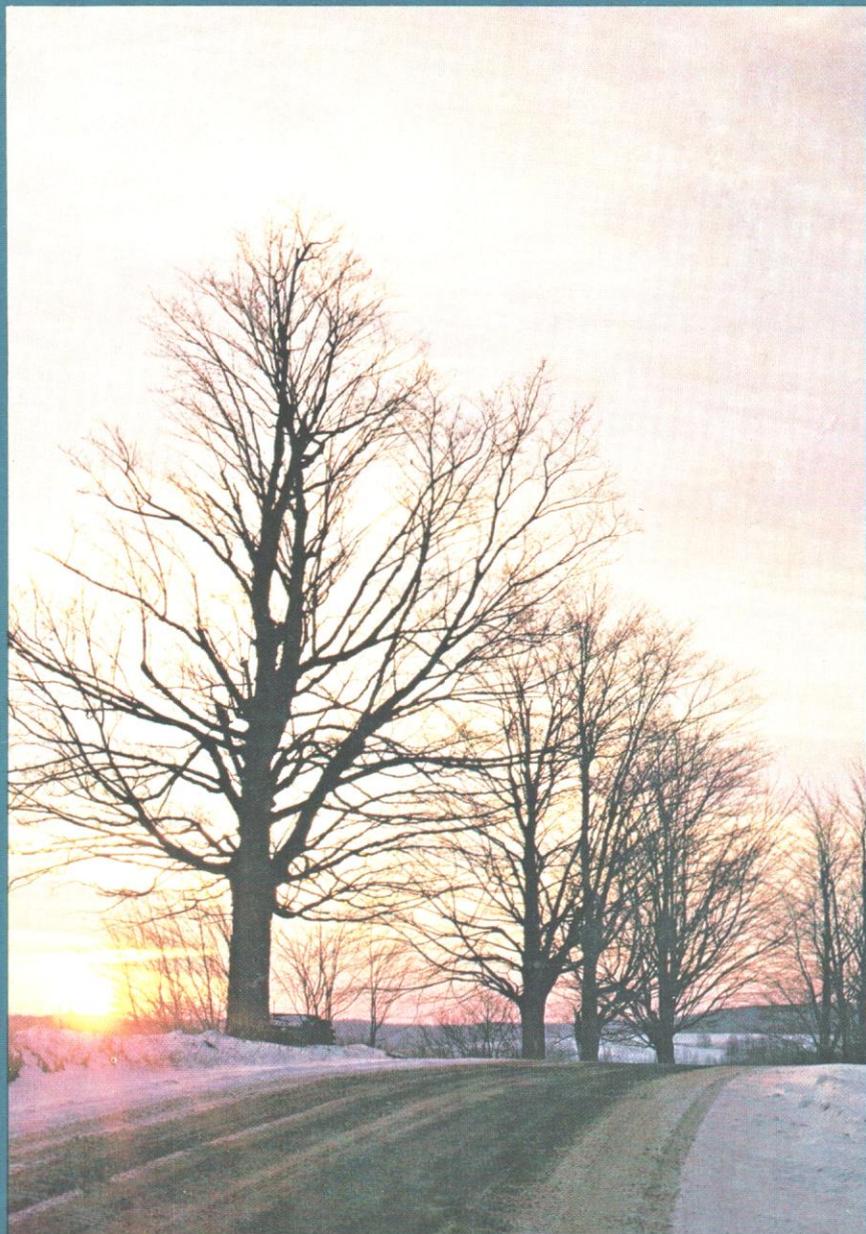


The Sabbath Sentinel

DECEMBER, 1986



The First Day of the Week: A Stylistic Theme?

By Gerald Wheeler

The reference to the first day of the week in Acts 20:7 has been interpreted by many as an indication of the developing observance of Sunday as a day of worship in the apostolic church. Max M. B. Turner, for example, asks in his essay "The Sabbath, Sunday, and the Law in Luke/Acts" the question, "If Luke was not indicating Sunday worship, why did he mention the day at all?" (In D. A. Carson, editor, *From Sabbath to Lord's Day*, Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1982, pp. 131, 132.) So sure are most scholars and commentators that Acts 20:7 is talking about worship on Sunday that they pay little or no attention to any other possible reasons why the day might be cited.

Why did Luke so specifically give the day of this meeting if he did not have the Sunday worship aspect in mind?

Perhaps we can get some clues to what Luke had in mind if we compare Acts 20:7-12 with another Lukan passage, Luke 24. We find a number of intriguing parallels between the two.

1. Both, of course, describe events that took place on the first day of the week. Luke 24:1—Acts 20:7.

2. A resurrection has occurred. Luke 24:5,6—Acts 20:10.

3. Bread is broken and eaten. Luke 24:30.

4. People are comforted by the fact of that resurrection. Luke 24:32—Acts 20:12. (If we went to other Gospel accounts we would find additional parallels to Acts 20:12, such as Matthew 28:8 and John 20:20.)

As a literary craftsman Luke has constructed Luke 24 and Acts 20:7-12 so that they echo each other. He stresses the points of contrast, including the fact that the resurrection of Eutychus took place on the first day of the week. Thus Luke mentions the day not because of any growing custom of Sunday worship, but because of the striking parallels between the two events, the incident of the young man's resurrection being a shadow of the glorious resurrection of Christ. The continuing power of Christ's resurrection can be seen to still be at work in the raising of Eutychus. (Also, as some commentators point out, we have here a counterpart to Peter's raising of Dorcas.)

Luke states that Paul then broke bread, I believe, not because the group of Christians were celebrating the Lord's Supper, but

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because of the parallels to Jesus breaking bread in Luke 24:30. The breaking of bread in Luke 24:30 stems from the Oriental custom of hospitality. Perhaps Paul broke bread in the upper room because he knew the story of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, and was consciously patterning his response to the restoration of Eutychus to that incident. If nothing else we must notice that the breaking of bread in Acts 20:11 is in the singular. Unless we want to project back into this story the post-New Testament concept of a priest celebrating mass in front of the assembled Christians, we cannot have the group performing the Lord's Supper as an act of Sunday worship, contrary to what many have argued.

This chain of association of the first day with resurrection may also help explain the usage of the first day in the only other passage where it appears outside of the Gospel accounts of Christ's resurrection: 1 Corinthians 16:2. Notice that chapter 16 follows chapter 15 which is one of Paul's great passages on the doctrine of resurrection.

By urging his readers to collect the offering for Jerusalem on the first day of the week, Paul would be connecting the idea of Jesus' wondrous gift on the cross with their own gift. Jesus had given all out of total love. They should at least give something to the saints in Jerusalem out of a response to that gift. Think of what Christ did for you in Jerusalem on that unforgettable first day of the week, he implies, and now as a token of your gratitude give some greatly needed help to His followers in that city.

Interestingly the larger context of Acts 20:7-12 is that of Paul's trip to Jerusalem to deliver that love offering. Furthermore, Paul knew

that he was going there to suffer. The prophet Agabus warned him (Acts 21:10-13). Could the apostle have been thinking of His Savior's suffering there? Could it have given him still another reason to break bread in either conscious or unconscious imitation of Christ's action with the two disciples (Luke 24:30) or even in the upper room? Could something like this have shaped the way Luke wrote the Eutychus incident?

The mental chain of association between the themes of resurrection and the first day of the week in Christ's resurrection could clearly have triggered Luke and Paul to mention the day of the week in Acts 20:7 and 1 Corinthians 16:2. It does not have to have anything to do with Sunday worship or religious activity at all. In fact, the parallels between Acts 20:7-12 and Luke 24 suggest that Luke was motivated by literary stylistic considerations more than anything else. Both episodes happened on the first day of the week, and he could not resist bringing out that fact because it helped him to create such a beautiful literary structure.

When the church later had to justify its new practice of Sunday worship, they used these references to support it, but Luke and Paul alluded to the first day for other reasons.

—a book editor at Review and Herald Publishing Assn., the author has written many magazine articles and several books, including *The Two-Tailed Dinosaur*.

It is unfortunate that the only exercise some people get is: jumping to conclusions, running down friends, side stepping responsibility, dodging issues, passing the buck, and pushing their luck.

SDA Annual Council Meets In Brazil

During October, more than 200 delegates from all over the world converged on Rio de Janeiro for the Seventh-day Adventist Annual Council meetings, the first to be held in South America. Lay representatives from all SDA divisions were included for the first time.

Some highlights of council business: a commission was established to study the appropriateness of competitive sports in Adventist colleges, academies, and churches; an annual budget of \$143 million was adopted; a document articulating an Adventist position on a broad range of sexual issues (including teenage promiscuity, premarital sex, incest, sexual abuse of children, homosexual behavior, and lust) was returned to committee for further study.

In response to very rapid growth in Africa, the Central and Western Uganda Fields were combined into one Uganda Union Mission. Membership there increased from more than 15,000 to 36,000 in the past four years.

Call for Global Strategy

On the closing day of the meetings, General Conference President Neal C. Wilson called for a comprehensive strategy for evangelizing the world. Wilson commented, "We're told that 2.5 billion people have not heard the name of Christ. We have identified approximately 25,000 people groups in the world. Of those, 15,000 groups have never been touched."

He went on to say, "I believe this church has the human and

financial resources to finish the work. It may take some redeployment, redirection, but we are capable of completing the task."

It was reported to the council that 448,177 new members have been added to the church, worldwide, since July, 1985.

South American Celebration

The Annual Council coincided with the 70th birthday celebration of the South American Division. The highlight was an all-day extravaganza on the Sabbath of the council meetings. Between 12,000 and 15,000 church members from Rio and surrounding areas flocked to the enclosed, downtown sports arena for a day of worship services, musical programs, and church reports.

The South American Division, which began with 5,000 members 70 years ago, now has 715,000 and employs 1000 pastors and 5,300 teachers.

—Based on an article in the
Adventist Review.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS????

By all means notify us in advance when you move. If we send a SENTINEL to your old address, the post office charges us 30¢ to return it—and you risk missing that issue.

A gem cannot be polished without friction, nor can a man be perfected without the abrasive of trials!

Church of God Ministers Meet

During September, 65 ministers, 12 observers, and 25 wives convened in Glorieta, New Mexico, for the biennial meetings of the North American Ministerial Council of the Church of God (Seventh Day).

In business sessions they unanimously endorsed a Ministerial Code of Ethics. Reelected for another two-year term were the current officers, including Calvin Burrell, President.

Sessions early in the week were devoted to presentations about the differing viewpoints on the topics of salvation, law and grace, the church, and doctrinal truth. The focus was three areas of tensions that had been identified earlier in the year by the Church's executive board. The three had to do with the relative emphasis of God's grace and man's responsibility to obey; the relative emphasis of the church's distinctive doctrines; and, the relative emphasis on being isolated from other churches as opposed to seeking fellowship with others. (Editor's note: These three areas of tensions, and their importance for all Sabbathkeepers, were discussed in the editorial in the July issue of THE SABBATH SENTINEL.)

On Friday the Council unanimously adopted a consensus statement, which is reproduced below.

I. Grace and Law

We are saved by God's grace through faith in the person and

finished work of Jesus Christ. This grace and salvation demands our obedient response, inspires our obedient response, and empowers our obedient response.

Therefore, because it is God's grace which leads to holy living and obedience rather than holy living and obedience which lead to God's grace, God's grace should receive the greater emphasis, but not without maintaining a proper balance.

II. The Importance of Doctrine

All of our doctrinal beliefs are very important in that they express to the best of our present understanding the truth of the Bible. But not all of our doctrines share the same purpose or emphasis. This we have recognized by reordering our doctrinal beliefs statement under the headings "Belief and Salvation (Doctrines that Reveal Salvation)," "Christian Action (Doctrines that Reveal Responsibility)," and "Study and Research (Doctrines that Reveal Learned Truth)."

III. The Mission and Message of Our Church

The Church of God (Seventh Day) exists first, to proclaim the gospel of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Second, the Church of God (Seventh Day) exists to proclaim a unique understanding of Bible Truth.

(Editor's comment: I have reproduced the above statements because they deal with issues that are very important to all Sabbathkeepers and seventh-day churches.)

Celebrating the Savior's Birth



December is the month of Christmas, the traditional time for celebrating Jesus' birth. Of course, historians recognize that Jesus was most probably born in the fall, not in late December, which was the time of the pagan festivals in honor of the sun. A rapidly growing church allowed these Roman celebrations to be carried over into its traditions. Worship of the Son of God was substituted for worship of the sun god to create what many consider paganized Christianity or Christianized paganism.

Given the pagan, non-biblical origin of Christmas, many Christians, including this editor, have determined not to observe it at all. However, in rejecting the celebration of Christmas, it seems we ignore the historical fact of Jesus' birth. We rarely reread the story; we rarely rehearse it for our children; we rarely praise God for the fact that it happened! This, I submit is to our detriment.

The birth of Jesus must be included in any list of the major events in God's plan for the salvation of mankind. Consider the sheer magnitude of God (the Son) emptying Himself of glory to take on the form of a human baby! Consider that this event was foretold by many prophets! Consider the miracles God used to announce, bring about, and to proclaim this event: angels appeared to Mary, to Joseph, to Elizabeth, to Zechariah; a whole host proclaimed the good news to the shepherds; the magi from the East were miraculously led to come and worship Jesus! Consider that two of the four Gospel writers record the events in great detail! It was truly an event of monumental proportions in the plan of God.

Those of us who reject Christmas should be careful that we don't throw the baby out with the bathwater! To be sure, the Bible does not prescribe a celebration for the Savior's birth; and I am not suggesting that we should concoct some new tradition for remembering it. What I am saying is that we should recognize the importance of this event. We should rejoice in it and praise God for it! We should periodically read—for ourselves and our children—the prophecies of Jesus' birth and the several chapters of Matthew and Luke that describe the event in detail.

Jesus is no longer a babe away in a manger; He grew to be a man; He died on the cross; he rose from the dead and ascended to the right hand of the Father, where He now sits in glory and power. But let's remember that all this would never have happened had it not been for the babe in the manger. Let's rejoice with the angels, "I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10).

—Richard A. Wiedenheft

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The Bible Sabbath Association is a nonsectarian, non-denominational association dedicated to bringing together into one strong organization all believers in the Biblical seventh-day Sabbath (Saturday) regardless of sect, creed, or denomination. Its sole purpose is to promote communication, understanding and respect among all Sabbathkeepers and to spread the knowledge of, belief in, and observance of the Creator's Holy Day. The only qualification for membership in BSA is belief in the seventh-day Sabbath.

Annual Member Contribution: Regular Membership, \$20; Family Membership, \$25 (individual member certificates issued but only one set of records and one copy of THE SABBATH SENTINEL and other mailings is sent); Life Membership, \$500 or more contributed during one year. All memberships include annual subscription to THE SABBATH SENTINEL.

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Opinions expressed in articles are those of the writers and not necessarily of The Bible Sabbath Association.

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News from the Seventh-Day Community

Moore Attends Washington Conference on Home Schools

Dr. Raymond Moore, a Seventh-day Adventist and leading home school advocate, was among those invited to speak last summer at a conference called by U.S. Secretary of Education, William Bennett. In attendance were members of the Secretary's staff and officials of leading educational associations and of several key states. Both public and church school officials seemed pleased that the presenters came across as unified in their standards for home education and asked Secretary Bennett to call more and expanded meetings.

Flood Devastates Church of God Work in Southeast India

The lowlands of East and West Godavari Districts along the Godavari River were flooded in mid-August with an average of 5 feet of water. Thousands of homes were destroyed; many of those made of mud or unbaked bricks collapsed as a result of standing for up to 20 days in the receding flood waters. Thousands of acres of rice, sugar cane, bananas, and other crops were destroyed. The Church of God, which has about 1,300 members in the area, reported the loss of homes of seventy-five member families and damage to ten prayer chapels.

Kusma Jesudas, director of the Church of God (Seventh Day) in the area wrote: "My wife and I went to Doddipatla on August 16 to escape the flood. The night was dreadful. The breaches in the flood banks allowed the Godavari River to fill water all over our area. More than four feet of water filled our house. We lost our stored rice and other food and many personal items. It spoiled some of our church

literature. We were out of our house for three weeks. We feel blessed of the Lord because many houses were completely destroyed by the onrush of the flood. All the crops in the field have been ruined. There is no work for the farm laborers."

B. Prabhakar, Secretary of the Church, wrote, "In our meeting of September 14, the Executive Board and pastors of the Church of God in India decided to appeal to you to consider the victims of the flood and especially our church members. We petition you to help us generously."

Individuals wishing to help these Indian Sabbathkeepers may do so by writing to India Relief, Missions Abroad, P.O. Box 33677, Denver, CO 80233.

Adventist Crusade in Zimbabwe

More than 1,939 converts have joined the SDA church as a result of a three-week evangelistic campaign conducted by Pastor R. P. Stafford, Eastern Africa Division evangelist. Local pastors and theology students from Solusi College assisted with the crusade, which drew approximately 2,000 each night to city park amphitheater in Bulawayo.

Garner Ted Armstrong's Program on WGN Cancelled

The Garner Ted Armstrong telecast has been dropped by WGN's nationwide cable network. According to Armstrong, ". . . the station refused to renew our contract, would not discuss with us any terms or conditions whatsoever! I had done exactly as God commands, crying aloud, sparing not, and showing the people of our country their *sins*—I had said, 'God will not prevent homosexuals from contracting AIDS in dirty, filthy bath houses!' I had shown, in that telecast, how AIDS is a disease that

is brought on homosexuals as a direct result of their abominable *sins*! Someone took exception to my remarks, and we received a telephone call saying the station REFUSED to air that particular program. They demanded a substitute. It was only days later that I learned we were being cancelled."

To replace the Chicago superstation, the Church of God, International, has obtained time, at much greater cost and with far fewer responses, in individual metropolitan areas.

8,400 Brazilian Adventist Youths Attend Camp

It could have been just another summer youth festival, but it wasn't—the emphasis was on evangelism. Those attending went out into the city of Itabuna, Bahia, to engage in a number of activities designed to prepare the way for evangelistic meetings. The young people provided a variety of services in over 820 homes, they distributed 10,000 articles of clothing, 10,000 magazines, and sent a rose to 640 hospital patients; 6,000 marched in a parade promoting clean, healthful living.

Such a large camp required construction of a mini-city, which the mayor of Itabuna praised for being free of violence, drugs, and alcohol, and not having a single incident requiring local police action.

All this was in preparation for eight series of evangelistic meetings, five of which were to be conducted by young people.

SDB Elected VP of Baptist Body

Kirk Looper of Leavenworth, Kansas, was elected to represent Seventh Day Baptists in the North American Baptist Men's Fellowship. He was subsequently elected to serve as vice-president of that body for a five-year term.

Talk Show Host Switches to Adventist Publication

Adventist Barbara Jackson-Hall, a television talk show host on WCMH-TV in Columbus, Ohio, wanted to do something more relevant and meaningful in order to make a positive difference in people's lives. She now has that opportunity as assistant editor of *Message*, the Adventists' black lifestyle magazine.

Washington D.C. Mayor Honors SDA Hospital

Mayor Marion Barry, along with many other public officials, attended the grand opening of Hadley Hospital, an 81-bed, \$18.6 million Adventist facility. The hospital is reported to rank third among the 13 hospitals in the nation's capital in the number of indigent patients treated.

Survey of Adventist Youth and Drugs

In 1985, Andrews University's Institute of Alcoholism and Drug Dependency received completed questionnaires from 801 Adventist youths ages 12 to 24. As reported in the October 16, 1986, issue of *Adventist Review*, very few were currently using narcotics or street drugs; however, 8% admit to using tobacco; 12% use alcohol (17% of college age youths); and two-thirds use caffeine-containing beverages or pills.

We invite you to submit information about the seventh-day people, congregations, denominations, ministries—any news items that would be of interest to the seventh-day community in general.

The Sabbath commandment is the only one of the Ten that starts with the word "remember," as if it would be the one most likely to cause us to make excuses for not observing it. No doubt, it is a test commandment.

The Rest of Your Life

By Eugene Lincoln

Should you live to be seventy years old, you will have spent about 280 months of your life asleep, another thirty for vacations, and weekends use around 120 months. Think of it! Thirty-five years of your life will have been spent resting—or at least having the opportunity to rest.

Yet most folks are restless and rest-less. They have allowed themselves to be caught up in the frenzied day-to-day rush that makes up what most of us call life. Sometimes we feel that rest and relaxation are almost akin to sin. Weekends provide for an opportunity to catch up on work in the house and yard; vacations often leave us more worn out than if we had kept working; and night affords

an opportunity to dream on how to solve the next day's problems.

But our Creator did not design us to live restless lives. We need to rest at regular intervals to preserve our physical, mental and spiritual health. He Himself provided an example by resting after completing the most gigantic construction job ever undertaken, the creation of the world (Genesis 2:1,2). He named one day, the seventh day of the week, the Sabbath. He offers this special day to all of us as a reminder of His unmatched creative power in the universe and of His re-creative power in our lives that leads us from sinful restlessness to godliness (Ezekiel 20:12).

The seventh day, God's Sabbath (Saturday), has a vital

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BSA Sabbath Calendars for 1987

Special features: Sabbaths in red, information about moon phases, Biblical months, dates for festivals and holidays, Bible verses. The 1987 calendar will be published as part of the December issue of THE SABBATH SENTINEL, so all subscribers will automatically receive one.

Order extra calendars for \$1.75 each; \$1.50 each for 10 or more.

(Because of high mailing costs, a minimum order of at least 2 calendars is deeply appreciated)

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ingredient that no other day contains: God's blessing (Genesis 2:3). This blessing will overflow into the lives of those who remember that on this day we have a special appointment with our Creator and Redeemer. The experience of communing with Him will give us a calmness and peace of mind that will help us all during the following week.

Should you live to be seventy years old you can spend ten years of your life enjoying a taste of Eden by drawing closer to God than you ever can during the hustle of workdays. If you have never experienced this tranquility of mind and spirit that comes from the One who has promised to give rest to the weary and heavy laden (Matthew 11:28,29), now is the time to begin. Resolve that, beginning next Sabbath, you will enjoy the divinely-given Rest Day for the rest of your life!

Reprints of this article are available as a tract. Order from The Bible Sabbath Association, RD 1 Box 222, Fairview, OK 73737. 2¢ each; 400 for \$5.

Inside God's Hug

By Marilyn Merchant

Some time ago, I ran across a cartoon which shows little PJ, in his pajamas, being held by his mom in a tight embrace and telling her that that is his favorite place, inside her hug. It is such a poignant piece that it often evokes tears from those who view it on my refrigerator.

Thank goodness, we as a people are becoming much less stiff and formal and more demonstrative in many of our churches. Handshakes, although still a very acceptable greeting, are in many cases giving

way to hugs. Even the telephone company, in one of their commercials, has acknowledged the healing comfort of a hug from dad after a bad day.

One of the pastors that I am well acquainted with tells of greeting one of his parishioners with a hug, only to have her burst into tears and rush from the church. He was much upset and anxious to free himself to go talk with her to find out how he had offended her. When he caught up with her, she told him he was the first person that had touched her since the death of her husband some time previous. How very sad that those who crave the warmth and love of their fellow members in Christ find it so hard to find.

When I first saw the cartoon, I cut it out for my own PJ but then could think of so many more people I wanted to share it with. To me, it is the essence of all our relationships, yes, even our religion. My favorite place is in the center of God's hug. With his loving arms wrapped around me, I at last feel safe, warm, and loved. How about you?

I know there are those who prefer their "space" and would not welcome being hugged by everyone. For them, a few warm words of greeting may suffice. But Seventh Day Baptists have long been known for their friendliness, so be sure that visitors to your church feel welcomed and want to return.

—the author, who lives in Riverside, Calif., serves as Seventh Day Baptist Women's Society editor for *The Sabbath Recorder*, where this article was first published.

Tell the world the seventh day is the holy Sabbath (but with the wisdom and understanding of the Lord).

—Don and Maggie Sodergren in *Worldwide Newsletter*

Classified Ads

Revised Sacred Name Rotherham Bibles: \$5.50 paperback; Revised King James N.T., \$4; hardback, \$14; leather \$20. Information about Essenes 7-year repeating solar calendar and Jubilees to Messiah. 1838 West Hayes, Davenport, IA 52804.

(11-12)

United Cassette Library invites you to write for its brand new catalog listing more than 600 cassette tapes available free on a loan basis. Most are by Sabbath-keepers. Topics include family and marriage, prophecy, doctrine, creation science, Christian growth. Write P.O. Box 45T, Lake Winola, PA 18625.

(10-12)

The Biblical Church of God offers you a free booklet that you should find interesting: *What is the Purpose of Life?* Write Biblical

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Contact sought with Sabbath-observers who follow Natural Hygienic principles. Urgent! Write Chamberlain, Box 8581, Dundas, Ontario, Canada L9H 5E7

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The Christological Controversy, a reconsidered and researched compilation of the difficult and controversial subject of the Godhead. Postpaid, \$1.50. Write John Kiesz, 820 Woodlawn, Canon City, CO 81212.

(12)

The Christian Church of God holds weekly Sabbath services. Serving southeast Florida. For information, write P.O. Box 3827, Lantana, FL 33465.

(7-7)



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