

The Sabbath Under Crossfire: A Look At Recent Developments

Endtime Issues No. 63

14 February 2001

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Dear Members of the Endtime Issues Newsletter:

The last newsletter *Left Behind: Fact or Fiction?* generated an unusual number of favorable responses. Many pastors have expressed their appreciation for this analysis of the Rapture, currently popularized by the movie and film *Left Behind*. I have been invited to share this study in conjunction with my ADVENT SEMINAR during the next few weekends.

The study of the Sabbath has heightened my appreciation for the study of the Second Advent, because these two doctrines have a common denominator. They both invite us to meet the Lord. The Sabbath invites us to meet the invisible Lord in time on His Holy Day and the Second Advent invites us to meet the visible Lord in space on the glorious Day of His Coming. Our weekly preparation to meet the Lord on His Holy Day, constitutes an essential preparation to meet the Lord in space on the glorious day of His coming.

Beginning with this newsletter I would like to share with you some of the lectures that I deliver in conjunction with my SABBATH ENRICHMENT SEMINAR. The reason is twofold. First, many of our subscribers have expressed an interest for my seminars which they have been unable to attend because of distance. Second, I spent considerable time restructuring and updating my presentations in preparation for the videotaping that was done at the Sacramento Central SDA Church on February 2, 3 and 4, 2001. Pastor Doug Batchelor, the senior pastor, graciously invited me to present my seminar at his church, which has a state of the art equipment for video recording. The church looks like a studio with four expensive video cameras centrally located in the sanctuary for a professional recording. About ten people are involved in a taping session.

I was glad that I could tape my presentations in a sanctuary before a live, warm audience, rather than in a studio before cold cameras. In fact, the reception and the response of the congregation was marvelous. Joani Mauth, the church Secretary, told me that on the Sabbath there was the largest crowd (over 1,100) she had ever seen during the past 23 years she has attended the church.

The Sacramento Central SDA Church provided me with a unique opportunity to make a fresh video recording of the Sabbath Seminar. The recording began on Friday evening, February 2, 2001, with my testimony entitled "My Search for the Sabbath at a Vatican University." This is the gripping story of how the Lord opened the door for me to enter, study, research, and publish a dissertation on the Sabbath/Sunday question at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, Italy.

On Sabbath morning at 11:00 a. m. I shared a practical meditation entitled "The Sabbath as Time for Service." This meditation explores how on and through the Sabbath we can serve God, ourselves, and others. On Sabbath afternoon at 4:00 p. m. I delivered the informative lecture "The Sabbath Under Crossfire: A Look at Recent Developments." This lengthy two hours lecture offers an updated report on recent Sabbath/Sunday developments. I decided to share this lecture in this newsletter, because it has been enthusiastically received by capacity crowds everywhere.

On Sunday morning I delivered the final two lectures. The first is entitled "The Sabbath and the Savior." In this Christ-centered sermon I suggest seven ways in which the Sabbath enables the believer to experience Christ's peace and rest in our lives. The last lecture "Holy Day or Holiday?" offers a summary of my doctoral investigation on how

the change came about from Saturday to Sunday in early Christianity. In the next newsletter I plan to post this lecture which you should find helpful when you wish to explain to your friends how the Sabbath was changed to Sunday.

About 60 close up images of significant documents were shown during the course of the five presentations which lasted a total of six hours. I would like to express my wholehearted appreciation, not only to the Sacramento Central SDA Church for hosting the seminar, but also to the taping team of Amazing Facts. They spent many hours preparing the shots for each presentation, then taping my lectures, and finally editing them. I have been informed that by February 18, 2001, I will receive the finished edited masters video cassettes in Super VHS format for duplication. This means that in few days we will be able to supply you with the complete six hour SABBATH ENRICHMENT SEMINAR in three video cassettes and six audio tapes. To order your set, fill out the order form at the end of this newsletter.

UPCOMING WEEKEND SEMINARS

As a service to our subscribers, I am listing the date and the location of the seminars for the month of February, March, and April 2001. Feel free to contact me at (616) 471-2915 for a special seminar in your area during the latter part of this year. I still have few open weekends.

FEBRUARY 16-17: PENDLETON SDA CHURCH

Location: 1401 SW Goodwin Place, Pendleton, OR 97801

For information call Pastor Daniel Knapp at (541) 276-0882 or (541) 996-6222.

FEBRUARY 23-24: COEUR D'ALENE SDA CHURCH

Location: 111 Locust Avenue, Coeur d'Alene, ID 83814

For information call Pastor Lloyd Perrin at (509) 276-7386 or (908) 664-5473.

MARCH 2-3: WALLA WALLA CITY SDA CHURCH

Location: 2133 Howard Street, Walla Walla, WA 99362

For information call Pastor Rick Bowes at (509) 525-9540 or (509) 525-5700.

MARCH 9-10: APOPKA SDA CHURCH (ORLANDO)

Location: 305 South Highland Avenue, Apopka, FL 32704

For information call Pastor John Appell at (407) 899-2812 or (407) 880-1726

MARCH 16-17: WINTER SPRINGS SDA CHURCH (ORLANDO)

Location: 50 S. Moss Road, Winter Springs, FL 32708

For information call Pastor Gustav Scheuneman at (407) 327-1190 or (407) 862-5463.

MARCH 23-24: SPOKANE CENTRAL SDA CHURCH

Location: 828 W Spofford Avenue, Spokane, WA 99205

For information call Pastor Jeff Kinne at (509) 328-5900 or (509) 443-9961.

APRIL 6-7: RED DEER SDA CHURCH, ALBERTA, CANADA

Location: Highway 2 South to McKenzie Road, Red Deer

For information call Pastor Ian Hartley (403) 347-9201 or (403) 886-4123

APRIL 20-21: SANDPOINT SDA CHURCH

Location: 2255 Pine Street, Sandpoint, Idaho 83864

For information call Pastor Ron Reed at (208) 265-0519 or (208) 263-3648

APRIL 27-28: HERMISTON SDA CHURCH

Location: 855 W. Highland, Hermiston, OR 97838

For information call Pastor Kevin Wilfley at (541) 567-7989 or (541) 567-8241

**THE SABBATH UNDER CROSSFIRE:
A LOOK AT RECENT DEVELOPMENTS**
Samuele Bacchiocchi, Ph. D., Retired Prof. of Theology,
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Few Biblical doctrines has been under the constant crossfire of controversy during Christian history, like that of the Sabbath. A bibliographic survey of the Sabbath/Sunday literature produced between the Reformation and our time shows that over 3000 major treatises have been published, besides the countless number of articles. Truly it can be said that the Sabbath has had no rest.

Why of the Ten Commandments, only the Sabbath has been under the constant crossfire of controversy? Most likely because the Sabbath touches us in our intimacy more than the other nine commandments. It summons us to consecrate our time to God and most people would rather use their time to seek for pleasure and profit, rather than for the presence and peace of God.

In recent times the Sabbath/Sunday controversy has been rekindled by at least two significant developments. On the one hand the Sabbath has been attacked in an unprecedented way, not only by Sundaykeeping scholars and church leaders like the Pope, but also by former Sabbatarians. The latter is a new development, because never before in Christian history the Sabbath has been attacked by Sabbatarians. On the other hand, however, the Sabbath is being rediscovered by many church leaders, scholars, and religious organizations.

The Sabbath in my Life. Before presenting an updated report on these recent developments, I would like to mention briefly why I have developed such a passionate interest for the study of the Sabbath. The reason is simple. The Sabbath has been a testing truth in my early life. I suffered considerably for choosing to honor the Savior on the Sabbath. I grew up in Rome, Italy, at a time when the short working week did not exist and Saturday was a school day. To justify my Sabbath absences my mother often took me to the family doctor who would prepare a medical excuse saying that on a given Saturday I was “psychologically incapacitated.”

I recall the priest who came to our class twice a week to teach us the Catholic Catechism. When he learned that I was a Seventh-day Adventist, he told the whole class that I was “Un Protestante eretico—A heretical Protestant,” and consequently they should keep away from me. Indeed, they avoided me as if I had AIDS. The ridicule, rejection, persecution I faced from different sources, especially for my Sabbathkeeping, caused me to dream to investigate one day which is God’s Holy Day and what it should mean to our Christian life today.

While attending Newbold College in England and later Andrews University Theological Seminary, I wrote several papers on various aspects of the Sabbath/Sunday question. But my dream was to write a doctoral dissertation on the rise of Sunday observance in early Christianity. I wanted to understand more fully the interplay of factors which caused many Christians to abandon Sabbathkeeping and adopt Sundaykeeping.

In July 1977 when I stood inside the Pontifical Gregorian University Press watching my doctoral dissertation *From Sabbath to Sunday* rolling off the press, I was made forcefully aware of the fact that my youthful dream had come true beyond my dimmest expectations. As a teenager I could have never imagined that the Lord would make it possible for me to enter, study, research, and publish a dissertation on the change from Saturday to Sunday at a prestigious Pontifical University. I could have never dreamed that I would receive a gold medal from Pope Paul VI for the *summa cum laude* distinction for my class work and dissertation. I could have never imagined that the Lord would use this research to help many sincere people around the world rediscover the validity and value of the Sabbath for today.

Over the years my interest for the Sabbath has continued unabated. In fact, since the publication of my dissertation *From Sabbath to Sunday* in 1977, I have authored three other books on the Sabbath: *Divine Rest for Human Restlessness*, which explores the theological meaning of the Sabbath for today; *The Sabbath in the New Testament*, which examines the continuity of the Sabbath in the New Testament; *The Sabbath Under Crossfire*, which responds to the most recent attacks against the Sabbath and reports on the rediscovery of the Sabbath by numerous religious organizations and church leaders. A special offer on these four Sabbath books will be given at the end.

This lecture is a nutshell summary of the highlights of *The Sabbath Under Crossfire*. For the sake of clarity, this presentation is divided into two parts: the first, dealing with the recent attacks against the Sabbath, and the second, reporting on the rediscovery of the Sabbath by various religious organizations.

PART ONE: RECENT ATTACKS AGAINST THE SABBATH

In recent times the Sabbath has been attacked by three major sources. First of all, the Sabbath has been attacked in a subtle and deceptive way by Pope John Paul II himself. In his famous Pastoral Letter *Dies Domini* (The Lord's Day) released on May 31, 1998, the Pope makes a passionate plea for a revival of Sunday observance by appealing to the moral imperative of the Sabbath commandment. We will discuss in a moment the deceptive attempt of the Pope to make Sunday the Biblical Sabbath.

Second, the Sabbath has been attacked by numerous Catholic and Protestant scholars who have written doctoral dissertations, arguing for the abrogation of the Sabbath at the Cross, and the apostolic origin of Sunday. Third, for the first time in Christian history the Sabbath is being attacked by former Sabbatarians who have recently embraced the so-called "New Covenant Theology." Let us take a look at each of these three attacks against the Sabbath.

1. The Pope and the Sabbath

The Pope's attack against the Sabbath is very subtle and deceptive because on the one hand he speaks eloquently of the Sabbath as "a kind of architecture of time" that marks the unfolding of Biblical revelation from creation, to redemption, to final restoration, and yet on the other hand he proclaims Sunday to be the embodiment, fulfillment and full expression of the Sabbath. When I read the first few pages of the Pastoral Letter, I thought that the Pope had become a Sabbatarian. Perhaps he became a convert after reading my two books *From Sabbath to Sunday* and *Divine Rest for Human Restlessness* donated to him personally by Dr. Beverly Beach, Director of the Inter-Churches Affairs at the General Conference. In fact, we did receive a letter from the Pope's secretary, saying that the Holy Father was reading the books with interest. But my joy was short lived, because I soon discovered that the Pope's strategy is to make Sunday the biblical Sabbath.

For example, the Pope wrote: "Sunday is the day of rest because it is the day 'blessed' by God and 'made holy' by him, set apart from the other days to be, among all of them, 'the Lord's Day.'" (#14). This statement is grossly wrong, because nowhere the Bible suggests that God "blessed" and "made holy" Sunday. It is evident that the Pope reads Sunday into the biblical Sabbath, to justify Sunday observance as a biblical institution.

The Pope's attempt to make Sunday the biblical Sabbath is surprising because it represents a significant departure from the traditional Catholic explanation that Sunday observance is an ecclesiastical institution different from the Sabbath. In the past, this explanation virtually has been regarded as an established fact by Catholic theologians and historians. Thomas of Aquinas, for instance, who is regarded as the greatest Catholic theologian who ever lived, makes this unambiguous statement: "In the New Law the observance of the Lord's day took the place of the observance of the Sabbath not by

virtue of the precept [Sabbath commandment] but by the institution of the Church and the custom of Christian people.”

Why does John Paul depart from the traditional Catholic position that Sunday observance is a Catholic institution, different from the Sabbath? Most likely because he is very concerned about the crisis of Sunday observance. In most Catholic countries less than 10% of Catholics go to church on Sunday. In Italy, where I come from, it is estimated that only 5% of Catholics go to church on Sunday. The remaining 95% go to church three times in their lives: when they are hatched, matched, and dispatched. The Pope believes that if this trend continues, it can threaten the future of the Catholic Church.

To resolve the crisis of Sunday observance, the Pope challenges Christians to respect Sunday, not merely as an ecclesiastical institution established by the Catholic Church, but as a divine command—a moral imperative of the Sabbath commandment. Furthermore, by making Sundaykeeping a moral imperative rooted in the Sabbath commandment, the Pope offers the strongest moral reasons to justify the enforcement of Sunday observance by means of canonical law within the Catholic church and civil legislation outside the church. He urges Christians to “ensure that civil legislation respects their duty to keep Sunday holy” (#67).

I spent several weeks examining this historical document. In fact, I devoted the whole first chapter of *The Sabbath Under Crossfire* to an in depth analysis of the Pastoral Letter. The response of the press has been gratifying. Several newspapers, including *Washington Post*, expressed support for my challenge to the Pope’s attempt to make Sunday the biblical Sabbath. The article in the *Washington Post* is entitled “When is the Lord’s Day? Adventist Says Pope Unfairly Promotes Sunday Sabbath.” Surprisingly, my picture appears next to the one of Pope John Paul II.

Sunday is not the Sabbath. The fundamental problem with the Pope’s position is the failure to recognize that Sunday is not the Sabbath. The two days differ in origin, meaning, and experience. The Pope’s attempt to make Sunday the “extension and full expression” of the creative and redemptive meanings of the Sabbath is very ingenious, but it lacks biblical and historical support. From a biblical perspective, there are no indications that New Testament Christians ever interpreted the day of Christ’s Resurrection as representing the fulfillment and “full expression” of the Sabbath. In fact, the New Testament attributes no liturgical significance to the day of Christ’s Resurrection, simply because the Resurrection was seen as an existential reality experienced by living victoriously by the power of the Risen Savior, and not a liturgical practice, associated with Sunday worship.

Had Jesus wanted to memorialize the day of His Resurrection, He would have capitalized on that day to establish a fitting memorial of that event. But, none of the utterances of the risen Savior reveal an intent to memorialize the day of His Resurrection by making it the new Christian day of rest and worship. Biblical institutions such as the Sabbath, Baptism, and the Lord’s Supper, all trace their origin to a divine act that established them. But there is no such divine act to institute a weekly Sunday or annual Easter Sunday memorial of the Resurrection.

From a historical perspective, the Pope’s claim that the celebration of Christ’s Resurrection on a weekly Sunday and annual Easter-Sunday “evolved from the early years after the Lord’s Resurrection” (#19) is discredited by compelling historical facts. For example, for at least a century after Christ’s death there was no Easter-Sunday. Passover was still observed by the date of Nisan 14 (irrespective of the day of the week), and not on Easter-Sunday. When in the latter part of the second century Bishop Victor (189-198) attempted to impose Easter-Sunday, he was met with a strong opposition by the churches of Asia Minor.

Indications such as these discredit the Pope’s attempt to invest Sunday with the theological meaning and eschatological function of the Sabbath. Moreover, such an attempt breaks the continuity and cosmic scope of the Sabbath which embraces and

unites creation, redemption and final restoration; the past, the present and the future; man, nature and God; this world and the world to come.

The Pope's appeal to the Sabbath to justify Sunday observance, stems from the conviction that Sunday observance is *not an option but a moral obligation* which is well-defined both in the Catholic Catechism and the Catholic Canon Law. While Protestant churches *encourage* their members to attend Sunday services, the Catholic Church *obliges* their members to attend Sunday Mass. The reason is clearly stated in the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: "The Sunday Eucharist is the foundation and confirmation of all Christian practice. For this reason the faithful are obliged to participate in the Eucharist on days of obligation . . . Those who deliberately fail in this obligation commit a grave sin" (p. 527; emphasis supplied).

The Pope's Call for Sunday Legislation

To protect the rights of Catholic to observe Sunday and their holy days, Pope John Paul calls upon Christians to "strive to ensure that civil legislation respects their duty to keep Sunday holy" (#67) In other words, the Pope appeals to Christians to pressure the international community of nations to promulgate Sunday legislation in order to protect the right of Catholics to observe their Sunday. To achieve this objective the Vatican is also using its diplomatic channels to pressure various nations to make the Catholic holy days national holidays. For example, recently the government of Croatia signed a concordat with the Holy See, agreeing to make not only Sunday, but also seven other annual Catholic holy days as national holidays.

The Pope's call upon the international community of nations to promulgate Sunday legislation, *ignores two fundamental facts*. First, we live today we live today in a *pluralistic society* where there are, for example, Christians and Jews who observe the seventh-day Sabbath as their Holy Day, and Muslims who may wish to observe their Friday.

If Sundaykeepers expect the State to make Sunday a legal holiday to facilitate their Sunday rest and worship, then Sabbatarians have an equal right to expect the State to make Saturday a legal holiday to protect their Sabbath rest and worship. To be fair to the various religious and nonreligious groups, the State would then have to pass legislation guaranteeing special days of rest and worship to different groups of people. The implementation of such a plan is inconceivable because it would disrupt our socioeconomic structure.

A second important consideration is *that Sunday laws have proven to be a failure*. They have not resolved the crisis of diminishing church attendance. In most Western European countries, Sunday Laws have been in effect for many years. Contrary to the United States, on Sunday most of the business establishments are shut down. Even most gasoline stations are closed on Sunday—a fact that can be costly to uninformed American tourists. But, have Sunday Laws facilitated church attendance? Absolutely not! The truth of the matter is that church attendance in Western Europe is considerably lower than that in the United States, running at less than 10% of the Christian population.

The solution to the decline in church attendance is not Sunday legislation, but internal moral and spiritual renovation. What the Pope should do, is not to call for international Sunday legislation, but to call upon Christians everywhere to remember what they have long forgotten: REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY TO KEEP IT HOLY. The Pope should explain that to remember the Sabbath entails, not just attending Sunday mass from time to time, but showing one's commitment to Christ by consecrating the seventh-day to Him. It is only when Christians become morally convicted that Sabbathkeeping is a divine institution established to ensure our physical and spiritual well-being, that they will feel compelled to observe God's Holy Day.

2. Scholarly Studies Against the Sabbath

A second major attack against the Sabbath has come in recent years from numerous Catholic and Protestant scholars who have written doctoral dissertation against the Sabbath. These publications argue for the abrogation of the Sabbath in the New Testament and for the apostolic origin of Sunday. In my Sabbath books, especially my dissertation *From Sabbath to Sunday* and in *The Sabbath Under Crossfire*, I have examined these publications.

The most important work is the symposium *From Sabbath to the Lord's Day*, produced by seven British/American scholars as a common doctoral project at Cambridge University, in England. In many ways this symposium is a response to my doctoral dissertation *From Sabbath to Sunday*. In a nutshell their thesis is that Christ terminated the Old Covenant function of the Sabbath by becoming our salvation Sabbath rest. Consequently Christians no longer need to observe the Old Testament Sabbath. Instead, they should observe Sunday in honor of the Risen Savior. We will examine this view in the next newsletter entitled "Holy Day or Holiday?"

3. The Sabbath Attacked by Former Sabbatarians

A third and most surprising attack against the Sabbath has come in recent years from former Sabbatarians. To my knowledge this is the first time in Christian history that the Sabbath is being attacked by Christians who in the past had been the champions of its observance. These include first of all the leadership of the Worldwide Church of God who in early 1995 prepared a 22 pages document entitled "The Sabbath." This document, which was sent out to all their ministers around the world, declares the Sabbath to be part of the Old Covenant, given to the Jews, terminated at the Cross, and no longer binding upon New Covenant Christians. This view is generally known as "New Covenant Theology." The impact of this theology has been devastating in the Worldwide Church of God, causing the loss of over 80% of its members. In fact, its membership has declined from over 200,000 members to only about 30,000.

The New Covenant theology has found its way also in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. About twenty former Seventh-day Adventist pastors and Bible teachers have embraced it and influenced about 5000 Adventist to leave the church.. Perhaps the most influential promoter of this new theology is Dale Ratzlaff, a former SDA pastor and Bible teacher at Monterey Bay Adventist Academy. He has authored the book *Sabbath in Crisis* which I have examined very closely in my book *The Sabbath Under Crossfire*. Frankly, I find, not only the content of the book but even its title irrational, because to claim that the Sabbath is in crisis, it would mean that God Himself is in crisis, since He is the one who established the Sabbath in the first place.

Ratzlaff has been very active in attacking the Sabbath in particular and the Seventh-day Adventist Church in general. He has spoken against the Sabbath in various radio talk shows. I was invited to debate him by a Christian radio station in St. Louis, MO. We had a one hour animated discussion. We continued the dialogue on the internet and in a matter of few weeks over 7000 people contacted me to receive the exchanges. This is how my biweekly ENDTIME ISSUES newsletter began. Today the newsletter has over 13,000 subscribers. Your friends are welcomed to subscribe. All what they need to do is to email me a message saying "subscribe me" at: sbacchiocchi@qtm.net or sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com

During the past few years about twenty former SDA pastors and Bible teachers have embraced the so-called New Covenant Theology, and have established their own independent "Grace" oriented congregations. Some of them are actively promoting their anti-sabbatarian and anti-SDA views through books, magazines, tapes, and lectures. An example is Rodney Nelson, who wrote an article "Why the Lord's Day Matters to Me," for the *Sunday* magazine of the Lord's Day alliance of the USA. He identifies himself in the article as "a former Seventh-day Adventist," who found it necessary to abandon Sabbathkeeping and embrace Sundaykeeping. The four reasons he gives are totally

devoid of biblical and historical support. For an analysis see *The Sabbath Under Crossfire*, especially pp.25-40.

The New Covenant Theology promoted by former Sabbatarians, emphasizes the distinction between the Old Covenant, which they claim was based on a “*package of laws*” and the New Covenant, which they claim is based on *principles of love*. The Sabbath is supposed to be part of the Old Covenant package of laws which Christ fulfilled. Thus, Christians are no longer expected to observe the Sabbath by resting physically on the seventh-day because they can experience the rest of salvation every day.

I dare to predict that this so-called “New Covenant Theology” is going to make inroads in our Adventist Church more and more, attracting especially those who prefer to spend the Sabbath seeking for pleasure or profit rather than for the peace and presence of God. Thus it behooves us to understand what are the fundamental problems of the “New Covenant Theology.” For the sake of brevity let me mention four major fundamental problems of the New Covenant Theology.

Four Fundamental Problems of the New Covenant Theology

1. The New Covenant Theology create *an arbitrary and radical distinction between the Old Covenant*, allegedly based on a package of laws given by Moses, and New Covenant established on the principles of love revealed by Christ. Such a distinction is nowhere to be found in the Bible. The New Covenant in the Bible, which incidentally is first given in the Old Testament, does not entail the replacement of laws with a generic principle of love, but *the internalization of God’s Law*: “This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my Law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God” (Jer 31:33). There is no antithesis in the Bible between law and love, because God’s laws are principles of love.

2. The New Covenant Theology fails to recognize the simple fact the *biblical “covenant” is God’s commitment to save His people*. And God has only one Plan of Salvation. God did not offer salvation to the Jews on the basis of works of the law and when He discovered that works do not work, He changed his plan and decided to offer salvation to Christians on the basis of grace. Salvation has always been a divine provision of grace. When Moses went up on Mt. Sinai, he received on the hand the Decalogue—God’s principles of life, and on the other hand, the blueprint of the tabernacle—God’s provision of grace (Ex 24:12 to 25:9).

3. The New Covenant Theology ignores *the cosmic sweep of the Sabbath*, which embraces creation, redemption, and final restoration. Incidentally, the Pope recognizes this fact when he speaks of the Sabbath as marking the “sacred architecture of time” that reveals the unfolding of salvation history from creation to its final restoration. It is noteworthy that while Hebrews declares the Levitical priesthood and services as “abolished” (Heb 10:9), “obsolete,” and “ready to vanish away” (Heb 8:13), it explicitly teaches that a “Sabbathkeeping [*sabbatismos*] has been left behind for the people of God” (Heb 4:9). Why? Because the Sabbath point to the eternal rest and peace that awaits the people of God.

4. By replacing the physical rest of the Sabbath with the spiritual rest of salvation, *the New Covenant Theology deprives believers of a vital institution established by God to internalize the reality of salvation*. The physical Sabbath rest is the channel through which we experience the reality of the spiritual salvation rest (Heb 4:10). Physical symbols like the water of baptism, the bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper, and the physical rest of the Sabbath, are designed to help believers conceptualize and internalize the reality of salvation they represent. We stop our work on the Sabbath to allow God to work in us more fully and freely.

PART TWO: THE REDISCOVERY OF THE SABBATH

So far we have discussed the various attacks launched against the Sabbath. This may give the impression that the Sabbath is in danger or crisis. The good news is that while some are making a renewed attempt to negate the continuity, validity and value of the Sabbath for the Christian life today, there are other Christians who are rediscovering the Sabbath as a divine remedy for our tension-filled, cacophonous, restless generation.

The rediscovery of the Sabbath today assumes two different forms. On the one hand, there are Christians who are reexamining the biblical meaning and function of the Sabbath in order to develop a "Biblical" model for Sundaykeeping. We may call these people SUNDAY SABBATARIANS because they believe in observing Sunday as their biblical Sabbath. On the other hand, there are other Christians who reject the compromise position of Sunday Sabbatarians and want to rediscover the Sabbath as the Biblical seventh day, both in terms of its meaning and experience. These SEVENTH-DAY SABBATARIANS sense the need to recover the Biblical and Jewish roots of Christianity which have been largely lost as a result of the Christian theology of contempt for the Jews—a theology which has plagued Christianity through the centuries and caused the loss of the precious Jewish heritage of the Christian faith.

Let us briefly look at some examples of the rediscovery of the Sabbath first by Sunday Sabbatarians and then by Seventh-day Sabbatarians.

1. The Rediscovery of the Sabbath by Sunday Sabbatarians

Keeping the Sabbath Wholly. A good example of the rediscovery of the Sabbath as a model for Sundaykeeping is the book *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly: Ceasing, Resting, Embracing, Feasting* by Marva J. Dawn, a Lutheran theologian. With refreshing insight she captures the meaning and experience of the Sabbath in Scripture and in the religious life of the Jewish people. When I heard Marva Dawn present the highlights of her book at the International Sabbath Symposium, sponsored by the University of Denver on May 24-26, 1989, I thought that she was a Sabbatarian, because she did a marvelous job at capturing some of the fundamental meanings and experiences of the Sabbath. However, my thrill was dampened when I read the appendix of her book where she explains how to observe the Christian Sabbath from sunset Saturday to sunset Sunday. Dawn's attempt to invest Sunday with the meaning and experience of the Sabbath ignores the fundamental fact that Sunday is not the Sabbath. The two days are different in their origin, meaning, and experience.

"Call the Sabbath Delightful." Another example of the rediscovery of the Sabbath as a model for Sundaykeeping is the article "Call the Sabbath Delightful," published in *The Lutheran*, the official magazine of the American Lutheran Church. The author, Judith Fiedler Finn, an attorney, discovered the Sabbath by turning to the Sabbatarian in her community. She discovered that "the Sabbath is a sanctuary in time. In fact, it is a time in which we can begin to experience eternity and its peace." She decided, however, that for her family "the most practical choice" was to make Sunday their Sabbath. Despite her husband's initial protest, she writes, "We plunged in 'cold turkey.' No work from sunset Saturday to sunset Sunday." She continues explaining how her family celebrates Sunday as the biblical Sabbath.

Finn's attempt to celebrate Sunday from sunset to sunset as though it were the Sabbath ignores the historical reality that Sunday is not the Sabbath. The essence of Sundaykeeping has never been a consecration of time, but merely the attendance at a church service.

University of Denver Sabbath Symposium. The scholarly community also has shown an interest for rediscovering the Sabbath as a model for Sundaykeeping. An example is *the International Sabbath Symposium* sponsored by the University of Denver May 24-26, 1989. The organizer of the symposium was Dr. Stanley M. Wagner, Director of the Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Denver.

Stanley Wagner received from one of his students a tape of a Sabbath lecture I delivered at the First Denver Seventh-day Adventist Church. While listening to that tape, Dr. Wagner recounts, "I was absolutely overwhelmed by Dr. Bacchiocchi's address, in which he spoke of the Sabbath in the warmest, most loving terms I had ever heard from the mouth of a Christian. It was then that I felt the time had come for Jewish and Christian scholars to meet to explore our respective traditions relative to the Sabbath."

I vividly recall the evening when Dr. Wagner called me to tell me how impressed he was by my lecture on the Sabbath and by my book *Divine Rest for Human Restlessness*. He told me that what he heard and read had inspired him to explore the possibility of convening at the University of Denver an international Sabbath symposium that would bring together Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, and Sabbatarian scholars, for the purpose of reexamining the relevance of the Sabbath for today. Then he asked me: "Would you be willing to come to deliver one of the major addresses?" I replied: "Dr. Wagner, I would be glad to come at my own expense, if necessary."

This Sabbath Symposium was truly a ground-breaking event that brought together leading scholars from prestigious institutions as far away as England and Israel. While some of the papers presented made an attempt to apply the values of the Sabbath to Sundaykeeping, most of them examined the history, theology, and relevance of the Sabbath for today. Eventually, the papers were published by Crossroad in the book *The Sabbath in Jewish and Christian Traditions* (272 pages).

What surprised me most at the conference was to hear some Sundaykeeping scholars waxing eloquent about the Sabbath—a day they had never observed. For example, you should have heard Catholic Professor Dennis Kennedy, C. M., from St. Thomas Seminary, in Houston, Texas. He was one of the respondents to my paper, but instead of critiquing my presentation, he chose to present his own meditation on the relevance of the Sabbath for both the human and subhuman creation. He said: "We humans need to experience God's sanctifying presence. So we keep the Sabbath to (1) follow divine example, (2) acknowledge God as Creator, and (3) participate in God's rest and blessings. It is a sign of covenant between God and us—we look back to the past perfect creation and forward to the ultimate salvation" (p. 132).

I was so thrilled to hear Father Kennedy speaking so eloquently about the Sabbath, that I sprung forward at the end of his presentation, and told him: "Father Kennedy, may I extend to you the right hand of fellowship into the Seventh-day Adventist church. You have given such an eloquent meditation on the Sabbath, that you deserve to become an honorary member of my church."

The willingness of Sundaykeeping scholars to reexamine the values of the Sabbath for the social, ecological, and psychological problems of our society represents a positive trend that needs to be encouraged. In time, this trend could well motivate Christians to adopt seventh-day Sabbathkeeping, not only as a philosophical value but also as an existential practice governing their lives.

University of South Africa Sabbath Conference. A similar conference on "The biblical Day of Rest" was sponsored by the C. B. Powell Bible Center of the University of South Africa on June 16-17, 1994. The conference was partly called to deal with the question debated in the public press on whether or not competitive sports should be allowed on Sunday. The question was stirred up by the refusal of some South African rugby players to play on Sunday during an international competition in Australia. These players belonged to the Dutch Reformed Church that observes Sunday as the Christian Sabbath.

The conference was attended by about 100 scholars and church leaders of the major denominations in South Africa. The papers presented at the conference were published in a book *The Biblical Day of Rest*. I was invited to present two papers at this conference. The first dealt with the historical change from Sabbath to Sunday in early Christianity, and the second addressed the relevance of the Sabbath for modern society. The response was very positive. I could sense that though there was disagreement about which day is the Christian Sabbath, there was agreement on its meaning, nature, and relevance for today.

Three Dutch Reformed pastors attending the conference told me that they wanted to reexamine the validity and value of the seventh-day Sabbath for themselves and for their congregations. In fact, one of them came to visit me at the home of the Adventist pastor where I was staying and kept me up on a Friday night until past midnight. He held me hostage until I gave him my two Sabbath books, which were the only two sample copies I had with me. Another attended the Sabbath morning service at the City Hall auditorium where I spoke. When he greeted me at the door, he told me that he was going to reexamine the Sabbath for himself and his congregation.

The Lord's Day Alliance. A final example of rediscovery of the Sabbath as a model for Sunday keeping is provided by the goals and work of the Lord's Day Alliance of the United States (LDA). I became personally acquainted with the work of the LDA several years ago when its Executive Director, Dr. James Wesberry, came to spend a Sabbath with our family here at Andrews University where I taught for 26 years. After reading my book *From Sabbath to Sunday*, he wrote me a most gracious letter inquiring about the possibility of meeting one another. He wrote: "It will be a great joy to meet and talk with you any time such a meeting may be arranged. . . . Such a conversation might add to my knowledge and give me additional ideas about how the Lord's Day should be observed. . . . If you propose a time and a place for such a get-together, it will be an honor to meet and talk with you. I should hope you might visit me here in our office."

Dr. Wesberry came to spend the Sabbath of December 2, 1978, with us. The visit was a memorable occasion not only for my family but also for him. In fact, in his farewell address to the Board Members of the LDA, published in *Sunday*, the official magazine of the LDA, Dr. Wesberry mentioned his visit to Andrews University as one of the highlights of his tenure as Executive Director of the LDA. He was greatly impressed by the atmosphere of peace and tranquillity that he felt was so pervasive in our homes, campus, and lives on the Sabbath.

When my wife and I took Dr. Wesberry to the South Bend airport that Saturday night, he said: "This was the most delightful Sabbath I have ever experienced in my life." Obviously, it was the only one seventh-day Sabbath he had observed. Then he asked: "Would you be willing to come to Atlanta, Georgia, next February 14, and be our keynote speaker at our annual LDA board meeting that brings together about 150 church leaders representing 21 denominations? I would like you to share with them some of the things you have shared with me today." It goes without saying that I was delighted to accept the invitation. It was for me an unforgettable experience to speak to such a distinguished group of Church leaders. In my lecture, I spoke not only on how the change came about from Saturday to Sunday in early Christianity, but also on how the values of the Sabbath can revitalize the religious experience of millions of Christians today.

Prior to his death Dr. Wesberry wrote me a most gracious letter asking me to do him "a big favor," namely, to explore the possibility of establishing an endowed chair for Sabbath Studies in his name. When I informed him by phone that an endowed chair for Sabbath Studies at Andrews University would require an investment of half a million dollars, he told me that this was way beyond his means. We discussed the possibility of raising together the funds needed for this worthy project, but he passed away before his dream could become a reality. The fact remains that on his death bed, Dr. Wesberry felt the conviction to contribute to the promotion of the Sabbath.

2. The Rediscovery of the Seventh-day Sabbath

So far we have talked about Sunday-Sabbatarians who want to rediscover the Sabbath as a model for Sundaykeeping. Now we want to focus on the increasing number of Christians today who wish to rediscover the biblical seventh-day Sabbath. A comprehensive history of the many Sabbatarian churches and groups that have come into existence during the past 30 to 40 years would require considerable research and the writing of a sizeable volume. The few examples of Sabbatarian publications and churches that I will mention are only representative of the rediscovery of the Sabbath by Christians of different persuasions. Interested readers will find a listing in *The Directory of Sabbath-Observing Groups*, published by the Bible Sabbath Association. This valuable source of information lists approximately 300 churches and groups who have accepted the Sabbath in recent times.

For the purpose of this lecture, I will submit first a sampling of recent publications rediscovering the seventh-day Sabbath. Then I will give a brief report on a few new Sabbatarian churches with which I have become personally acquainted. .

Catch Your Breath: God's Invitation to Sabbath Rest. A fitting example of the rediscovery of the Sabbath in recent publications is the newly released book *Catch Your Breath: God's Invitation to Sabbath Rest* (1997), authored by Don Postema who serves as pastor of the Campus Chapel at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. The book, which is published by CRC (Christian Reformed Church), provides a practical and creative study of the meaning of the Sabbath for today. In his spiritual search for inner peace and rest, Postema tried various resources including Eastern meditation until he was struck by the fact that "Jews and Christians have a practice as near as our Bible, as close as our tradition, as available as the next ten minutes or weekend: the Sabbath" (p. 15)

Postema explains that "The Sabbath is a gift from God given to humanity right from the beginning. . . . A vacation with God planned from the beginning to be enjoyed into eternity" (p. 15). The aim of the book is not to argue for the continuity or validity of the Sabbath, but rather to invite people to experience its benefits, blessings. Postema writes: "The benefit of the Sabbath is not simply in the study of it but most assuredly in the practice of it—in living Sabbath. Reading and thinking about Sabbath is like reading travel brochures and dreaming about great vacation spots but never going there for a vacation. It is interesting. You can learn a lot. But you can't have the experience unless you make the journey" (p. 5).

"This book is something like a travel guide to an intriguing vacation spot. But I hope you don't simply read about it quickly and put it down thinking, 'I might like to go there some time.' Rather, I hope that together we can experience a vacation with God" (p. 5). Contrary to other authors who study the Sabbath as a role model for Sundaykeeping, Postema focuses exclusively on the biblical seventh-day Sabbath. I found no attempts in the book to apply the values of the Sabbath to Sunday.

Restore. An unusual journal called *Restore* was recently started by Dr. John D. Garr, founder of the Restoration Foundation. Garr has pioneered research, writing, and teaching on the Hebrew foundations of the Christian faith for the past thirty years. The aim of *Restore* is to promote the recovery of the biblical Hebrew heritage to the Christian believer. The contributors are mostly scholars who write within their field of expertise.

A recent issue of *Restore* (Spring 2000) was devoted to the Sabbath. "Restoring Shabbat: Time for god and Family." I was privileged to contribute an article to this issue on "The Good News of the Sabbath." What I find surprising about this organization is that it does not claim any religious affiliation. It consists of scholars of different persuasions who share the common concern to help Christians of all faiths recover vital aspects of their Hebrew heritage, like the Sabbath.

USA TODAY: Remember the Sabbath? It came as a surprise to me to find a timely article "REMEMBER THE SABBATH?" of all places in the weekend edition of *USA TODAY* (April 2-4, 1999). The article is adapted from the book *The Sabbath: Remembering the Sacred Rhythm of Rest and Delight*, by Wayne Mueller. The article lists 10 suggestions for making the Sabbath an enjoyable experience and closes making a plea for renewed Sabbathkeeping in America today.

Hemisphere. A most unlikely place to find an article discussing the rediscovery of the Sabbath is *Hemisphere*, the magazine of United Airlines. I was surprised on a United Airline flight to the West Coast to read in the July 1997 issue of *Hemisphere* a delightful article entitled "Ancient Wisdom," written by Nan Chase, a frequent contributor to *The Washington Post*. Chase tells the story of how she discovered the Sabbath by reading about it in a book she found in the waiting room of a marital counselor. She came across the book at the very time she and her husband went to a marriage counselor because they were deadlocked "over crises of time management, of growth and change." She was surprised to read that Sabbathkeeping can strengthen marital relationships.

She decided to begin observing the Sabbath from "sundown Friday until sundown Saturday" by resting: "No cooking, no shopping or paying of bills, no pulling of weeds or pruning shrubs, no cleaning or repairing the house, nor even talking about or thinking about work and the office. The Sabbath is a day without labor, a time to savor the sweetness of life . . . My personal life, my professional life, and my family life have all improved, and I plan to go on celebrating the Sabbath." What an inspiring testimony to be found, of all places, in an airline magazine. This is but one example of how different people today are rediscovering the blessings of Sabbathkeeping for their families, marriages, and personal lives.

The sampling of publications cited above reflect the growing interest for rediscovering the Sabbath on the part of Christian thinkers of different persuasions. At this juncture, I would like to mention a few churches and groups who have rediscovered the Sabbath in recent times. No special mention will be made of the rediscovery of the Sabbath by older Sabbatarian churches, like the Seventh Day Baptist Church, or the Church of God Seventh-day, since these churches have been in existence for a longer time.

Sabbatarian Methodists. A Sabbatarian Methodist movement, known as Wesley Synod, came into existence in 1996. The founder is Dr. Steven Sanchez, S. T. D. a Methodist Bishop. In a telephone conversation he told me that he presides over 68 congregations scattered throughout North America with about 5000 members. The concern of the Wesley Synod is to return to the Hebraic roots of Christianity. They believe in the observance of God's law, in general, and the Sabbath, in particular.

Bishop Sanchez explained to me that, though their denomination was organized only recently, they stand fully in the Wesleyan tradition because in the early days John Wesley was a seventh-day Sabbath keeper and believed in keeping the dietary laws. He claims that this information is not found in later biographies of Wesley's life but can be found in earlier books. Surprisingly, recently I received a sermon of John Wesley defending the Seventh-day Sabbath against those promoting the so-called New Covenant theology. The sermon will be published in a bicentennial commemoration of John Wesley's writings

Bishop Sanchez explained to me that their church observes the Sabbath from sunset Friday till sunset Saturday not only by going to church on Saturday morning, but also by abstaining from ordinary work in order to give priority to the Lord in their thinking and living. It is encouraging to see how the Holy Spirit is moving upon the hearts of Christians in mainline denominations to recover the Hebrew heritage of the Christian faith, especially by returning to the principle and practice of Sabbathkeeping.

Sabbatarian Southern Baptist Churches. Another encouraging development is the rediscovery of the Sabbath by some Southern Baptist Churches. Let me share with you one experience. On February 11-12, 1999 I was invited to present my Sabbath Enrichment Seminar in Riverside, California, at La Sierra University. On Friday evening, at the end of my testimony, the University Pastor, Dan Smith, alerted me that at the last pew in the back was sitting the pastor of the First Baptist Church of Lucerne Valley. He invited me to go with him to greet this Baptist pastor. We spent few minutes together and I gave to Pastor Allan Stanfield a gift copy of my latest book *The Sabbath Under Crossfire*.

Pastor Stanfield came back Sabbath morning and Sabbath afternoon. When I greeted him on Saturday evening he told me that he was eager to rediscover the Sabbath for himself and his congregation. A week later he ordered a case of *The Sabbath Under Crossfire* which he passed out to the leading families of his congregation. For the next six weeks the congregation met on Wednesday night to study the Sabbath and used the book as a study guide. Then on Wednesday, April 21, 1999, the church held a business meeting in which they voted almost unanimously to move their church services from Sunday to Saturday. Only one Sunday school teacher voted against. The following Saturday, April 24, the church worshipped for the first time on the seventh-day Sabbath. Since then other Southern Baptist churches have followed the same example. Surprisingly, they have been able to remain within the Southern Baptist convention.

The Church of Israel. At the "Friends of the Sabbath Conference" held in Sydney, Australia, June 1996, the participants were delighted to hear Pastor Dan Gayman relate in a most gripping way how the Lord led his Open Bible Church, near Schell City, Missouri, to rediscover and accept the Sabbath. As a result of the rediscovery of new biblical truths, the name of the church was changed to "The Church of Israel." Gayman's presentation was so inspiring that he was invited to repeat it in several Adventist churches in Sydney after the Conference.

Pastor Gayman graciously faxed me on September 6, 1998, a nutshell summary of the providential way the Lord led his congregation to rediscover the Sabbath. He explains that his congregation, being an Open Bible Church, was interested in following biblical truths wherever they might lead them. "Beginning in the year 1985 the Church of Israel [of approximately 200 members] made a conscious effort to study the question of the Sabbath. . . . The congregation studied the issue of the Sabbath for a period of two years and carefully researched every word to be found in Scripture on the subject, along with voluminous books on the subject. The goal was to bring the church into the truth of the Sabbath without loss of a single family." Incidentally, Guyman ordered my Sabbath books on numerous occasions during the time his congregation was involved in the study of the Sabbath.

After two years of Bible study, "in the late Fall of 1987 the ministers and the congregation made their decision to transfer their church services from Sunday to the biblical Sabbath." The official change occurred on December 17, 1987, "without the loss of a single family." Since that time "the church has never failed to observe a full scale worship service on the biblical Sabbath."

Pastor Guyman concludes his summary report with these words: "The transfer from Sunday to the biblical Sabbath has been one of the most important spiritual events in the life of the church. It has wrought powerful transformation in the lives of all the church members. The church has doubled in size and increased its evangelistic outreach to every state in the United States. The church has shared its testimony on the Sabbath with untold numbers of people and upwards of one thousand people have joined the church in the celebration of the Holy Sabbath around the United States."

Messianic Jewish Congregations. The rediscovery of the Sabbath has played a significant role in the religious life of the Messianic Jewish Movement which has gained prominence during the past thirty years. During this time, hundreds of Messianic Jewish Congregations have been established across the United States and overseas.

The rediscovery of the Sabbath among Messianic Jews has been a gradual process. Most Messianic Jews were originally Sundaykeepers largely because their movement was originally sponsored by Sundaykeeping Protestant churches. Surprisingly, Sabbatarian churches have done very little to reach the Jews with the Gospel.

What has led Messianic Jewish congregations to rediscover the Sabbath in recent times is their commitment to recover the Jewish roots of the Christian faith. Some Messianic Jewish Rabbis have explained to me that in their search for their roots, they discovered that Jesus and the apostles were Jews who observed the law in general, and the Sabbath in particular. They found that Christianity began as the continuation of Judaism, not as a radical break away from it. Consequently, they came to realize that the acceptance of Jesus as their expected Messiah did not necessitate for them to reject such an important aspect of their Jewish heritage as Sabbathkeeping.

Sabbatarian Mennonites. Recently, some Mennonites also have rediscovered the Sabbath. The interest of some Mennonites for a rediscovery of the Sabbath can be traced back to some of their Anabaptist founding fathers who were Sabbatarians. The Anabaptist movement represents the radical wing of the Reformation. Their concern was to complete the reformation initiated by Luther and Calvin by returning to the beliefs and practices of the Apostolic Church. Because of this overriding concern, they became known as restitutionists.

Two active Anabaptist leaders, Andreas Fisher and Oswald Glait, became the pioneers and promoters of the Sabbath. Both of them suffered martyr deaths, largely due to their Sabbatarian views. Sabbatarians owe a debt of gratitude to these Sabbath pioneers whose work later influenced the origin of the Seventh Day Baptist church. The latter has been instrumental in helping the early Adventists and other Christians to rediscover the Sabbath.

Mennonite scholar Daniel Liechty has produced a comprehensive biography of Andreas Fisher through a painstaking examination of all the primary and secondary sources he searched out in various European countries. His research was published in 1988 by the Herald Press under the title *Andreas Fisher and the Sabbatarian Anabaptists*. It was my privilege to write the Foreword to this important research.

Liechty carefully reconstructs the Sabbatarian theology of one wing of the Anabaptist movement. In doing so, he raises important questions regarding the theological consistency of the major Anabaptist streams that wanted to rediscover and restore apostolic biblical teachings and practices and yet refused to accept the apostolic practice of Sabbathkeeping. In a personal letter, Liechty informed me that his research has had such an impact upon him that he has become a Sabbatarian.

Liechty's research is of immense value to Sabbatarian churches because it proves that the principle and practice of seventh-day Sabbathkeeping was rediscovered and accepted in the earliest years of the Reformation itself. Moreover, it provides vital information for tracing the historical roots of their theological beliefs.

I was made aware of the interest of the Mennonites in the Sabbath a few years ago when I was invited by the president of the student association of the Associate Mennonite Seminary, in Elkhart, Indiana, to speak at their chapel program on the historical change from Sabbath to Sunday in early Christianity. The lecture was followed by a pleasant discussion. At the end of the discussion, an elderly Old Testament professor, who looked very much like an Old Testament patriarch with a nice flowing white beard, stood up and made a daring speech. He said something like this: "I have listened attentively to the presentation of Dr. Bacchiocchi and to the discussion. It appears to me that there is a keen interest on the part of some Mennonites to return to the biblical principle and practice of Sabbathkeeping. Rather than arguing about this matter, why not

open up our church doors on Saturday morning so that those who have this conviction can worship God on the Sabbath without interference.”

A few months later I learned from one of my colleagues that during a visit to the Associated Mennonite Seminary he was told that a group of faculty and students on the campus meets for worship on Sabbath mornings. This episode provides another example of the providential way the Lord is leading sincere people to rediscover the Sabbath.

Assemblies of Yahweh. One of the larger Sabbatarian churches is the Assemblies of Yahweh, with headquarters in Bethel, Pennsylvania. This church came into existence in 1962 largely as a result of the work of Jacob O. Meyer, who is regarded as the founding father. Since then numerous independent Assemblies of Yahweh have been formed. Though these share the same or a similar name, they function independently from the mother church.

True Jesus Church. The rediscovery of the Sabbath is a phenomenon occurring not only among Christians in North America but also overseas. A few examples are familiar to me. A rather well-known Sabbatarian church in China and the South Pacific is the True Jesus Church. It was established in 1917 in Beijing, China, by Paul Wei, Ling-Shen Chang, and Barnabas Chung, who had been affiliated with Sundaykeeping denominations. They claim to have received the complete truth regarding salvation through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Sabbath observance is one of their fundamental beliefs, as stated in the list of their basic beliefs: “The Sabbath Day, the seventh day of the week (Saturday), is a holy day, blessed and sanctified by God. It is to be observed under the Lord’s grace for the commemoration of God’s creation and redemption, and with the hope of eternal rest.”

Although the True Jesus Church originated in China, its mission has spread to the South Pacific, South-East Asia, and other parts of the world, including Russia. At present it has approximately 1,000,000 members in China and 79,000 members in the free world.³¹ In 1985, the headquarters of the church was relocated from Taiwan to Los Angeles and “four evangelical centers were also established to meet the expansion of the work: the American Evangelical Center (AEC), the Europe Evangelical Center (EEC), the North-East Asia Evangelical Center (NEAEC), and the South-East Asia Evangelical Center.”

Sabbatarians in Eastern Europe. On August 1992 I received a letter from Robert Kiesel, president of the Polish Brethren Unity Church, inviting me to attend a meeting of 1,500 leaders of congregations in Western Ukraine on November 1, 1992. In his letter, Kiesel writes: “During this meeting our brethren are going to discuss the basic topic of the relationship between Judaism and Christianity in order to establish a new Sabbathkeeping Church of God. . . . I hope you can find time to come to this meeting as one of the best Western Sabbath theologians and help us in the process of the creation of the new Church.”

Kiesel’s letter and invitation was sent to me through Dr. Przemyslaw Waliszewski, a scientist in the Department of Cancer Biology of The Cleveland and Clinic Foundation, an internationally known cancer research center. In his accompanying letter, Prof. Waliszewski (a non-SDA) urged me to accept the invitation and asked permission to translate my Sabbath books into Polish and Russian. On such short notice and with such limited information about the actual location of the meeting, it was impossible for me to attend. My absence from the meeting does not detract from the fact that 1500 leaders of Polish Unity Brethren Church in Poland and Western Ukraine came together to establish a new Sabbathkeeping Church of God.

Church Leaders Joining the Adventist Church. One of the joys of my ministry is to learn about ministers of different denominations who have recently accepted the Sabbath and joined our Seventh-day Adventist Church. Time and again I have been made aware of the fact that there are many sincere ministers who are sincerely seeking to know and to do the will of God. Sometime ago I received a letter from Bishop Julius Massey of the St Paul's Old Catholic Church. He thanked me for the gift copy of the book *From Sabbath to Sunday* I mailed him. Then he wrote: "I believe that your book will give me the information which I have long sought. . . . I sincerely desire to know the truth. If one is sincere but wrong, he is still wrong." What a wonderful testimony!

Bishop Giuseppe Fradale. Along the same line let me share the conversion story of former Bishop Giuseppe Fradale, an Italian who was in charge of the Old Catholic Dioceses of Brooklyn New York. One day I received a gracious letter from him, inviting me to attend his baptism as a guest of honor, because my book *From Sabbath to Sunday* had helped him to accept the Sabbath and join our SDA church. His baptism was scheduled for May 8, 1989, which happen to be his 62nd birthday. He told me that he wanted to celebrate his physical birth and spiritual rebirth on the same day.

When I discovered that on that date I was scheduled for a weekend seminar in Los Angeles, CA, I called Dr. Fradale to express my regret and to inform him that I would be in New York City on the following Sabbath to present a seminar at the Mount Vernon SDA Church. I invited him to come in order to become personally acquainted with him. He came and we spent the Sabbath school time together in the Pastor's office. He told me the story of God's providential leading in his life.

Seven years before an Adventist lady gave him a copy of my dissertation *From Sabbath to Sunday*. He told me that after reading the book he became intellectually convinced about the Sabbath, but he was not prepared to make a practical commitment. In the meantime he got sick. He went to see several doctors, but no medication seem to help him. His problem was that he was burned out, stressed out. He said that he would get up in the morning feeling more exhausted than when I went to bed at night.

One morning in desperation he prayed that God would lead him somewhere to someone who could help him. After his prayer of desperation he went out looking for help. He walked a couple of blocks until he came at an intersection where there was the medical van ministry of the Greater New York Conference. Two gentlemen smiled at him and invited him to receive a free medical check up. He looked at them and at the van which said: "Community Services of the Seventh-day Adventist Church." Bishop Fradale, said to himself: "No, way. I, a Catholic bishop, seeking for help at a street corner from Seventh-day Adventists. No way! But then, I remembered that I prayed that the Lord might lead me somewhere to get help. In desperation, I accepted the invitation."

Once he got inside the van, they took his blood pressure and tests, and then they asked him if they could pray for him. He accepted the offer because he was seeking for healing in his body. Fradale said: "Both of them prayed so sincerely and fervently that while they were yet praying I felt the healing touch of God in my body. When we arose from prayer, I asked them: Tell me more about your church." They started telling him about the Sabbath. He reassured them that they did not need to convince me about the Sabbath because he had read *From Sabbath to Sunday* by Dr. Bacchiocchi. To make the long story short, they introduced him to Elder Kretschmeir, who at that time was serving as President of the Greater New York Conference. He gave him private Bible studies and was baptized on May 8, 1989.

Pastor John Rogers. The last conversion story I will mention in this newsletter is that of Pastor John Roger, a former minister with the Church of God. He wrote to me a letter requesting a copy of *From Sabbath to Sunday*. He had read few chapter from a borrowed copy and he said "I must have a copy for my own library. No minister's library can be complete without such a wonderful book." He closed the letter saying, "I feel this book will become one of my best tools in helping my church to become Sabbath keepers, as this is something I have been working on for sometime."

You can be sure that I mailed him all my Sabbath books, videos, and cassettes, praying the Lord would use the material to help Pastor Roger and his congregation. Three months later I received a call on a Sunday morning from Roice Mentor, Pastor of the Pontiac SDA Church in Michigan. Pastor Mentor asked me: "Do you remember sending a package of Sabbath material to Pastor John Rogers?" "Surely, I do. I have been wondering what has happened." Mentor responded: "You do not have to wonder anymore. John Rogers joined our Pontiac SDA Church yesterday on profession of faith. But, he would like to meet you."

Next day, Monday afternoon at 3:00 p. m., both of them were at my house and we spent a couple of hours in blessed fellowship together. I asked John Roger: "What difference has the Adventist message, and the Sabbath in particular made to your life and ministry?" Roger responded: "Sam, I want you to know that I was a Christian before joining the Adventist Church. I loved the Lord and I pleaded with my congregation every Sunday morning to make a fuller commitment to Jesus Christ. But since I accepted the Sabbath and I have learned to consecrate my Sabbath time to God, I feel that I am offering to the Lord, not only lip service, but the service of my total being." This beautiful testimony exemplifies the function of the Sabbath, namely, to make it possible for us to show in a concrete, tangible way our commitment to the Lord.

Conclusion

This fragmentary report has served to show that while some are attacking the Sabbath, other are rediscovering its meaning and blessings for their lives. The Sabbath has been under the constant crossfire of controversy in Christian history, undoubtedly because it affects the quality of Christian living more than any other Biblical institution. Satan knows that if he can lead the people to ignore the Lord on the Sabbath day, ultimately they will ignore God every day of their lives.

We have seen that today the Sabbath is being attacked today not only by Sundaykeepers, but also by former Sabbathkeepers. These renewed attacks against the Sabbath coming from different quarters have not damaged the Sabbath, but have impoverished the many people who have chosen to ignore God's Holy Day. Contrary to what some claim, the Sabbath is not in crisis, because it is a divine institution and God is never in crisis. Instead, the crisis affects countless Christians who have been deprived of the physical, mental, and spiritual renewal the Sabbath is designed to provide them.

In the midst of this controversy it is reassuring to know that there are many Christians who are rediscovering the Sabbath as God's gift to the human family. These Christians are discovering that the values of the Sabbath, as a day for spiritual, physical, moral, and social renewal, are essential for revitalizing the religious experience of millions of Christians today.

The rediscovery of the Sabbath by various church leaders and religious organizations reminds us of Ellen White's statement that in this final hour of human history the Sabbath will be "proclaimed more fully" (EW 33). I believe that the Lord offers us today a unique opportunity to proclaim the Sabbath more fully. To proclaim the Sabbath more fully, we need to understand it and experience it more fully as a joyful celebration of God's creative and redemptive love. May the Sabbath truly become for each one of us the day when we stop our daily work, in order to allow the Savior to work in us more freely and fully, and thus experience the awareness of His presence, peace, and rest in our lives (Heb 4:10).

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