

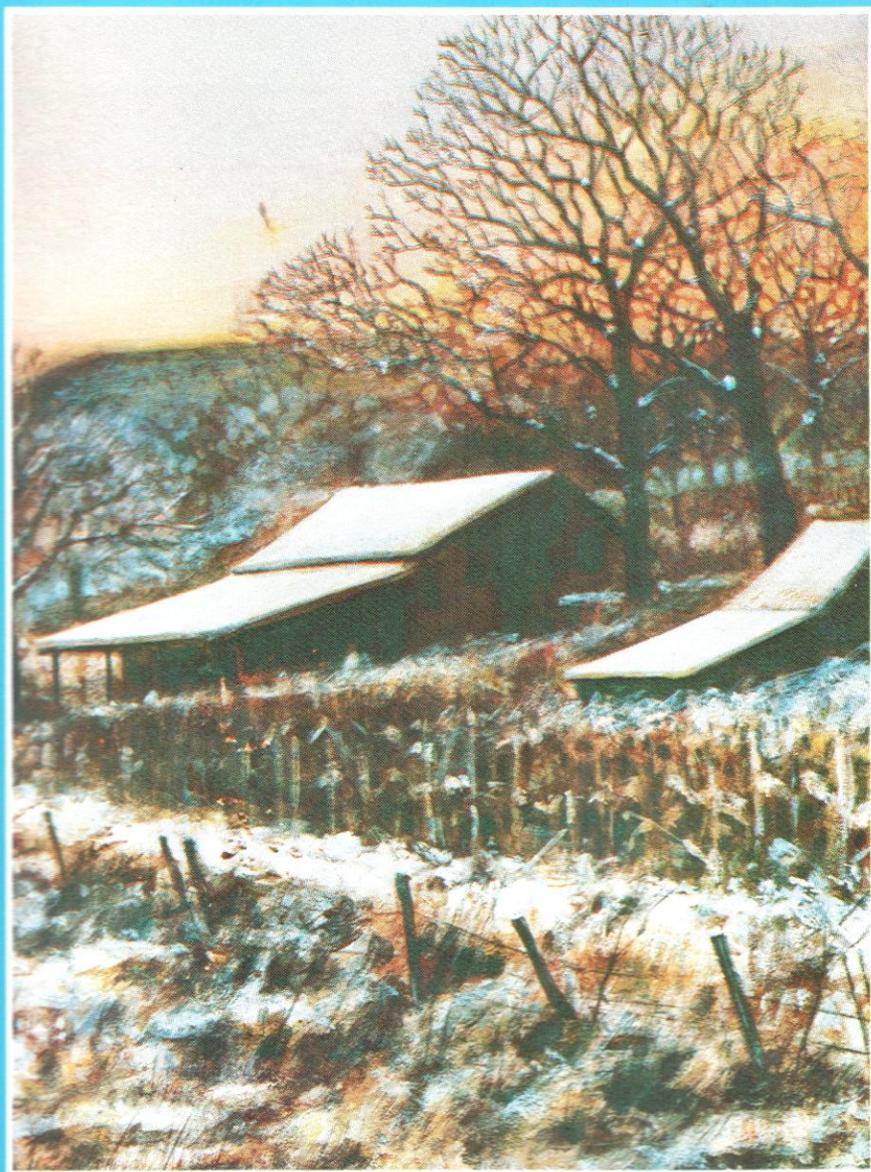
# *The* SABBATH SENTINEL

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Serving the Seventh-day Christian Community

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December 1991



# Whether We Celebrate or Not...

*The Sabbathkeeping community is sharply divided on the issue of whether or not Christians should celebrate Christmas. The greater number of Sabbathkeepers view this holiday in a positive way and celebrate it to some extent; while they do not deny its pagan elements and recognize that it is not mandated in the Scripture, they believe that it is a positive experience for families and intimately connected with their worship of the true God and the gift of His Son to the world.*

*A significant minority of Sabbathkeepers do not celebrate Christmas in any manner. They point out the historical evidence that Christ was not born on December 25, that the date and many associated customs were borrowed from pagans, and that the Bible forcefully warns against the adoption of pagan customs to worship the true God. They would point out the inconsistency in rejecting Sunday but accepting other days with similar pagan, traditional roots. Many among the minority who don't celebrate Christmas would offer the biblically based holy days (Passover, Pentecost, Feast of Tabernacles, etc) as being far better for celebrating the mighty acts of God than anything borrowed from the pagans.*

*While it is not my purpose to debate whether Christians should or shouldn't celebrate Christmas, I do believe there are extremes both groups need to avoid.*

*Those who celebrate Christmas ought to guard against blurring the sharp distinction between the historical events recorded in scripture and the pagan customs that are so intertwined with the holiday season. If in their holiday celebrations young children are led to see the Christ child, the wise men, Santa Claus and Rudolph as all part of the same Yuletide mosaic, then they are done a terrible disservice. When they become disillusioned with Santa, will they also wonder about Jesus?*

*If in celebrating Christmas the events of Christ's birth and the attendant worship experiences are overshadowed by holiday meals, shopping sprees, decorating, and family fun, then priorities are askew. If after exchanging gifts the primary question is "What did you get?" Then the Biblical teaching about giving without expecting anything in return has been subverted.*

*For those who don't celebrate Christmas there is the danger of completely ignoring one of the most profound and dramatic events in all history. God became flesh and dwelt among men! Many who reject the celebration of Christmas never rehearse the appearance of Gabriel to Mary, the trek to Bethlehem and the search for a place to stay, the birth of Jesus, the angelic herald to the shepherds, the coming of the wise men, the duplicity of Herod, the flight to Egypt. These are powerful events which display the majesty of God and His love for human beings as well as mankind's need for a Savior. To ignore them is to rob the next generation of Christians of a vital chapter in God's plan. Those who don't celebrate Christmas ought to make sure that periodically, perhaps annually in the fall, they focus on these events for themselves and for their children.*

*The debate about celebrating Christmas will undoubtedly go on until the events of the first advent are eclipsed by those of the second. But in the meantime, whether we celebrate or not, let us make certain that both we and our children fully appreciate the magnitude of the historical events that took place in Bethlehem some 1990 years ago.*

—Richard A. Wiedenheft

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**Annual Member Contribution:** Regular Membership, \$20; Family Membership, \$25; Life Membership, \$500 or more contributed during one year. All memberships include an annual subscription to *The Sabbath Sentinel*.

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the liberty of His Sabbath!**

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# Jerusalem During the Gulf War

by Naomi Fauth

*Editor's Note:* While the Gulf War seems like ancient history now, eleven months ago it gripped the attention of the world. The following article gives insight into what it was like living in Jerusalem during the Iraqi SCUD missile attacks. It was reprinted from *The Mount Zion Reporter*, May/June 1991.

The war is now said to be over and tension is beginning to ease. It seemed that war had to happen—there was no way to avoid it. Through tribulations we find comfort in the Lord. He is in control and our peace is secured in Him.

During the alerts, our family and the Reporter staff would gather in our sealed room and await the all clear signal. The young people would occupy themselves by playing a game, and we would pray and sometimes read a scripture to ease the tension. The 91st Psalm was especially comforting.

Most of the attacks came at night or in the early morning hours. We had sealed two rooms in preparation for the war, but only one room was actually used. The other room would have served as an extra supply of air in the event of a lengthy attack. Elderly friends and neighbors stayed with us sometimes, as it was hard for them to stay in their homes alone during the attacks.

Our six year old grandson, Adam, was calm and collective during the missile alerts. After repeating the ordeal a few times, though, we heard him say to his 4 year old sister, Priscilla, "Maybe we should move to England." (A little playmate of theirs moved to England a few days before the war began.)

Little Priscilla cried for a while during the first attack, but after being

comforted she got over most of her initial fears. In the attacks that followed she sat still in her chair, side by side with her brother, gas masks on, and waited patiently.

Ranatya, my niece Bethie's little four year old daughter, is by nature soft spoken and quiet. While putting her mask on during the first missile alert, her mother asked her if she understood why they were doing this. She surprised everyone when she answered, "Because Saddam Hussein is stupid." Ranatya was not afraid to sleep in her room at night after her mother sealed the windows with plastic. There was another thing that little Ranatya was careful about: she always made sure that her mother closed the window drapes—she said, "So Saddam Hussein can't see me."

Our granddaughter Priscilla's fourth birthday fell on the same day as the U.N. deadline for Saddam to pull out of Kuwait: the 15th of January. That evening after the birthday supper, some of us hurried away to a prayer meeting at the Holy Land Hotel—this was the opening night. Every winter for several years now, at this same time of year, there is a series of special prayer meetings to pray for Israel. The date had been set far ahead, and the deadline date for the pullout just happened to coincide with the meeting. There were quite a few people who came from other countries for the prayer meetings. The hotel management interrupted the

hotel management interrupted the services to issue gas masks. It was a ruling that everyone at the meeting had to have their masks with them. The meetings were all well attended. We prayed together for Israel's protection: for angels to hover over Israel in greater numbers, and for mercy for all those who would die. As gas seemed to be the biggest danger to the population here, special prayer was given asking for rain—gas becomes less effective the more it rains. Rain was slow coming this year but since the beginning of the war we have had heavy rains much of the time.

One night on our way home from the market, we stopped at a sewing shop to buy a few needed things for mending clothes. The door of the little shop was locked but the lights were still on, so I went to a larger store nearby to ask where the shop keeper might be. The person I asked pointed to another shop nearby. Through the window, I saw the man from the sewing shop. He was standing with a few others in the bigger store—one man was wearing a gas mask. After I went in and asked the man from the little sewing shop if I could buy some items from his little shop, he came out and opened the door to his shop so I could get what I needed. Then, I thanked him and we left. After we had been home for some time, we heard the all clear sirens blow. It had been raining hard all evening and evidently the Scud sirens blew when we were at the market. We had not heard them! The outdoor market has plastic-like roofs and the rain hitting the roofing makes a lot of noise. I felt foolish when I realized that I had dragged the poor shop keeper out of his safe room during a scud attack.

During some of the Scud attacks, a few of our young men went up to the roof of the church building. The whole valley below us and the opposite hillside would come alive with singing, whistling and shouting as the Arabs

on their housetops cheered along what they hoped would lead to the destruction of Israel. From the roof you could see the Scuds going high overhead, usually on their way towards Tel Aviv. Then, it looked as if the fuel flickered out as they begin to fall towards the earth. After a little while, we could hear and feel the explosion.

Sister Minnie stayed with us during the beginning days of the war. She had been away for a while on a trip to America, but came back to Israel just before the war started. She has worked among the Arab people in the Jericho and Bethlehem areas for many years. She is a strong prayer warrior and we felt honored to have her with us. It seemed good for her to be here at this special time, praying in Jerusalem and interceding for the people.

We are praying earnestly for the situation in the region and for the young people called upon to lay down their lives. We are also praying for their loved ones. May the Lord be their comfort and hope. We wish the best for all of God's creation on both sides of the conflict—that each of His children may find peace with Him and be purified. (Dan. 12:10). May each one of us be consecrated anew for His Work and His purpose, in this great hour of time.

"...Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, (be) unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." (Rev. 5:13).

## **CHANGE OF ADDRESS?**

By all means notify us in advance if 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.

# Sabbathkeeping Christian And To Be Happy About It

by Eugene Lincoln

A few years ago my wife and I visited a tiny Sabbathkeeping church in a small Midwestern town. Sabbath school had just ended, and the worship service had not yet begun. When we entered the sanctuary, we sensed an atmosphere of unmitigated gloom. We took a seat near the back. But we soon sensed that we had become objects of attention for most of those who were present. We responded to the stares with friendly nods, but no one nodded back.

Soon a young lady came in. She was smiling ever so slightly, but when her smile met the attention of a white-haired man sitting near the front, he glowered at her. Her smile disappeared, and in the twinkling of an eye she was looking as glum as the others.

"We've erred," I whispered to my wife. "Obviously this isn't a worship service; it's a funeral. But where is the body?" I noticed a wizened man across the aisle. However, he was definitely alive. Perhaps it was a pre-funeral service.

But it was a Sabbath worship service. After we had heard the sermon on what we must face in the latter days, I felt that the corners of my mouth were beginning to droop. I thought, *Is this the "good news" of salvation?*

Since then I've pondered why a Sabbathkeeping Christian should not be happy. The four Gospels use the word *joy* 23 times, and the apostle Paul

uses it 24 times in his epistles—26 if you count the book of Hebrews. This indicates that happiness is a pretty important ingredient of our Christian living.

I compiled a list of things that would help me to be a happier Christian. You too might want to make a similar list, but of course yours would be different. Like a pair of shoes: what fits me might not be comfortable for you.

Here's my list:

- Put Christ, not creed, commandments, church, or any other thing, first in your life. These things, though important, must take their place far behind having a saving relationship with Jesus.
- Don't look for perfection in others, for you won't find it. But ponder this: Can they find it in you? Give them credit for what you're doing—trying with God's help to be perfect through Christ. Some may be ahead of you, some behind.
- Be sure of what you believe and why you believe it. Don't be afraid to examine your beliefs critically. You might imagine yourself as a nonbeliever and think of the questions he would ask. Then, using your Bible, answer them to your satisfaction.
- Try to find humor even when everything seems to be going wrong. A minister stumbled over a microphone cord during his sermon. Getting up, he remarked, "I speak to you now as a

man who also has fallen." Even the Lord must have a sense of humor, or He would not have created the platypus.

- Put yourself into church affairs. Like when you put money into a bank account, you will gain interest-interest in doing something worthwhile that will help banish the oppressive feelings that accompany focusing on yourself.

- Associate with Christians of other beliefs. This will give you insight into why they believe as they do. Sharing experiences with them will boarden your outlook and add to the joy of your own experience.

- Share your beliefs with relatives and friends. But do not criticize, ridicule, or otherwise put down their beliefs. The best proof that you have something worthwhile is in your personal testimony, by words and conduct, of the joy the Savior has brought you and the change He has made in your life.

- When depression seems to take

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over, ask the Lord for the peace that He has promised to give His followers.

We need not wait until our eternal home to have super-natural joy; it's waiting now for you to grasp it in faith.

Shalom!

## *A Sabbathkeeping High School*

If you have teenage children or grandchildren, perhaps you've wondered if there is an alternative to the school they're now attending. Perhaps you've wished they had more opportunities to meet other young people of like faith. Consider Spring Vale Academy — a coed, boarding high school, located in central Michigan. Spring Vale has been offering a quality education based on Christian values since 1946.

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### Adventist Church Torched

The Hagerstown, Maryland, Seventh-day Adventist church, where BSA President Eugene Lincoln workshops, was destroyed by an arsonist, September 4. The local fire marshal declared the blaze to be deliberately set after officials interviewed eyewitnesses, took fingerprints, and analyzed evidence. No one was seriously hurt; but it will take more than a year to construct a new building. About \$1 million damage was done. Several congregations have offered to rent space to the Adventists.

This column, has not yet heard the reasons for the arson or if anyone has been caught. Churches, however, have become a target of choice for arsonists, with over 1000 damaged last year. In San Antonio, Texas, for instance, eight Catholic and five protestant churches have been damaged or destroyed in 19 months.

### Baptist Leader Escapes Death

In a letter dated May 21, 1991, Elder Lawrence Ol Ucheguonu, who heads the SDB Mission in Nigeria, West Africa, wrote of his escape from Muslim thugs. He was traveling to the north of Nigeria to seek out church members that his predecessor, Rev. Gershon Harrison, had converted from Islam (this column, Oct. '90), when he met one of them on the way. Soon the two spied a crowd armed "with hatchets, cutlasses, arrows, and bows, killing." Lawrence, with his companion, ran "to the bush, and from there I found my way to the East, where I come from. I lost my Bible, bag, clothes, and money. I had

to sell my handwatch, shoes, and the only shirt on my body before I got transport money..." He continued, "May glory be to God for the safety of my dear life, for I have not completed the work I wish to do for Christ's sake.

### Summit Initiates Programs

This past summer the Church of God (Seventh Day)'s Summit School of Theology started a Pastoral Orientation program to equip lay leaders for professional ministry. Sixteen students took the studies in June. In addition to passing the courses, prospective ministers must demonstrate understanding of the Bible plus church doctrine and polity. Because of the rapid Hispanic growth in the church, Summit has also begun a Hispanic Pre-Summit Education Program, helping local leaders to master English well enough to enter the Diploma of Theology Studies curriculum.

### WCG to Stay in Pasadena

This scribe's speculation (Jan. & July '90) that the Worldwide Church of God would sell its Pasadena, California, headquarters and move to Big Sandy, Texas, has proved incorrect. Though the church's Ambassador College did relocate to its mothballed Texas campus, the college buildings in Pasadena are being converted to church administration use, alleviating overcrowding in such operations as the Ministerial Refreshing Program. Early this year WCG announced it had over 97,000 members in 125 countries.

### **A Convict with Rights**

An Oklahoma State Penitentiary inmate has won a suit against prison officials, forcing the prison to accommodate the prisoner with a vegetarian diet.

Seventh-day Adventist Loyd LaFever requested vegetarian meals based on his religious beliefs. Prison authorities refused on the grounds that such a diet was not required by LaFever's church and that a meatless diet might endanger the inmate's health.

LaFever submitted a report from the American Dietetic Association to the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals. The paper stated that "vegetarian diets are healthful and nutritionally adequate when appropriately planned." The court agreed.

Citing the First Amendment, the court held that an individual's rights "are not limited to beliefs shared by all members of a religious sect." The court also decided that constitutional protection of a person's religious dietary beliefs and practices is warranted.

### **Sexual Harassment**

In *Black v. Snyder*, the Minnesota Court of Appeals has ruled that clerics cannot hide behind the First Amendment in sexual harassment cases.

Former associate pastor of St. John's Lutheran Church, Susan Black, claimed that unwelcome sexual advances were made by her former supervising pastor, William Snyder. Black said that Williams insisted she go out with him and that he touch

her in a sexual manner, inside the workplace.

The appellate court overturned a trial court's decision to dismiss the case, based on the church's claim of the lack of subject matter jurisdiction. Reinstating the suit, the appellate court said that Black's charges are "unrelated to pastoral qualifications or issues of church doctrine."

Three months after Black reported the harassment to church authorities, she was fired for failure to run the office efficiently.

### **More Harrassment**

The Ohio State Supreme Court has ruled in favor of an Adventist pastor and officials of the Ohio Conference, charged in a clergy malpractice suit.

According to Leroy and Garnet Byrd, Pastor Richard Faber forced Mrs. Byrd to have sex with him. The Byrds had received marriage counseling from Faber from 1984 to 1987. In a suit against the Ohio, Columbia Union and General Conferences, the couple claimed that the church was liable due to negligent hiring.

The court ruled that the suit was improperly filed and that the Byrds had failed to indicate any history of previous improper conduct that the church may have known when hiring Faber. The high court also stated that "The Seventh-day Adventist organization in no way promotes or advocates sexual conduct between pastors and parishioners. The (church) did not hire Faber to rape, seduce, or otherwise physically assault members of his congregation."

Column compiled by Ed Ozalas



## ***Reaching Out With Modern Technology***

The Associated Church of God congregation in Harrisburg, Penna., is using a special telephone line, a telephone answering machine, and a free cassette tape ministry to reach out to large numbers of people in the community. Each week Pastor Bob Wertz records an intriguing two to three minute message designed to pique interest in a sermon tape which telephone callers are invited to request. Hundreds of people call; scores leave their names and addresses each week. A few have started attending church.

People find out about the program on a local cable network that has a viewer information channel. While the audio portion gives the weather or music, ten second video advertisements scroll across the screen. Non profit groups can display their announcements free of charge. So, while viewers listen to the weather or music they see a message such as, "Can you resist temptation? For a brief recorded message call 761-7633."

People who called to find out more about resisting temptation heard Bob's short, recorded message that introduced the story of David and Bathsheba. It concluded with, "For the rest of the story as well as the lessons to be learned from this notorious moment of temptation, request our free sermon tape entitled 'The Life Cycle of a Sin.' ...you will learn how not to respond to temptation by

David's example."

In a typical week, two hundred people call and about 20% leave their names and addresses. Some call many times before deciding to ask for a tape. Some ask for a tape so frequently that they say, "Hi! This is Pete. Send me the tape this week." Callers who leave their names and addresses receive the requested tape along with a cover letter that invites them to attend Sabbath services and reminds them that they should call again—because a new message is offered each week.

Pastor Wertz says the group has tried many different types of outreach, but that this one is by far the most cost-effective. He offers some suggestions: "You don't need to pay for a new dial tone line, since you'll never need to dial out on the line. A terminal line, which is less than 50% the cost, is okay. Also, it is worth investing in a commercial phone answering machine. We ruined two homeowner variety machines before getting our Code-a-phone."

While you might not have a local TV channel that offers free advertising, a program like this can be advertised through any medium—short classified ads in newspapers and shoppers guides, on billboards, through handbills, and on the radio and TV.

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**The Bible Sabbath Association** needs self-supporting people who like to travel to contact groups and individuals for BSA promotional activities. If you would like to serve as a BSA Ambassador, write Ambassador, c/o The Sabbath Sentinel, Rt 1 Box 222, Fairview, OK 73737. (12)

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by Lettie Lippincott Siddens

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# TO REPEAT

## SIGNIFICANT STATEMENTS BY OR ABOUT SABBATHKEEPERS

She was soon to be married, but her fiance was not the father of the child she was carrying. The shame...to both families would be great. A baby now would certainly ruin her life. And what kind of life could a teenage girl offer a child? The only rational thing...would be to abort this child so her life could go on. A very common story, indeed. The same scenario is repeated thousands of times a day around the world, resulting in 50 million aborted children a year—children considered to be of no consequence. This particular child, however, was of immeasurable consequence—He was, of course, our Lord Jesus Christ. Certainly no other baby will ever have the impact that Jesus had, but each child is still a unique and special gift created by God.

Letter from George Lawson to members of Adventists for Life, Dec. '90

A funeral is a solemn, sobering occasion—a moment when more tears are shed than words said. But do we adequately reflect on what we hear during a eulogy? We hear words that paint a picture of a person who had value. Perhaps for the first time we hear of an individual's unique contributions.... Before, she was a grouchy old librarian. Now she's the special woman who never turned down a research request. Before he was the domineering executive. Now he's the corporate chief who sets precedents in his field. Before she was the stepmother who could never stop nagging. Now she's the only one who sent cards during the most memorable events of someone's life. Why do we frequently only prize people after their breath and spirit have left them, when rose petals blow gently across their coffins?

"Give Their Eulogies Today!" by Christina R. Kuo, *The Plain Truth*, Aug. '91

The first place to look for (protection from Yahweh's wrath against society) is in the Sacred Name of our Heavenly Father and in the name of our Savior Yahshua the Messiah. When you come to understand the intrinsic saving potential of the Sacred Name, your faith in the Heavenly Father will be built up immeasurably.

Editorial by Jacob O. Meyer, *The Sacred Name Broadcaster*, 8/1991 . . . . .

We find two groups who represent two extremes, both of which are dangerous to God's cause. One group tries to sanctify traditions by labeling them "landmarks." These people rightly decry slipping standards but mistakenly prescribe a rule-based rather than a gospel-based antidote.... The other group (calling itself progressive), in its desperate effort to jettison any authority, including (or specially) God's authority, discards truth and godliness by labeling it antiquated and meaningless.

Commencement address, Robert S. Folkenberg, Andrews University, June '91

*Quotes don't necessarily reflect the views of The Bible Sabbath Association*