet, and became, for the first time, the willing instruments of the Jesuits and the Popes. They may be excused, if not forgiven. Their schools had long been swept away; their people had sunk into ignorance; they had endured centuries of ceaseless turmoil and war. Rome stretched forth its cunning hand to get control of the Irish Church, and after four centuries of violence, succeeded at last by fraud (*Ibid.*).

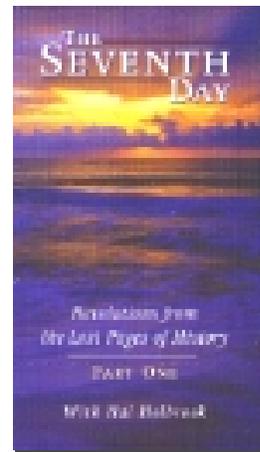
The Irish rallied against the British, but were hopelessly defeated by Elizabeth's armies. The Pope gave little aid, the Spanish were too far off and the English Raleigh cut down the Irish, and Grey massacred the rebels. When Elizabeth died, Ireland was almost wholly conquered by England.

What of St. Patrick's day? The church of St. Patrick is gone.

Rome has claimed his name and largely blotted out the history of the defeat and takeover of the church he established, and the fact that most of Ireland's present miseries are still ripples of the dark history.

But that is the story if one simply looks in the old history books.

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The Seventh Day

Revelations from the Lost Pages of History – Part One, with Hal Holbrook, 52 min. VHS NTSC video, \$25.00, or \$5.00 for 14-day LOAN. Also available in PAL format for \$30.00. First in a five-part series of the history of the Sabbath. (V215)

Notice: Part Two is now available for the same price as Part One.

Editor's Comment: I want to thank the Office of Spiritual Formation of the Presbyterian Church (U. S. A.) for allowing us to reprint their report on Sabbath keeping. In spite of the secular tidalwave that threatens to engulf all of Western Christianity, there are some who are seeking a closer walk with God and do not believe that two hours of church per week will ever satisfy the inner craving we all have for a more intimate relationship with our God and His Son, Jesus Christ. Even though we would differ on which day should be set aside to pursue that intimacy with our Creator, we commend all efforts to understand the true meaning of "Sabbath" and the reason our Heavenly Father bestowed this wonderful gift upon us.

An Invitation to Sabbath: Rediscovering a Gift

Report of the Work Group on Sabbath Keeping to the 212th General Assembly

...in six days the Lord made heaven and earth the sea and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it. (Exodus 20:11)

...a sabbath rest still remains for the people of God; for those who enter Gods rest also cease from their labors as God did from his. (Hebrews 4: 9-10)

The Need for Sabbath

There is a deep need today to rediscover the gift of Sabbath. The need declares itself in the most intimate places of the human heart and in the broadest spheres of social and economic interchange. It asserts itself even where Sabbath is only a distant memory, even where the word "Sabbath" is not known at all. Across barriers of age and culture, the need speaks, presses, makes itself known.

For some the need for Sabbath emerges as a cry from within. Exhausted, we yearn over the loss of time to rejoice in those closest to us, or simply to play, to rest and be still, to delight in the goodness that we believe yet surrounds us. We yearn, and in our yearning we ache.

For some the need for Sabbath names itself in quiet grief. Grief that we are moving faster and faster in our lives, but the only progress we seem to make is into a greater emptiness. Grief that the ways we have strained so conscientiously to live are simply not working. Grief that although we partake abundantly from the table our culture spreads before us, we come away from the table still hungry, as hurried and pressed as ever rather than nourished and renewed.

As a society, we know well the statistics that delineate a particular form of progress: the ideal economic growth rate is 3% to 5% per year; adjusting for inflation, United States citizens spend more than twice as much for material goods and services as they did fifty years ago; we buy homes almost three times larger than we did following World War II and fill them with twice as

many things; we work longer hours, more of us hold multiple jobs, and we now live to the full what some decades ago was proclaimed as "the gospel of consumerism."¹

Yet these same statistics give rise to questions. For an increasing number of us the questions themselves articulate the need for Sabbath. Can the finite resources of the earth sustain the economic growth our culture demands? Can persons and can families survive the drivenness of a life that finds its "good news" in ever more rapid consumption? Are fundamental elements of justice sacrificed as people work longer and longer hours just to keep the system going, and as the gap between those who have the means for leisure and those with no means at all grows wider by the year? ²

And in the Church, the need to rediscover the gift of Sabbath sounds through both the best and the most harried realms of our common life. At best, we desire to know more fully the overwhelming mystery of God's all-restoring love. We yearn to be still and see afresh the miracles that surround us. We long for disciplines of time and practice that will let us simply rejoice in the One we seek to serve. At worst we find ourselves exhausted from trying too hard to serve the divine grace we proclaim. Collectively, we long for a goodness that seems to have fled.

"Days pass and years vanish, and we walk sightless among miracles," go the words of a Jewish prayer used on the eve of beginning Sabbath. "Sabbath is a gift, but we are so reluctant to accept it, that God had to make it a command," writes contemporary religious leader Barbara Brown Taylor. ³ In the context of wide

and deepening need for Sabbath, both statements speak an honest word. They also speak a healing word. Acknowledging the loss inherent in our reluctance to pause at all, they point our needy spirits to an overwhelming gift offered by the Living God.

Sabbath comes to us as a many-layered gift. In its manifestation it shines as a gem of limitless facets, infinite and uncontainable yet taking particular forms. Divinely fashioned, even its mode of coming from God is multiple. In the Book of Genesis, God breathes Sabbath into the very fabric of creation. It takes form as the seventh full day, the day on which God rested and rejoiced in the goodness of all that God had made (Genesis 2:1-3). At Mount Sinai, God speaks Sabbath as a sacred mandate. God's people are forever to remember the Sabbath. They are to set aside one full day in seven and keep it holy to the Lord (Exodus 20:8-11). In the gospels, Sabbath repeatedly provides both time and space for Jesus' witness to the life-transforming power of *Abba*. And it is as we enter the multiple dimensions of Sabbath that we begin to know most fully the immensity of the gift.

Sabbath is for our joy and our rest. "The Sabbath was made for humankind and not humankind for the Sabbath," proclaims Jesus just after his disciples have feasted on the Sabbath day (Mark 2:27). The commandment to keep Sabbath, according to John Calvin, reflects God's genuine concern for God's people. Again says Calvin, "Work is good, but when we work all the time work becomes a curse not a blessing." ⁴ And so Sabbath invites us to rest and take joy in what already is, even as God rested on the seventh day and rejoiced in all the goodness of creation.

Sabbath is for deepened communion with the Living God. As we unwrap the gift of Sabbath, it yields to us blessings beyond our much needed rest and joy. In the spiritual practice of Jews and Christians alike, Sabbath is a time for us to be shaped within. "On the Sabbath," writes Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, "we especially care for the seed of eternity planted in the soul." ⁵ John Calvin simply tells us, "On the Sabbath, we cease our work so God can do God's work in us." ⁶

Sabbath draws us into the sacred rhythm God has woven into all of life and all creation. Sabbath invites us to the three-fold liturgy of rest, redemption and renewal. With the most intimate of acts, and the broadest, we celebrate this liturgy. We immerse ourselves in its goodness when we pause for a brief prayer, or for an instant of stillness, or for saying "Amen!" to the grace we sense surrounds us. In such Sabbath moments, we mirror the rhythm of Sabbath. And from the early movements of biblical faith, the Living God has called us to ever wider patterns of Sabbath living. The earth itself needs the rhythm of rest, redemption and renewal, so every seventh year the land is to lie fallow

and receive the gift of sabbatical life (Leviticus 25). On the widest scale of all, the Sabbath is a graced foretaste of the eternal rest, redemption and renewal all creation shall know when Christ comes in glory. Sabbath draws us toward both the minute and the infinite. When we give ourselves to Sabbath, it becomes time that interprets all our times.

Sabbath is profoundly prophetic. From its beginning, Sabbath has declared that the Living God is the one source and aim of all our life. "Sabbath keeping," said Calvin, "is a way of living out our belief that we are not our own; that we belong to God." ⁷ Not possessions. Not the striving after them. Not dominance over other human beings. In the biblical teachings, the sacred rhythm of rest, redemption and renewal calls for release from debt and the complete redistribution of resources every fiftieth year in the Year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25). In virtually every age, and surely in our own, to live in the world as belonging to God is to follow a discomfiting and prophetic path.

Sabbath is for our life in community. Although the blessings of Sabbath are often richly personal, the gift of Sabbath is not a private gift, nor has it ever been presented as such. At Mount Sinai, Sabbath came to the entire community. It was for all ages, all stations in life. No one stood outside the call to rest in the presence of God. In Judaism, for better than two millennia the observance of Sabbath has bound together a widely scattered people. In Christianity, the Sabbath, or Lord's Day, is both communal and Christ-focused. It summons the followers of Jesus to enter together into the presence of the One whose grace is sufficient for all our human need (Hebrews 4).

Steadily, persistently, the layers of Sabbath beckon. It is likely we shall never enter all of them in a single moment. Yet as we see the depth of need around us, and as we sense the vastness of the gift, a simple question arises for us just as it has through the ages: How can we now more fully live the gift we have been given?

To live the gift of Sabbath is, of course, to receive it openly and with gratitude. It is to savor Sabbath's freshness. It is to walk in Sabbath's ways, even when those ways set us apart from the culture that surrounds us.

And clearly, from the earliest of traditions, to live the gift of Sabbath is to hallow time. In the fourth commandment, the foundational emphasis is neither on work nor on the prohibition of work, but on keeping time holy: "Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8).

In the Deuteronomy tradition, to live the gift of Sabbath is to take a day of rest from labor, because God delivered us from the oppression of hard taskmasters in Egypt. "Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm;

therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.” (Deuteronomy 5:15)”

In the Reformed tradition, from its earliest confessions to the present Directory for Worship, to live the gift of Sabbath is to engage in simple, time hallowing acts:

- seek rest from daily occupation;
- share with others in worship;
- take time with God’s word;
- engage in acts of compassion;
- enjoy activities that refresh and renew the spirit.

Our long tradition guides us and yet still the question presses. The hallowing of time is ever specific. For our own particular age we seek a clearer vision. In our culture, with all its rush and its fracturing of human bonds, how can we live the hallowing of time?

Answers emerge. They emerge in part from new Sabbath life that already stirs among us. They emerge in part as wholly fresh beckonings that at once enliven and convict our spirits. None of the answers is yet complete. Like Sabbath itself, though, they come as a grace. We would do well to hear and accept with joy the strong invitation they speak. It is invitation to...

Restore, at all levels of our common life, the practice of keeping every seventh day as the Lord’s Day, a Sabbath holy to God. In our present context, this will not be easy. It is also a task we can no longer ignore.

Celebrate the places where Sabbath life already grows. Children’s books that tell anew of God and of rest and of joy; rich ethnic traditions that flow from centuries of devotion; the simple and sometimes struggling efforts of persons to carve out time to rejoice in God and one another; renewed attention to the Year of Jubilee and to allowing Sabbath for the land—all these point the way to the recovery of Sabbath. They mark the fresh stirrings of Sabbath in our midst. As we honor them we shall honor and receive afresh the gift.

Share deeply in mutual support and dialogue. Single parents, young families, persons living alone, older couples have different patterns and diverse needs in developing Sabbath life. Yet even if our hallowing of time must be alone, we need the support of the community to do it. And as we share with one another our various ways of spending time with God, our common vision of Sabbath will grow both full and clear.

Live prophetically. If we live Sabbath’s rhythm of rest, then we must dare claim that rest for all people, including the poor, including ourselves. And we must dare tend our environment as a treasure for the ages. To do this in our materially driven culture is to walk the way of the prophets.

Examine and amend the spirit-draining patterns of our corporate life. At all levels of our denomination, persons struggle with exhaustion. What patterns of

drivenness do we need to let go of in our congregations? Presbyteries? Synods? General Assembly? What forms of true spiritual rest do we need to embrace?

Come again and again to the table where we are truly fed. The table of the present age dazzles but clearly it does not feed. The table of Sabbath is far simpler. Its nourishment is deep. It is the table of the One who says, “Take. Eat. This is my body. This is my blood. This is for you.” In coming regularly to the table of our Lord, in searching out the times for this and in living the discipline of it, we shall together enter the ever-widening mystery of grace that breathes through all of the Sabbath invitation.

In recovering Sabbath, we are in many ways as little children, beginners, explorers. Yet the gift is before us. The need burns within us. The ways of fresh living start to emerge. And if we continue to grow in the ways we are beckoned, we may, by God’s grace, join the company of those who through the ages have proclaimed with their very lives what it is “to glorify God and to enjoy God forever.”⁸

NOTES

1. Wayne Muller. 1999. *Sabbath: Restoring the Sacred Rhythm of Rest*. New York: Bantam Books.
2. Ruy Costa. “The Political Importance of The Sabbath.” Massachusetts Council of Churches (n.d.)
3. Barbara Brown Taylor. 1999. “Remember the sabbath.” *Christian Century* (May 5).
4. John Calvin. *Commentaries*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House (1993).
5. Abraham Heschel. 1951. *The Sabbath*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
6. John Calvin. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press (1960).
7. John Calvin. *Commentaries*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House (1993).
8. *Book of Confessions*, 7.001.

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The Church in the World

Sudan

More than Hate Fuels Persecution of Christians in Sudan

The government of Sudan continues to be one of the most fiercely anti-Christian regimes on the planet. The Christian population resides primarily in the south of the country and is often the target of devastating military assaults by troops of the Muslim government in Khartoum using everything from mortar and machine gun fire to rocket attacks from heavily armed helicopter gunships. The Muslim troops make a common practice of raiding Christian villages where the inhabitants are either killed outright or taken into slavery. Those not murdered or taken into slavery are maimed and left for others to take care of.

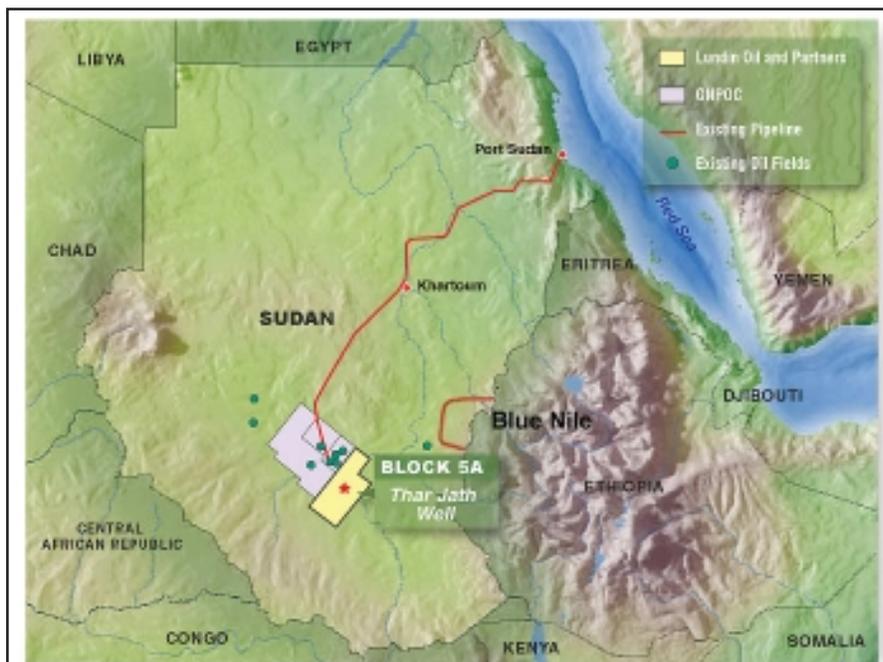
What has recently come to light is that the government in Khartoum has a second motive for desiring to depopulate the area of its Christian citizens: oil, and lots of it. Over the last several years oil exploration companies, including Chinese, and Western financial institutions have supplied the government with money to buy weapons for its war against its Christian citizens. (See accompanying map.)

Sudan

Police Launch Manhunt to Find Christian

Sudanese security police have mounted a widening manhunt to track down a local convert to Christianity who went into hiding during early February in Khartoum to escape arrest and possible death. Aladin Omer Agabni Mohammed, a former Muslim who left Islam 11 years ago, is subject to the death penalty under Sudanese criminal law. According to a church leader, Mohammed is in "a real tough situation now. He is being hunted everywhere. I am not sure how he is going to survive, because he's really being threatened."

(Source: compassdirect.org)



Oil fuels the Government of Sudan war machine. Here are the major oilfields in Southern Sudan. The GNPOC (Greater Nile Petroleum Operating Company) is a partnership including NYSE-traded Talisman Energy (TLM), NYSE-traded PetroChina's parent, China National Petroleum Corporation, and Malaysia's Petronas. Block 5A is a region including NASDAQ-traded Lundin Oil (LOILY) and Malaysia's Petronas. The Adar Yel oilfield, less than 50 miles to the immediate west of the Blue Nile region, is now being developed by NYSE-traded PetroChina's parent, China National Petroleum Corporation. (Source: Blue Nile Project, blue-nile.org)

India

Missionaries Released

Two Christian missionaries and a new believer working in the newly created state of Jharkand who were kidnapped on February 11 have been released. Sources said that Gospel for Asia (GFA) workers were abducted by anti-Christian forces who had threatened to kill all three. But two days later, the missionaries and the new convert were released unharmed.

In another incident, an evangelist from the Evangelical Fellowship of India was arrested on February 8 after Hindu extremists accused him of converting people by coercion.

(Source: Compassdirect.org)

Nigeria

State Government Closes Two Churches

The government of Zamfara state in northern Nigeria, which was the first to introduce the Islamic legal system, is saying there are too many churches, and some must be demolished. Two churches were closed in January in Zamfara. Fourteen more church buildings have been marked by the Zamfara state government for demolition soon. "Life in Zamfara is traumatic for Christians," Pastor David Ishaya told Compass. "We are pursuing the matter legally. We want our rights and religious freedom respected."

(Source: Compassdirect.org)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Greetings:

I enjoy The Sabbath Sentinel. It has some good material in it. I think back sometimes about when I was on the board and attended board meetings, and Violet was Recording Secretary for one term.

I don't remember what year it was, but the first board meeting we attended was in Memphis, Tennessee. Keep up the good work.

With love,

Eugene & Violet Rodgers

First, thanks for your continued financial support. We are always delighted to hear from those who have paved the way for us. The fact that the BSA and Sabbath Sentinel are still around after more than 50 years is a testimony to the faithfulness and dedication of you and others over the years. Thank you for doing the work. —Editor

Dear Sabbath Sentinel:

Thank you so much for the January-February issue of The Sabbath Sentinel. I thank you for all the issues, but this one was very good.

"Left Behind" was very interesting, and I made copies of it to send to others. I also learned a lot from "Christianity vs. Islam."

A small offering is enclosed. I'd like to do more. In fact, there are some people that I would really like to receive this magazine.

Thanks.

Barbara Barton

Barbara: Thank you for your contribution. —Editor

Dear Brother Ryland,

Christian greetings to you. I feel I must comment on a Sabbath article written by Mr. Eshun of Ghana appearing in the January-February 2002

edition of The Sabbath Sentinel. I will be happy if you would be pleased to present my views to your readers. Thank you for your consideration.

Having lived many years in Central Africa, it was good to see an article in The Sabbath Sentinel written by Mr. Isaac Kofi Eshun of Ghana in West Africa. Mr. Eshun speaks highly of the Sabbath, a day blessed of God and set apart. I pray that the eyes of people might be opened to its validity and value in a hectic world desperately in need of a day of rest.

With all due respect to the author of this article I believe the views expressed are spiritually dangerous, in that they appear to make the Sabbath into another gospel. There is only one authentic gospel, the Gospel of Christ. We need not another. As Sabbath-keepers we have genuine appreciation for the Sabbath, but hopefully our love is placed solidly on Jesus, Lord of the Sabbath.

Keeping the Sabbath for the right reasons is commendable, to be encouraged. It provides both rest and blessing. It is symbolic of much greater future and eternal rest when we are together with Christ. The Sabbath itself never saved anyone, and I find it impossible to think of it as the "tree of life." Mr. Eshun has written that "the seventh-day Sabbath is, without dispute, a gateway to eternal life." I fear that, though the article is well intended, it might lead a person astray or make it practically impossible for a Sunday-keeping evangelical to embrace Sabbath truth. Christ is our Salvation, and Christ alone in whom the very fulness of God came to dwell. Hallelujah!

Yours together,

David C. Pearson

Dear Mr. Pearson:

Thank you for your comments on the article by Mr. Eshun. After rereading the article, I agree that the article could be interpreted in a way that makes the Sabbath the single, make-or-break issue for our salvation, although I am sure that Mr. Eshun would be horrified to think that others would interpret his article as placing the Sabbath above Christ. As you so aptly pointed out, Christ is our focus, not the Sabbath.

There is something very infectious about the enthusiasm of many Africans when they come to embrace the Sabbath, and Mr. Eshun is no exception. When I initially read the article, I was taken by the enthusiasm and did not consider that the article might be interpreted in the way you have described. Upon reflection, I should have edited the article in such a way as to put the spotlight on Christ as Lord of the Sabbath.

Your comments were helpful and much appreciated. —Editor

Dear Elder Ryland,

Greetings in the Most Powerful Name of Yahweh through His beloved Son Yahshua, Messiah.

I call you Elder. I hope you won't mind, as I consider you an elderly one in the faith of being Sabbath-keeper...

I am touched by what you have written in your article "Who is My Enemy?", May-June issue 2001. True that some might resort to violence or even murder in order to maintain their control or position in the congregation. No, you do not exaggerate. History proves that religious rivalry was and is the most violent and bloody cases.

I quote your statement “One of the amazing characteristics of the Christian Church of the twenty-first century is that we are unable to define our enemies.” I am puzzled by this, but let me support these with challenging questions. Why can Christians not define their enemies?

I am deeply touched too by Richard and Sabina Wumbrand, how they fought their faith within Communist countries. As the Scripture says, we will be held accountable of what we know and if we thought it is right to spread the good news to the communist countries, then it is sin not to do so. But I am for sure, you believe too what John 6:44 states, “No man can come to Me, except the Father Which hath sent Me draw him, and I will raise him up at the last day.” I firmly believe that those who are not called today will have their chance in the coming kingdom, if they are appointed to be left alive at the coming of Yahshua. What I mean is that, we should not force at any rate to get into countries which are so dangerous to stay around, for Almighty Yahweh has an appointed time for each and every one...

I am living on an island where the Muslims, Christians, and communist rebels are rampant in areas where there is stoppage of fellowshiping. Some of the brethren in that area are now abandoning the place because they could hardly meet the necessities of life due to hard life. They are being persecuted of hunger and poverty and not the direct persecution from the Christians, Muslims, and communist rebels. The cause of their hunger is because of many business firms. Years before the things happened, I attended these places during Sabbaths and Feasts. I have observed that some of the brethren took the Sabbaths and Feasts for granted. Some of them worked and did not attend the Feasts for the reason of economic survival. I have analyzed this: If we leave the Sabbaths and Feasts, and reverse the formula of

“seeking Yahweh first and His righteousness and all things will be added,” surely it will also have reverse effects too...

I will always remember you and all writers, members of the Bible Sabbath Association in my prayers. I know Almighty Yahweh blesses His people who walk in the narrow path of His required righteousness. In His mercy that endureth forever, may He continue to provide all in His spirit and in His truth.

More power to all in His Name.
Halle lu Yah.

Very respectfully yours,
Sister Ana Harrom, Philippines

Sister Harrom:

Thank you for your support of the Bible Sabbath Association and The Sabbath Sentinel. Even though we are based in the United States, we are truly gratified that our publication reaches many parts of the world. We thank the Lord Jesus Christ that He has allowed us to bring His message to people on the other side of the world from us. Truly, His truth knows no borders; all men everywhere thirst for His living water.

Thank you also for taking the time to write us a lengthy letter. I was not able to include the entirety of your letter because of the limitations of space, but there are some ideas put forth in your letter that I would like to comment on.

First, in my article, “Who Is my Enemy?” my main point was that we Christians too often do not see Christ as the point around which we unify; rather, we unify around our own denomination or church association. We are prone to see others outside our church gathering as competitors, or even enemies.

Second, I will agree that Christians are often persecuted because of their own sins. This kind of persecution is designed to wake us up so that we will repent. Persecution tests our faithfulness. If you are living in an

area of the Philippines that is dangerous and the Lord has protected you in the midst of that danger, I rejoice in His mercy and protection. However, please don't forget that sometimes the righteous are persecuted—not because of sin but because of their righteousness. When this happens, the Lord considers it a blessing. (Matthew 5:11-12)

Third, you state that “we should not force at any rate to get into countries which are so dangerous to stay around, for Almighty Yahweh has an appointed time for each and every one.” I am very glad that neither Jesus nor the apostles took that approach to preaching the gospel. Life was very dangerous and deadly for Jesus in ancient Palestine, and all of the apostles except John suffered a martyr's death because they were willing to take the gospel into very dangerous regions. Please do not forget that Jesus gave instructions to the apostles and to the Church that would follow after them: “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age’” (Matthew 28:18-20). Notice that the Lord commands His followers to go. There is no command to return, no command to go only if it's safe—just go and teach. We can go to all nations because “all authority has been given to Me [Jesus].” The Lord also told his disciples: “For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it” (Mark 8:35). I truly believe that we should seek to save all people, not assume that this one or that one can wait for another time. God alone knows the right time. I do not believe that any of us can assume that we know God's timing. —Editor

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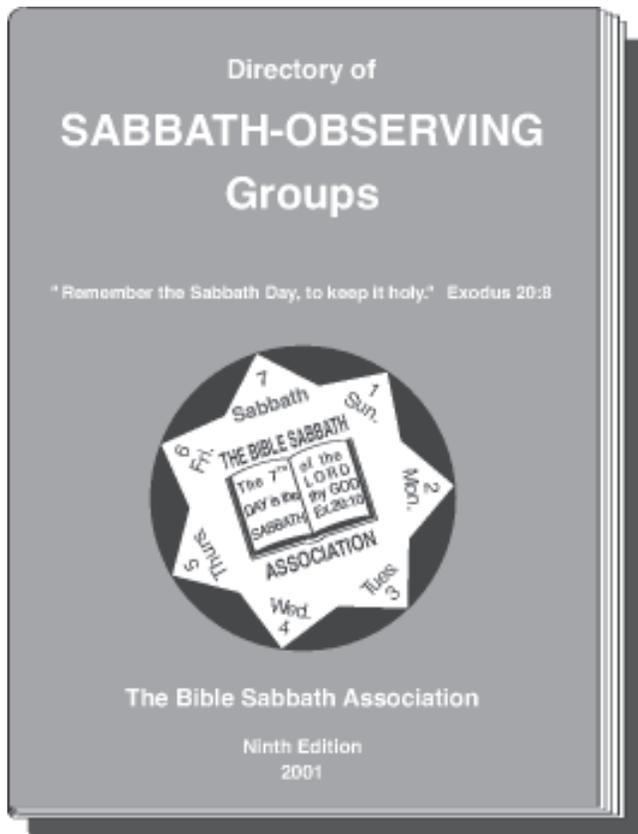
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