

## **Commentary — From the Margins**

### *A New Philadelphia Apologetic*

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When I began to reread prophecy and write what I was reading in 2002, I completed the initial draft of *A Philadelphia Apologetic (APA)* in two and a half months. By the fall of 2004, I knew that *APA* needed to be updated, and I began to rewrite chapters, but I did not get far before I realized that enough information was coming from typological exegesis that I needed to add to what I had just written. However, the demands of writing for numerous websites prevented me from returning to *APA*. Those demands remain. Thus, to satisfy both the demands for new pieces on my home website, and to finally return to *APA*, I have opted to use the *Commentaries* to produce the essays that will become chapters; so the serialized edition will remain as it presently is until enough *Commentaries* have been written for a new published edition. At that time, the serialized chapters will be replaced by the published edition.

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## **Chapter One**

*Drafted*

EVOLUTION—  
what happens if,  
the child asked,  
when you're baptized  
they hold you under  
too long?  
Will you become a fish?

(asked by my then seven year old  
daughter, Kristel – HK)

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1.

Bruce Bawer, author of *A Place at the Table* and *Stealing Jesus*, was asked by a stranger on the subway, “Are you a Christian?” (1.1). He uses the occasion to begin his focus on Protestant Christianity’s theft of “Jesus,” the linguistic icon representing the only way to salvation. But the *Jesus* stolen by Protestants, legalistic and non-legalistic, bears small resemblance to the Son of Man, who promised to love and to manifest Himself to the disciple who has His commandments and who keeps them (John 14:21), two attributes that form the realistic description of someone who is “a Christian,” as well as a definition of *Judeo-Christian legalism*.

“To have His commandments”—what does this mean?

Under the second covenant—a covenant not like the one made “on the day when [the Lord] took [Israel] by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt” (Heb 8:9), but one that has the laws of God put into the single house of Israel’s minds and written on their hearts (v. 10)—the law is not far from Israel, but in the disciple’s mouth and heart (Rom 10:8; cf. Deu 30:11-14; Jer. 31:31-33). So to have His commandments would be to have the law of God written on one’s heart and placed in one’s mind. This is the description of spiritual circumcision (Deu 30:6), first promised under the second covenant initially mediated by Moses (Deu 29:1), the covenant that was not ratified by blood but by a song (Deu chap 32) and the covenant to which better promises were added when its mediator became the glorified Christ Jesus. Better promises cannot be added to that which has been abolished, and it was the dividing wall of hostility that Jesus abolished on the cross, the law of commandments and ordinances made with the flesh and that would have the flesh circumcised (Eph 2:13-16). The flesh is not a heavenly thing, and covenants made with the flesh [a “covenant” linguistically represents the distance between “cuttings”] are necessarily ratified by blood as shadows and copies of heavenly things (Heb 9:22-23). Thus, the second covenant made on the plains of Moab and mediated by Moses is not a shadow of another second covenant, but the only second covenant that will ever be, the reason why better promises were added without this covenant being abolished.

“To have His commandments” is to have all that is written in the book of Deuteronomy (Deu 30:9-10); for Jesus said to the Pharisees who did not keep the law Moses gave them (John 7:19) that, “If you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words” (John 5:46-47). Moses wrote of Jesus in Deuteronomy (18:15-19). And it is in

Deuteronomy where Moses wrote, “And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and all your [mind], and to keep the commandments and statutes of the Lord, which I am commanding you today for your good” (Deu 10:12-13).

What was the second attribute of the disciple to whom Jesus promised to love and to manifest Himself? Keeping His commandments, correct? The Apostle John wrote, “And by this we know that we have come to know [Jesus], if we keep his commandments. Whoever says ‘I know him’ but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected” (1 John 23-5). John then added one more thing: “By this we may be sure that we are in [Jesus]: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked” (vv. 5-6).

The man Jesus of Nazareth was an Observant Jew, a prophet, and the first human being born of woman whose Father was not descended from the first Adam; thus, He was the first male child born to the human cultivar Israel who was not born consigned to disobedience. And it is this latter claim that Jesus’ Father was *Theos*, the God of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that truly divides the People of the Book into irreconcilable religions and sects.

It is not walking as Jesus walked that divides visible Christianity—the “Christianity of the flesh”—from the faith of Jesus’ first disciples, all outwardly Observant Jews who had been inwardly circumcised by Spirit. The Apostle Paul wrote, “For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter” (Rom 2:28-29). So it is not just *Jesus* who has been stolen, but *Israel* also. And the one who stole both is the same thief, the prince of this world.

The theft of both *Jesus* and *Israel* occurred so long ago that a third theft has been likewise overlooked: the claim of Islam is that the angel Gabriel came to Mohammad because both Christianity and Judaism had strayed from the truth of God, but Mohammad’s visions were not written down until after the prophet’s death. The prince of this world, the dragon that has deceived the whole world (Rev 12:9) by being as subtle as the serpent in the garden, stole “truth” given the prophet, a claim that will be just as hard for a Muslim to accept as it will be for a “Christian according to the flesh” to accept that *Jesus* was stolen or for today’s Observant Jew to accept that *Israel* was stolen. However, the prophet Malachi wrote, “Behold, I [YHWH] will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction” (4:5-6). When His disciples asked Jesus about the Elijah to come, Jesus said, “Elijah does come, and he will restore all things” (Matt 17:11). John the Baptist was a type of this Elijah to come, but only a type for John does not turn children’s hearts to their fathers nor does John restore all things. Jesus is the one who was not recognized by His people Israel (John 1:11), and to whom Israel did whatever they pleased (Matt 17:12). The endtime Elijah who will restore all things is the glorified prophet Jesus, the only Son of Θεός (John 3:16) and the firstborn Son of

Θεοῦ (Rom 8:29). And this endtime Elijah would not need to restore all things if “all things” were not in need of restoration.

The endtime Elijah will do the work of restoring all things through human beings to whom He manifests Himself, or makes Himself known. And many will come claiming to be used by Christ to restore all things and will lead many astray. Many will come as false prophets, false apostles, false ministers, and these many will convince the majority of the People of the Book to worship demons and the works of their hands under the guise that such worship is serving God and is pleasing to God.

The People of the Book are victims of a common thief, a murderer, an anointed cherub in whom lawlessness was found and from whose belly fire comes to utterly consume him (Ezek 28:18-19). This thief stole meaning from the Book and left a third of humankind believing in the Book but unable to take God’s intended meaning from it. But then, God knew that this would happen, the reason why the prophet Malachi wrote of an endtime Elijah who would turn the hearts of the children of God back to the Father, and the Father’s heart back to His children. For it is through the patriarchs that the People of the Book are divided, with these visible divisions forming shadows and copies of schisms that have given to each “living” patriarch (Matt 22:32) as many spiritual sons as each had physical sons, with Abraham’s offspring being one, not many.

For Bruce Bawer, Christianity is primarily divided between “law” and “love,” shorthand expressions for an overly simplistic analysis of the corpse of Christ, that spiritually lifeless Body that was buried in disbelief and disobedience centuries ago. Jesus told Simon Peter, ““And I tell you, you are Peter [Πέτρος], and on this rock [πέτρα] I will build my church, and the gates of [Hades] shall not prevail against it”” (Matt 16:18). The Apostle Paul [Saint Paul] wrote, “God has so composed the [human] body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it” (1 Cor 12:24-27).

Those human beings who have the law and who keep it—those whom Jesus loves and to whom Jesus manifests Himself, and those who in turn know and love Jesus by keeping His commandments—collectively and individually form the Body of Christ, and there will be no division in this Body ... if this Body had continued to live from the 1<sup>st</sup>-Century CE to the 21<sup>st</sup>-Century CE, there would also be no need to restore all things. The need to restore or to resurrect implies loss of what will be restored. The Elijah to come will restore all things, meaning that all things have been lost. And where can be found the undivided Body of Christ? Where is this Body?

If all things have been lost, what hasn’t been lost, a rhetorical question with a self-evident answer? If the Body of Jesus is the collective of disciples who inwardly have the law and who keep it outwardly [by the inside of the cup ruling the outside of the cup], then if all things must be restored, the Body of Jesus will be one of those things that is restored. Thus, no collective of disciples who have the law and who keep it exists prior to when the endtime restoration of all things begins.

Is the previous statement true? No collective of Christians exists who have been spiritually circumcised and who keep the commandments prior to the restoration of all things? The Sabbath commandment is the sign between God and Israel that the nation

might know that God sanctifies Israel, with Israel being the spiritually circumcised nation with whom the second covenant is made. So are “Christians according to the flesh” sanctified by God? Not if they attempt to enter God’s rest on the 8<sup>th</sup>-day. They don’t keep the commandments of Christ even if they have the law. They are as Pharisees were who also did not keep the law Moses had given them, this law being the second covenant, with these Pharisees being “Israelites according to the flesh.”

Depending upon which doctoral dissertation a scholar uses for support, the collective fellowships of converted Jews and Greeks that constituted the “Jesus Movement” in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Centuries began observing Sunday within the apostolic era or during the reign of Emperor Hadrian—and with the observance of Sunday came the outward cessation of keeping the commandments of Christ. And to break the law in one point is to break the law (Jas 2:10); the person is a lawbreaker. Thus, in the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Centuries to attempt to enter God’s rest on the 8<sup>th</sup> day rather than the 7<sup>th</sup> day made the person a willful and willing lawbreaker. This person committed blasphemy against the Holy Spirit which wrote the laws of God on the heart and in the mind of the one who was spiritually circumcised. The sins of this person will not be forgiven. And for the saving of the Spirit within called disciples in a like manner to what Paul commanded the saints at Corinth to do with the man who was joined to his stepmother (1 Cor 5:5), God delivered Israel into the hand of the spiritual king of Babylon so that Israel’s disobedience would be covered by its servitude to the prince of this world in the same way that natural Israel’s lawlessness in Egypt was covered by that nation’s slave status.

God consigned all of humankind to disobedience (Rom 11:32) and servitude to the prince of this world as humankind’s covering for its lawlessness, a natural form of grace that causes no sin to be reckoned against [counted against] human beings where there is no law (Rom 5:13). This consignment to disobedience comes from Adam’s transgression [original sin] and lasts until the person is drawn from this world (John 6:44) as natural Israel was drawn out of Egypt. Thus, “death reigned from Adam to Moses” (Rom 5:14), not from Adam to Jesus; for it is through the second covenant mediated by Moses that Israel is offered life or death (Deu 30:15), with obeying the commandments being the outward expression of loving God that is at the core of choosing life (v. 16).

The Church that Jesus built is the Body of Christ, a widely accepted truism of Christianity. And this Church is without division: what one member suffers, the entirety of the Body suffers together. Jesus’ own body was crucified. It was raised on the cross, where it lived from “about the sixth hour . . . until the ninth hour” (Luke 23:44). Noon to three p.m. Then the body of Jesus died. Disciples are crucified with Jesus and thus united with Him in a death like His—and if united with Christ in a death like His, disciples will be united with Him in a resurrection like His (Rom 6:5-6).

Since disciples collectively are the Body of Christ and individually are members of this Body, the church that Jesus built is collectively the Body of Christ. And as disciples are individually crucified with Christ, with their old nature or *self* to die with Christ, disciples collectively as the Body of Jesus were crucified with Christ and died with Christ, a shorter form of arriving at why no collective of fellowships exists that keep the commandments of God. The Body of Christ was raised up as Jesus was, and the Body died as Jesus died, and the Body will be resurrected from death as Jesus was, with the

Body suffering no decay as Jesus' earthly body did not see corruption. The restoration of all things assures that the resurrected Body suffers no decay.

The Body of Christ lost its divine Breath [Πνεύμα Ἅγιον] and spiritually died centuries ago. But as the gates of hell could not prevail against the physical body of Christ, resurrected from death without experiencing decay, the gates of hell will not prevail against the spiritual Body of Christ, which will be likewise resurrected from death after a length of time equivalent to the three days and three nights that the earthly body of Jesus spent buried in the Garden Tomb.

There is no division in the Body of Christ; yet, today, division is the defining characteristic of the "Christianity of the flesh." If the Body of Christ were to be represented as a circle in which there is no division, then the entirety of visible Christendom would lie outside of this circle. Bruce Bawer's "Protestant legalism" would lie outside this circle as would his "Protestant non-legalism." All of 8<sup>th</sup> day Christendom has Jesus' commandments available to them even if not written on their hearts and placed in the minds of these disciples, but none of 8<sup>th</sup>-day Christendom keeps them as evidenced by the day on which this theology attempts to enter God's rest; thus, 8<sup>th</sup>-day Christendom is excluded from being of the Body for this theology neither loves Jesus nor knows Him regardless of its protestations to the contrary (*cf.* John 14:21; 1 John 2:3-6). This theology represents the most radical and most severe schism to ever divide the Body, which by definition is not divided unless, of course, it is dissected in a post mortem examination to determine the cause of death—the living Body cannot be divided and still remain alive. Division causes death just as surely as does the loss of breath and the shock of being crucified.

The Body of Christ did not "evolve" throughout the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> Centuries CE, growing gills to take spiritual breath from the cesspool of lawlessness in which it found itself. Rather, it died on the cross with Jesus, a radical Observant Jew who spoke not His own words during His earthly ministry but the words [speech-acts] of the Father manifested in this world through Jesus' utterances and His miracles.

Jesus will love the disciple who has His commandments and by faith keeps them. This disciple will have his or her lack of circumcision, whether by neglect or by nature, counted as circumcision (Rom 2:26), thereby making this disciple an Israelite inwardly, with circumcision being a matter of the heart, by Spirit and not by the letter of the law. For the outward mangling of the flesh does not make the person an Israelite before God: the clipped foreskin of neither a Jew nor a Muslim nor a Christian makes this person holy to the Father. It is hearing the words of Jesus and believing the One who sent Him (John 5:24) that causes a person to pass from death to life without coming under judgment. This belief is manifested in the Christian through this circumcised or uncircumcised person keeping the precepts of the law by faith. This belief is manifested in the Observant Jew through this circumcised person professing by faith that Jesus is Lord and believing that the Father raised Jesus from dead (Rom 10:6-10). This belief is manifested in the Muslim through this circumcised person professing that the Prophet Jesus came to His people Israel as the Son of Allah, His only Son (John 1:1-2, 14; 3:16), to reveal to the called-out ones His God and His Father (John 20:17; 17:1-33, 7-8, 18, 21-26), whom the world did not previously know. The People of the Book, physically circumcised and uncircumcised, will come to God by one standard (the righteousness counted to

Abraham) and by one gate, the man Jesus of Nazareth, the last Adam and the living Abraham. There are not many Bodies of Christ, each vying with the other as the “true” Church to which was given the keys of the kingdom of heaven (Matt 16:19). There is but one indivisible Body of Christ, dead and now concealed in the grave. It is this Body that will be resurrected to life when empowered by the Holy Spirit at the beginning of seven endtime years of [tribulation](#).

But the Body of Christ, when resurrected to life, will not then be immediately raptured away to be with God. It will be as the earthly body of Jesus was in the darkness of the first day of a new week—

- As the selected Passover Lamb of God, a Lamb appropriate to the size of the household of God (Exod 12:3), the man Jesus entered Jerusalem on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the first month (John 12:1, 12) to be “penned” there in the city.
- As the Passover Lamb of Israel, Jesus was crucified and slain on the Preparation Day, the 14<sup>th</sup> of the first month (John 19:31), dying the ninth hour when the Pharisees then reckoned when Passover lambs were to be sacrificed between the evenings (Exod 12:5-6).
- Jesus gave only one sign that He was of God, the sign of Jonah, that as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, the Son of Man would be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth (Matt 12:39-40).
- Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus took Jesus’ body from the cross at dusk as the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the first month was about to begin, and laid His body in a new tomb in the garden close-by (John 19:38-42)
- The 15<sup>th</sup> day of the first month is a high day (John 19:31), the first High Sabbath of Unleavened Bread (Lev 23:6-7).
- The earthly body of Jesus lay in the heart of the earth the night and the day of the 15<sup>th</sup>, the night and the day of the 16<sup>th</sup>, the night and the day of the 17<sup>th</sup>, the weekly Sabbath; and the body of Jesus was gone from the tomb before dawn on the 18<sup>th</sup>, the first day of the following calendar week (John 20:1).
- Since the only sign Jesus gave was that of Jonah, twelve hours or more are unaccounted for between the conclusion of the three days and three nights and when the resurrected Jesus appears to Mary (John 20:17).
- These twelve plus hours are equivalent to the seven endtime years of tribulation that can be likened to the seven days of Unleavened Bread during which leavening represents sin, and Israel lives without sin.

The Body of Christ, in the spiritual darkness of the Tribulation, will have been resurrected to life and will be invisible [or nearly so] to the inhabitants of this world. What will be visible is the lawless Church [“Christians according to the flesh”] that long ago appropriated the name of Christ: the linguistic icons */Jesus/*, */Jesus Christ/*, and */Christian/* were stolen before the 1<sup>st</sup>-Century CE ended, and were employed by imaginative Greek philosophers to construct a Trojan horse by which these Greeks could overturn the emperor-worship cult that sustained the Roman Empire. As Odysseus and his men gained entrance inside the walls of Troy with a wood horse, Greek philosophers used their purloined corpse as the platform from which they would crown Roman

emperors. They were successful beyond even the outer limits of their imagination. And acquiring an empire and ruling it unquestionably made the descendants of these philosophers the agents of the prince of this world (2 Cor 11:14-15), not representatives of God.

The Church not the representative of God, how can that be? The Body of Christ dead—

If the Body of Christ is presently dead, with the terms for inclusion into this Body being possession of the Holy Spirit, the Divine Breath of God [again, Πνευμα Αγιον], then by logical extension, there is not today a collection of individuals who have received the Holy Spirit or who have been born of Spirit ... does this agree with critical observation of self-identified Christians? Concerning divisions, is there even a sect without divisions? No, unfortunately not, and especially not within the sects that claim to keep the commandments of God. There are hundred of slivers that have come from the splintered Sabbatarian Church of God. So where might a sphere of Believers be that is without inner schisms? Within just Pennsylvania's Leigh Valley, how many divisions are there among the Amish? Apparently dozens. In Pennsylvania's Morrison Cove, the German Seventh-Day Baptist Church is separated from the English Seventh-Day Baptist Church by a quarter of a mile and a cemetery. The two congregations have limited social contact. And where would one go from there? There are four Lutheran Synods in the United States, and how many schisms are there among Methodists, 8<sup>th</sup>-Day Baptists, even the Mormons [the Reformed Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints is now called the Community of Christ], hundreds? The Roman Church recognizes twenty-some differing sects of the Universal Church. So just based on the presence of division, the argumentative claims stands that the Body of Christ is dead, or at least not present in any discernible Christian fellowship.

Among self-identified Christians in North America, divorce occurs at the same rate as it does for non-Christians in the same communities. Christians receive just as many traffic citations. They are statistically indistinguishable from their non-Christian neighbors. So where is there any evidence of these self-identified Christians possessing the Holy Spirit or of having been born of Spirit? That evidence doesn't exist. It's not to be found. Oh, there might be one individual there and another here that displays the singular, nine-faceted fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22-23), but there is no collective of such individuals, and certainly there is no fellowship of such individuals with which the disciple can regularly assemble. And this has been the case since mid-1<sup>st</sup> Century, when all who were in Asia turned away from the Apostle Paul (2 Tim 1:15). Many Hellenistic converts about whom Paul had once bragged walked as enemies of the cross of Christ, with destruction as their end and their bellies as their gods (Phil 3:18-19). Plus, thousands of Jewish converts, zealous for the law, had been told that Paul taught Jews who were among Gentiles to forsake Moses when this was not the case (Acts 21:20-21). So Paul, who laid the foundation for the heavenly house of God (1 Cor 3:10-11), was abandoned by Gentile converts and under vows of death by Jews and Jewish converts. With whom was a Christian to fellowship at 60 CE, a decade before Jerusalem was sacked by Roman legions? With Hellenistic fellowships that had left Paul? With Jewish converts who wanted to kill Paul? The Body of Christ was crucified with Jesus, and was dying with His first disciples. It was not a dynamic movement about to transform the world; it was a



Body barely clinging to life and about to expire. Its spiritual condition reflected the physical condition of Jesus' earthly body shortly before the agony ended. And as Jesus' earthly body hung dead on the cross for over two hours before Joseph of Arimathea took away His body, the Body of Christ hung dead in the annals of history for a couple of decades before it was buried in disbelief and disobedience.

God used the prince of this world to carry knowledge of the man Jesus to all corners of this world. Clever, huh? If the prince of this world had not stolen *Jesus* and *Israel* and what *truth* was given to Mohammad, the People of the Book would still be warring against each other, but would do so under the guise of who is Abraham's lawful heir, Ishmael, Isaac, or the sons of Keturah. They would not collectively remember Jacob, Moses, Joshua, or Jesus, but because the prince of this world is a common thief, Moses who wrote of Jesus and Jesus who points back to Moses are remembered.

After the Body of Christ was buried in a grave of lawlessness, the visible *Christian Church* that overturned the Roman emperor-worship cult and won an empire for Greek philosophers and theologians was the only "Christianity" known to the world, but this "Christian faith" bore so little resemblance to the *Christianity of Christ Jesus* that even a Germanic rustic with a divining rod could not have located where the glorified Jesus had manifested Himself to a disciple. And that "making known" remains the test for discipleship: the one who has the commandments and who keeps them shows that he or she loves Jesus, and it is this person that the Father and the Son loves and to whom the Son will manifest Himself. So when Judas (not Iscariot) asked Jesus, "How is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?" (John 14:22), Jesus sidestepped a direct answer, saying instead, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word .... Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me" (vv. 23-24). So the person who has the commandments uttered by the *Logos* from atop Mount Horeb, with the *Logos* as *Theos* entering His creation as His son, His only, the man Jesus of Nazareth, has the commandments of Jesus. There is no other set of commandments although some teachers of lawlessness have ascribed more than forty commandments to Jesus. And the disciple who will not keep these commandments that the *Logos* uttered from atop the mountain does not love Jesus—it is just this simple! The disciple who loves Jesus keeps His commandments by faith and it is to this disciple that Jesus will manifest Himself, or make Himself known. Jesus will not, by His own declaration, make Himself known to the lawless disciple; He will deny knowing teachers of lawlessness in their resurrection (Matt 7:21-23).

The assumption that when Jesus said the gates of Hades would not prevail against the Church meant that His Body, the Church, would not die out is a logical and easy conclusion to make. But as soon as the Church becomes His Body as Paul states, the assumption should have been modified to mean that the Church would be resurrected from death as the man Jesus was resurrected from death. Now Jesus saying that Elijah would come and would restore all things can be placed in the context of the Church being returned to life after having died on the cross with Jesus. But the conclusion that the prince of this world intended for "Christians according to the flesh" to draw from Jesus' words is that the Church would not fail and that the Elijah to come was only John the Baptist. I was taught that the Church would not die out, and I have read the very bad scholarship of Sabbatarians who have attempted to prove that certain fringe cults and

sects kept the 7<sup>th</sup>-day Sabbath throughout the Dark Ages. Their scholarship remains an embarrassment to Sabbatarian Christianity. Nevertheless, even today there are Sabbatarian disciples who will insist that the Waldensians observed the Sabbath, not Sunday. Same for the Cathars. But if a Waldensian observed the Sabbath—it is doubtful that any did—he or she kept the person’s observance a secret from the society around them. Thus, I have been sloppy, assuming that the Body of Christ would not die out; assuming that every person who outwardly comes to Christ has been drawn by the Father from this world; assuming that those who would keep the commandments have been born of Spirit. Observant Jews keep the commandments, but deny Christ; so by extension, they have not been born of Spirit. So being born of Spirit constitutes more than professing that Jesus is Lord and by faith keeping the commandments. If it did not, then the Body of Christ would be alive today, and alive without division or schism. And there is no fellowship without schism. Even one united by name, such as the Sabbatarian “United Church of God,” is regularly riddled by schisms.

The Body of Christ is today dead, buried in dissension and disobedience, and awaiting resurrection when the seven endtime years of tribulation begin. Prior to when these endtime years begin, the work of restoring the teachings of Christ Jesus will be accomplished by the last Elijah working through a few disciples who have been called to this task.

## 2.

Realization that Jesus saying the gates of hell would not prevail against the Church does not preclude the Body of Christ from dying but only precludes the Body from remaining dead opens to endtime disciples the question that Bruce Bawer anticipates but does not answer in *Stealing Jesus*; for it isn’t the so-called “Christian political right” that stole the linguistic icon in the late 20<sup>th</sup>-Century, but Hellenistic philosophers in the 1<sup>st</sup>-Century. The “mystery of lawlessness,” already at work while the Apostle Paul lived (2 Thess 2:7), expunged all things Jewish from “Christianity” when constructing the theological Trojan horse used to steal an empire from Rome. This mystery of lawlessness found a ready ally in the 2<sup>nd</sup>-Century decrees of the Emperor Hadrian, a rigid ally that served as the washboard on which Sabbath observance was mostly scoured away from the icon. And it is Sabbath-observance that visibly defines “Israel” to a world unable to “see” into the hearts and minds of disciples. It will be Sabbath-observance through which the resurrected Body of Christ will be seen once the seven endtime years begin.

If the Body of Christ is, indeed, today dead for want of Divine Breath, who will constitute this spiritual Body when it is resurrected through empowerment by the Holy Spirit?

The above question has more relevance than initially perceived. If the Body of Christ consists only of those human beings who have been born of Spirit [literally, the “Πνευμα–Breath” of God], and if the Body dies when it loses its Breath [again, Πνευμα], then there is no Body to resurrect when the second Passover occurs. That constitutes a major problem in both perception and logic. And it is here where understanding the construction of the Church is essential:

- The Church began as the last Eve when Jesus, in the late afternoon of the day when He was resurrected from death and had ascended to his Father (John 20:19), stood among His disciples, breathed on them, and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit [Πνευμα Ἅγιον – or *Breath Holy*]” (v. 22).
- The Church does not begin on that day of Pentecost following Calvary, but begins on the same day that Jesus is glorified as the last Adam, a life-giving spirit (1 Cor 15:45). By breathing on the disciples who were together, Jesus directly transferred the Divine Breath of God to these ten (Judas Iscariot & Thomas were not there).
- The ten received the Holy Spirit and birth by Spirit (John 3:3-8) at relatively the same narrative moment as when God presented Eve to the first Adam, a type of Jesus (Rom 5:14), who said that Eve was *bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh* (Gen 2:23).
- The ten when born of Spirit through receiving the Divine Breath of Jesus became one with Jesus through possessing “the Spirit [Πνευμα] of Christ” (Rom 8:9) in a manner analogous to how the first Eve was made one with the first Adam; the ten become the last Eve, the Body of Christ in metaphoric relationship.
- Until a “group” or division of humankind is visible baptized by the Holy Spirit, the Divine Breath [again, Πνευμα Ἅγιον] must be directly passed to another individual as in Peter and John laying hands on the Samaritans that Philip baptized (Acts 8:17), but once a representative group is baptized by the Holy Spirit [Πνευμα Ἅγιον] as occurred on that day of Pentecost following Calvary when natural Israelites were filled or empowered by the Holy Breath of God (Acts chap 2), and as occurred when Peter went to the house of the Gentile Cornelius (Acts chap 10), the Holy Spirit [Πνευμα Ἅγιον] no longer requires being directly transferred. No laying on of hands occurs on that day of Pentecost when three thousand were added to the Church, nor were hands laid on Cornelius and his household that had visibly received the Holy Spirit prior to baptism.
- The third time that a visible manifestation of empowerment by the Holy Spirit occurs when Paul went to Ephesus where he found twelve disciples who had been baptized with John’s baptism (Acts 19:1-7). These twelve were baptized a second time [note this], and when Paul laid hands on them after they were baptized the second time, they received the Holy Spirit and began speaking in languages and prophesying.
- Prior to being baptized by Paul, the twelve at Ephesus were as the Samaritans were after hearing the preaching of Philip and being baptized by Philip (Acts 8:12-13) but before Peter and John came to lay hands on them. The Samaritans had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus (v. 16).
- Peter and John, however, do not rebaptize these Samaritans, but only pray for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, and lay hands on them for the same reason (vv. 15, 17).

- So Paul’s rebaptism of the twelve is scripturally a new thing, not previously done to those who had been baptized unto repentance to believe in Jesus as Philip did the Samaritans.

Prior to Calvary, humankind was physically divided by circumcision, but this wall of hostility was broken down in the flesh of Christ Jesus. Where there had been two physical men before—one circumcised, one uncircumcised—there became only one in the flesh, thereby making peace through the cross so that strangers and aliens and all those far from Israel might also be joined to God through spiritual circumcision. But herein is the catch: the Holy Spirit has not yet been poured out on all flesh. That did not occur on the day of Pentecost following Calvary, for there were no heavenly signs as the prophet Joel proclaimed (Joel 2:28-32). That pouring out of the Holy Spirit remains to occur when the single kingdom of this world becomes the kingdom of the Father and of His Son halfway through the seven endtime years of [tribulation](#) (*cf.* Rev 11:15-18; Dan 7:9-14). So presently, the Holy Spirit is only given to those whom the Father has drawn from this world, and spiritual circumcision only occurs to those drawn disciples when a journey of faith is undertaken that is mentally equivalent in length to the physical journey that the patriarch Abraham took from Ur of the Chaldeans to Haran, then from Haran to Canaan. Therefore, the barrier of physical circumcision has been replaced by the barrier of spiritual circumcision; i.e., circumcision of the heart by Spirit through faith and belief, and not by the letter of the law.

On that day of Pentecost when three thousand were added to the Body of Christ (to be added, Acts 2:41, the Body had to already exist), the three thousand do not speak in languages of another’s youth, nor do these three thousand prophesy. Only the disciples, now all Galileans [Judas Iscariot was the only non-Galilean] (v. 7), were speaking in words heard by each of the multitude in the language of his youth—so two men standing together if from different lands heard the Galileans speaking in the language of his youth, not in the language of the other’s youth. The miracle was in the hearing, not in the speaking. And when this multitude asked, “‘Brothers, what shall we do’” (v. 37), Peter said to them, “‘Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. **For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself**’” (vv. 38-39 – emphasis added). God must call the person to Himself. The Holy Spirit is to be given to only those whom God calls, not to everyone at this time. But this invisible division of humankind will end when the Holy Spirit is poured out on all flesh.

Since Jesus breathed on the ten, the waters of humanity have been divided by spiritual birth given to those whom God calls to Himself. The separation made in the flesh through circumcision becomes a separation made within hearts and minds through spiritual circumcision; thus, physical circumcision becomes a shadow and copy of spiritual circumcision. Physical circumcision can only be a copy of a heavenly thing for blood is shed (again, Heb 9:22-23).

The Holy Spirit will be poured out on all flesh when the kingdom of this world is taken from its present prince and is given to the Son of Man. It is this transference of authority to rule the single kingdom of this world that all of biblical prophecy is about.

God is not a respecter of persons, calling some, offering salvation to some, not calling others, not offering salvation to those not called. Rather, there are two harvests of God, with these harvests seen in the grain harvests of ancient Judea. There was an early barley harvest, the harvest of firstfruits, with spiritually Christ Jesus being the First of the firstfruits. This is the spring harvest that began with the Wave Sheaf Offering and continued until the Feast of Weeks. And spiritually, those disciples whom the Lord calls to Himself prior to His return will stand before Him at His return to have their judgments revealed (1 Cor 4:5). Some will be resurrected to everlasting life, some to condemnation (John 5:28-29). But the mass of humankind will not appear before Christ at His return, but after His thousand year long reign as Lord of lords and King of kings. They will appear as the latter wheat harvest.

All the while barley was being harvested in ancient Judea wheat was growing in adjoining fields. This wheat was the main crop of Judea; it was the money crop, the staple of life. But it wasn't harvested until late summer. Likewise, the mass of humankind will not be born of Spirit until resurrected from death in the great White Throne Judgment (Rev 20:11-15). Then, each person will be raised up after death and will be as one of the two thieves on either side of Jesus at Calvary. The person who acknowledges his or her transgressions of the law and acknowledges that Jesus is God will enter paradise that day, whereas the person who seeks to save his or her flesh will be cast into the lake of fire not to roast in perpetual torment but to be quickly and utterly consumed.

Judgment is not today upon those human beings who have not been born of Spirit. Their judgment occurs after the seven endtime years, after the Wedding Supper, after Jesus' 1000 year long reign, after Satan is released for a short while, after Satan is again taken and cast into the lake of fire. Only then, in "a sixth day" period immediately prior to the coming of a new heaven and new earth, the mass of humankind will be resurrected and given a second birth, a birth by Spirit, and will be judged by those things done while they lived physically. Those who sinned without knowing the law will also perish without being judged by the law, but by being judged by what they knew was right and wrong from the natural law within them; whereas those who did not have the law but who did what the law requires [the person who did good and loved his or her neighbor] will have their consciences accuse and excuse them and thereby receive everlasting life (Rom 2:12-16). As Satan dragged a third of the stars down from heaven, the Son of Man will drag a third of humankind into heaven, with the glorified firstfruits forming the Body of the Son of Man, Christ Jesus being the Head of this Body.

The importance of the twelve at Ephesus that had repented and had been baptized with John's baptism now can be seen:

- Following that day of Pentecost (Acts chap 2), no natural Israelite needed to have a direct transfer of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit would be given to whichever natural Israelite the Father drew from the world (John 6:44, 65) prior to the Israelite's baptism, with baptism now becoming the inclusionary rite that brought this natural Israelite into the household of God and under judgment.

- Following the baptism of Cornelius and his household, no Gentile needed to have the direct transfer of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit would be given to whichever Gentile the Father drew from the world prior to this Gentile's baptism [why would this Gentile come to God if God did not make the first overture], with baptism being the inclusionary rite that makes this Gentile part of Israel.
- No other division of humankind exists besides Israel and Gentile.
- But if the Body of Christ dies and has to be resurrected from death, the twelve at Ephesus are not an anomaly that differs from the Samaritans who were not rebaptized by Peter and John, but are the basis for the Father giving the Holy Spirit to those who have repented in a manner consistent with the second covenant made with Israel at Moab (Deu chaps 29-32).
- Today, and continuing on until the Holy Spirit is poured out on all flesh halfway through the seven endtime years of tribulation, the Father draws a person from this world by giving the person His Spirit and a second birth following the person's repentance in a manner that would be represented by John's baptism, and by the terms of the Moab covenant.
- The patriarch Abraham received use of the Holy Spirit when his name was changed from Abram to Abraham, with the /ah/ radical linguistically representing aspirated breath or "rough breath," but he was not born of Spirit. The same applies to King David and to the prophets of old. And contrary to what has been taught by the lawless Church, the same applies to disciples during this period when the Body of Christ is dead. The better promise of receipt of the Holy Spirit prior to obedience, a promise added to the second covenant, was temporarily suspended for Israel's sake when God delivered Israel into the hand of the spiritual king of Babylon because of Israel's lawlessness.

The Body of Christ will be resurrected and will consist of those natural Israelites and Gentiles who, while in a far land, turned to God and by faith began to obey His voice in all that God commanded Israel in the book of Deuteronomy (Deu 30:1-2, 9-10), loving God with the person's hearts and mind, and loving neighbor as oneself; professing that Jesus is Lord and believing that the Father raised Him from the dead. The resurrected Body of Christ will consist only of those who have demonstrated their faith and belief through repentance and obedience prior to receiving the Holy Spirit. Everyone else, regardless of whether he or she calls him or herself a "Christian," will appear before God in the great White Throne Judgment when the person will be born a second time. And this resurrected Body of Christ will be empowered by the Holy Spirit when liberated from indwelling sin and death at the [second Passover](#).

The Christian Church today, in all of its many sects and denominations, is a "feel-good" association that cooperatively markets guilt and arrogance as if human misery were milk to be churned into cheese.

Collectively, the People of the Book are today equally ignorant of what God expects from them: Judaism would have Israelites live good lives through benevolent social works whereas Christendom would have spiritual Israelites live good lives through

individual enlightenment and Islam would have Muslims live good lives through the “struggle.” But when Jesus was called “good,” He rebuked the rich young ruler, saying, ““Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone”” (Luke 18:19). If Jesus, a man without sin, denied that He was good while being of flesh, then no person is “good.” No person is truly without sin (1 John 1:8). And it isn’t goodness that God seeks, but faith and belief that leads to child-like obedience.

The Apostle Paul wrote, citing Isaiah concerning Israel, ““Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved, for the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth fully and without delay”” (Rom 9:27-28). And why will the Lord carry out His sentence of death? The prophet Isaiah writes elsewhere,

Behold the Lord will empty the earth and make it desolate, and he will twist its surface and scatter its inhabitants. ... The earth shall be utterly empty and utterly plundered; for the Lord has spoken this word. The earth mourns and withers; the world languishes and withers; the highest people of the earth languish. **The earth lies defiled under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed the laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant.** Therefore a curse devours the earth, and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt; therefore the inhabitants of the earth are scorched, and few men are left. (Isa 24:1, 3-6 – emphasis added)

The everlasting covenant is not the Sinai [Horeb] covenant for that covenant was ratified by blood, but the Moab covenant, ratified by a song, the law by which righteousness could have been attained. Paul wrote, “What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works” (Rom 9:30-32). Paul calls the Moab covenant “the righteousness based on faith” (Rom 10:6); for under the Moab covenant, Israel must turn to God when in a far land and begin to love God, this love manifest through Israel keeping the commandments of God. Turning to God in a far land is an action of faith and belief, an action like Abraham believing God that his offspring would be like the stars of heaven (Gen 15:6)—and it was Abraham believing God that his offspring would come from his dead loins that is counted to him as righteousness (Rom 4:3-5).

Only a remnant of Israel will be saved: many are called, but few will be chosen (Matt 22:14). It is not the many that find the broad way and wide gate that will receive everlasting life, but the few who travel the hard road and enter through the narrow gate. Why? Because the earth lies defiled under its inhabitants. Lawlessness reigns through Israel, and lawlessness is celebrated as liberation from the law whereas it is nothing more than rebellion against God. Lawlessness is manifested hatred of God by those who, most often, sing praises to the glory of the Son.

Evil is nothing more than determining for oneself what is right and what is wrong. Even if the person decides that he or she should obey the commandments of God because the commandments reflect the goodness of God, the person has committed the same sin that the first Eve committed; the person has judged the law, and by extension, has judged God. **A person is to keep the commandments because God said to.** That reason alone is sufficient.

*What about free will? What about God giving human beings minds with which to reason and to make decisions? Surely God doesn't expect blind obedience. Surely He values informed choice.*

What if He does expect blind obedience? Will endtime “Christians according to the flesh” follow their convictions into lion dens, or into Coliseum arenas? Christians in the 1<sup>st</sup>-Century were killed in every way imaginable. Or will endtime Christians say, *My God wouldn't expect that of me! My God is a God of love and peace.* Well, God is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. If He allowed intelligent men and women in the 1<sup>st</sup>-Century to be slain as Jesus was, He will allow equally intelligent men and women to be so slain in the 21<sup>st</sup>-Century. And they will be so slain (Rev 6:9-11). Love for God will have endtime disciples dying by faith for their beliefs. The person who places the life of his or her flesh ahead the person's love for God is not worthy of following Christ Jesus.

The “decision theology” of Billy Graham and of Evangelical Christianity places human beings in charge of their own salvation: making a *decision* for Christ now becomes the responsibility and work of the person, thus placing upon every person the obligation to choose life (Deu 30:15) on a fixed and unchanging day of salvation And this is bad theology. If fact, it is worse than bad for it is fatally flawed. The Father draws from this world those whom He chooses, and ever since the Body of Christ died on the cross with Christ Jesus, the pool of human beings from which the Father draws individuals consists only of those who have repented after the order of John's baptism. Whereas the Father initially drew individuals from natural Israel, then from natural Israel and from the nations, the Father now (and until the Holy Spirit is poured out on all flesh) only draws from those individuals who have truly repented and who have brought forth fruit worthy of repentance. Such a person, when born of Spirit, will not return to the world. And such a person might be found residing in any denomination.

The typical Evangelical “born again” experience is usually nothing more than a burp of guilt.

If the Moab covenant is the everlasting covenant to which better promises have been added when its mediator changed from Moses to Christ Jesus, what are those better promises? Where might they be found? In what Scripture, chapter and verse, or in which parable, the story of the Good Samaritan perhaps?

A lawyer seeking to test Jesus, asked, “Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” (Luke 10:25). This lawyer understands that he does not have eternal life, that eternal life is something to be inherited, and he knows what the Law says about inheriting everlasting life. So Jesus answered the lawyer by asking, “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?” (v. 26). The lawyer answers correctly (v. 28). The righteous requirement of the Law is to love God with heart and mind, and love one's neighbor as one loves him or herself. Keeping the commandments fulfills the righteous requirements of the Law; keeping the commandments is the manifestation of love toward God and neighbor. And the lawyer could not keep the commandments—Jesus said none were doing so—because the lawyer had no love for his neighbor ... the lawyer had all of the correct answers, but he lacked belief and faith, which together are counted as righteousness to the one who loves God and neighbor. A person has no love apart from the person keeping the commandments. If a man respects his wife and his neighbor's wife, loving his wife and loving his neighbor, the man will never commit adultery.



Likewise, if a man values his word and loves the one to whom he speaks, the man will utter no lie, bear no false witness. And so it is with every commandment when these commandments are written on hearts and placed in minds. Love becomes the interface between the law inscribed on hearts and the actions of the hands. Without this interface of love, the inner law remains a thing not seen by man or angels. Thus, fulfilling the law of God requires loving God and neighbor.

The better promises—they include (1) everlasting life rather than physical life, (2) return to heavenly Jerusalem rather than to physical Jerusalem, and when the Body of Christ was alive, crucified with Jesus, (3) the Holy Spirit prior to demonstrated obedience not following demonstrated obedience. This third promise will again manifest itself when the Holy Spirit is poured out on all flesh halfway through the seven endtime years. Until then, obedience precedes being born of Spirit. This way, the “Christian according to the flesh” will not lose the once-given spiritual life that would otherwise be lost because of his or her lawlessness. As the lawyer knew who sought to test Jesus, no person is born with an immortal soul. Eternal life is inherited. It is only given as a gift from God (Rom 6:23), with the wages for sin being death, not life in a rotisserie not quite hot enough to consume the person.

### 3.

How does a person know if he or she has been born of Spirit, a question that has an answer? But its answer opens a debate about the real Jesus and about what He taught. The Apostle Paul wrote,

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. (Rom 8:5-7)

If a person does not submit to God’s law, without question the person’s mind is set on the flesh: this person has not been born of Spirit, regardless of whether the person has had a dozen “born again” experiences. If a fellow, because he is a fellow, looks with lust at a provocatively attired female, the fellow’s mind is set on the flesh. Yes, it is! He has not been born of Spirit. Wow! That rules out most of the male half of humanity from being born of Spirit. Indeed, it does. It truly does. And the protestations can be heard from here—

The mind that is set on the things of the Spirit really does not experience the lustful desires, or the anger, the urge to kill that this same mind experienced prior to being born of Spirit. How can that be? How can you say that? I say from personal experience.

For me, the extraction of a mental thorn, somewhat like Paul’s physical thorn, brought light from darkness. And as Paul never explained what that physical thorn was, I have no need to relate what that mental thorn was. But unlike Paul’s physical thorn that God did not remove, the mental thorn was removed so that I could address, albeit somewhat vaguely, the profound mental change that occurs when a person is truly born of Spirit.

Paul addresses the mental change that occurred in him with spiritual birth in Romans chapter seven. And the entirety of Paul's ministry comes about because of this mental change. He goes from persecuting Christians and from approving the stoning of Stephen to being the one who lays the foundation for the heavenly house of God (1 Cor 3:10-11). This is truly a profound change, and a change that most "Christians according to the flesh" recognize as not having happened to them.

Bruce Bawer is gay, and according to Evangelical legalists, he cannot be a Christian because of his sexual orientation and practices. Yes, God condemns homosexual practices; they are abhorrent to him [sorry, Bruce, Scripture doesn't change because of who you want to love]. But what Bawer might understand but what Fundamental legalists certainly do not yet understand is that his sexual orientation is part of a received human nature that will be changed when he is born of Spirit, and instantly changed if born of Spirit after the second Passover occurs. When gays say that they were born the way they are, they speak from a post-puberty perspective. They were not born oriented to having sexual relationships with their own gender, but as their perception of self was being formed while very young, something happened differently from what happened to the majority of the population. And whatever happened modified the person's so-called human nature, which again, is a received nature from the prince of this world, "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience" (Eph 2:2 – emphasis added). The prince of this world is a spirit being, not the Secretary-General of the United Nations, or whichever human being conspiracy theorists currently believe is in control of a shadowy secret world government.

Chapter four of the book of Daniel is a message from King Nebuchadnezzar to all peoples, nations, and languages. It is his story, and it begins with him again having a vision that Daniel interprets for him, a vision about an angel of God directing the majestic tree seen in the vision be chopped down and its limbs lopped off, with its stump banded and left in the ground. The angel in the vision says, "Let his mind be changed from a man's, and let a beast's mind be given to him" (Dan 4:16). And a year after receiving this vision, the event happens: "While the words were still in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, 'O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: The kingdom has departed from you, and you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling place shall be with the beasts of the field. And you shall be made to eat grass like an ox'" (vv. 31-32) ... how did God make the king eat grass? By changing the nature of the king, taking from Nebuchadnezzar his human nature and giving to the king the nature of a castrated bull, not the nature of a young calf or a breeding stud. For seven years, the king did not realize that he was the king. Instead, he contentedly lay in the field, wet with the dew of heaven, grazing like an ox for his sustenance.

The human nature that was taken from Nebuchadnezzar was restored to him after seven years—and when his human nature was restored, the king blessed and praised and honored God (Dan 4:34-37).

In Daniel's vision recorded in his seventh chapter, Daniel saw a beast rise from the sea that was like a lion and had eagles' wings. This beast was lifted up and made to stand on two feet, "and the mind of a man was given to it" (v. 4). This spiritual king (v. 17) was given the nature of a man; he has his nature/mind instantly changed from what it was before to that of a man.

Human nature is less the product of biology than it is a gift from God. Thus, the person whose nature is today what learned men call “human nature,” that nature received from the prince of the power of the air when humankind was consigned to disobedience—this person will lift up his or her eyes when born of Spirit, and will bless and praise and honor God, for this person’s nature will not then be what it is now. The person who is today unwillingly gay will give great honor to God when this person is truly born of Spirit, far greater honor than will give the person who believes that he or she is “okay” with God.

The prophet Isaiah described the effect of being born of Spirit when the Holy Spirit is poured out on all flesh. Writing of the Christ, Isaiah discloses,

And the Spirit of the [YHWH] shall rest upon him, / the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, / the Spirit of counsel and might, / the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. ... The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, / and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, / and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; / and a little child shall lead them. / The cow and the bear shall graze; / their young shall lie down together; / and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. / The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, / and the weaned child shall put his and on the adder’s den. / They shall not hurt or destroy / in all my holy mountain; / for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord / as the waters cover the sea. (Isa 11:2, 6-9)

When poured out on all flesh, the Holy Spirit will change the carnivore natures of the great predators as well as the nature of human beings. People will receive the mind and nature of Christ Jesus. No longer will rebellion and greed—the nature of Satan—be evident in “human nature.” No longer will the lusts of the flesh reign over the desires of the heart and the thoughts of the mind; no longer will *all of the girls be prettier at closing time*. Those thoughts will be weeds pulled from the garden of God, the mental topography of the person born of Spirit.

If a person today still has the same nature he or she had when the person was a son of disobedience, the person remains a son of disobedience. This person has NOT been born of Spirit regardless of how much this person wants to believe that he or she has been. Only the person whose “human nature” has been truly been changed is born of Spirit.

Being born of Spirit means the death of the inner self with whom the person has grown comfortable and of whom the person has grown fond. With a changed *human nature* comes a changed value system, a changed mindset concerning little things like driving a few miles an hour over the speed limit, or seeing dead animals alongside the highway, or spending time with hobbies. The mundane loses importance. The person born of Spirit no longer loves this world and all this world has to offer. The desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, the pride of possessions (1 John 2:15-17)—all cease to have importance. And this cannot be fully grasped by the person who has not yet been born of Spirit.

Being born of Spirit causes the person to unconsciously separate from the world and the things of this world. Certainly no one truly born of Spirit participates in the politics of this world—the desire to participate is no longer there. So “born again” political candidates lie first to themselves, then to God, and finally to voters. They steal Jesus,

then co-opt what it means to be born of Spirit, and finally commit real murder by persecuting those very few who truly have been born of Spirit.

The “Christianity” of those who are repulsed by the act of thinking belongs with similar belief paradigms in the flotsam of this world’s history, that open sewer of flowing disobedience from which nauseous gases arise as wars and humors of wars, famines and genocide, destined to reappear regularly until the prince of this world is cast into time, where he too will perish as a man does.

#### 4.

Whether stated or intuitively surmised, a reason many intellectuals reject the “Christianity” of this world is the inherent loathing felt when they realize they are laboratory mice unable to escape observation (what omnipresence means) if any supreme deity exists. Denial of a deity’s existence, with both acceptance and denial based on similar levels of faith, eliminates intellectuals’ immediate problem. But a point on a two-dimensional plane would, if it could, perceive a cylinder as a circle. None of the cylinder’s height would be discernable by the point. Likewise, three-dimensional objects in a fourth dimension (time, made necessary to allow for movement of living entities) will be unable to perceive evidence of life in another inclusive dimension, say a twelfth dimension [heaven].

Religion is, to many intellectuals, nothing but ancient science fiction fodder for the masses. Karl Marx’s quote about religion being the opiate of the people is, however, too narrowly focused; for environmentalism is today the most popular religion in the Western world, and one supported by the enthusiasm of “intellectuals” (and the anti-intellectual icon, Albert Gore, Jr.) in a manner similar to the Great Awakening being supported by the enthusiasm of Calvinists. Environmentalism is an emotion-based belief paradigm that has benefitted from society’s rejection of the anti-intellectual bias of fundamentalist Christians and the silence of the traditional Church. Cooler winters will, to environmentalists, only mean that global warming is occurring. Additional snowfall will, again, only mean that warming is occurring. Droughts and floods will only mean warming is already here. Nothing short of subscription to a new belief paradigm will convince the “majority of scientists” testifying [used in a Christian sense] about global warning that a meltdown apocalypse is not about to happen.

Because a point on a plane perceives a cylinder as a circle doesn’t make the cylinder any less tall.

Because a university professor perceives Moses as a composite figure doesn’t make Moses any less challenging.

All that a point calling a cylinder a circle does is reveal the limitations that have been placed upon the point. All that a scholar calling Genesis a collection of myths does is reveal the limitations that have been placed on the natural mind. Thus, intellectuals who deny the existence of an inclusive dimension and a supreme deity reveal the limitations placed upon the thoughts of the persons doing the denying. They reveal facets of what it means not to be born of Spirit.

It would be fruitless for two points on a plane to argue about the nature of the cylinder that they sincerely believe to be a circle (or perhaps only an arc if the points’ movements are restricted). Their disputing would be meaningless. Likewise, Marx’s

quote, containing an element of truth, is equally meaningless. But unfortunately, too many Christians never consider that their activities and thoughts are continuously monitored. They never think deeply about the ramifications of having living entities, albeit in another dimension, that they cannot perceive in a room beside them. They profess belief in Christ based upon faith, but they live in darkness, behaving as if God is unable to see what they do. They fail to realize that if they were truly born of Spirit, they would be lights in a long spiritual night. And the circumstantial evidence that they have not been born of Spirit continues to mount, for everything any person does is visible to God and to angels and often to other humans. The person whose mind is set on the flesh, though, fails to realize that the person is under constant observation.

I didn't set out to be part of the Body of Christ; I actually set out to be a mathematician. I didn't want to be religious. In fact, I grew up believing church attendance was a sign of a serious character defect. But I was drafted into the Body, drafted just as I would have been into the Army if recruiters could have gotten me past the height-to-weight chart when I was eighteen. So I write now from a peculiar set of circumstances that did not have me initially repenting of anything.

Dad died when I was eleven. Massive heart attack. He is buried in Portland's Willamette National Cemetery, five rows down (west) of the flagpole. My brother, Ken, while Undersecretary of Health for Veteran Affairs, arranged for a plaque that acknowledges Dad's internment in the cemetery.

I was in fifth grade when Dad died. The oldest of five siblings, I was suddenly thrust into the role of *man of the house*, and I was imbued with a sense of responsibility that prevented me from truly rebelling against the status quo. I did sixth, seventh, and eighth grades in one year, started high school when twelve, and excelled at everything I did because it was expected of me. Not until years later did I *play* at living life. Even then, my play was limited to a level of professional irresponsibility that prevented me from really succeeding as a businessman. I never drank, never partied, never took drugs, never had extramarital affairs. I would have been, to my San Francisco peers, a very boring fellow. My teenage and young adult rebellion was limited to poaching more deer than I should have, not paying creditors on time, not being truthful. If a person wasn't a creditor, I looked acceptable on the outside. There wasn't, when I reached my majority, an obvious need in my life (or so I thought) for God or Christ or religion; plus, I didn't want anyone telling me what to do.

I should add that lawlessness had become so ingrained in me when I reached my majority that I would rather break a law than keep it even if greater benefits came from keeping it. Only the intellectual ability to calculate the odds of getting caught kept me out of jail during this period.

Mom remarried when I was thirteen, married Lyle Squier, a Seventh Day Adventist with a tenth-grade education, really a nice fellow whom neither I nor my siblings appreciated while we lived together. There are reasons why Dr. Laura tells her radio callers not to marry unless values are shared. Mom and Lyle fought over what foods would be brought into the house. Pork was suddenly taboo. There was no more Saturday grocery shopping, or fishing or hunting, or doing much of anything. And I set out to prove Lyle was wrong about the Sabbath. After all, the whole world, except for the Adventists, couldn't be wrong. I had a good mind. I could read as well as most people,

could reason intelligently, could recognize logical inconsistencies. There seemed no reason why I couldn't prove Lyle was an uneducated hick.

After studying everything I could, after reading the Bible fairly critically, I concluded that the whole world could be wrong. That was disillusioning. If a person were to believe in God (I didn't want to), the law remained in effect. Christians were no longer under the law, for the law was now inside the person, written on hearts and minds. Murder committed with the hand had become anger or hate committed with the mind. Adultery committed with the body had become lust committed with the mind. The Sabbath wasn't changed to another day, but went from what the body did on the seventh day to what the mind thought. What had been outside had relocated itself to inside the person. Luckily for me, or so I thought at the time, I was strong enough to resist the lure of myths and historical nonsense. So I set what I had learned on a mental backburner, and I went about my business, ignoring the Sabbath, God, and the need for personal salvation. Only now, I could figuratively shoot down arguments of anyone who claimed the Sabbath had been changed to Sunday by Christ's resurrection, and I wasn't above doing so.

Despite the fancy footwork of Protestant linguistics about the Sabbath being rest in Christ and only a figure of what was to come, the seventh-day Sabbath has always been a physical sign between *YHWH* and Israel that the holy nation knows its *Elohim* sanctifies the nation (v. 13). *YHWH* sanctified no nation other than Israel. Today, the Father and the Son sanctify no spiritual nation but the one composed of drawn and called disciples of Christ Jesus. The covenant that made Israel the physically holy nation (Exod 19:5-6) was abolished (Eph 2:15) when Israel killed the grantor of the covenant at Calvary. The *Logos* or *Theos*, the spokesman for *YHWH* and the One who married a faithless nation at Sinai, was born of woman as the man Jesus of Nazareth (John 1:14), and was with physical death free to marry another (Rom 7:1-4). He is now betrothed to a pregnant Bride just as Joseph was betrothed to Mary when she was found with child. The glorified Jesus' Bride is and will be the glorified saints collectively, all sons of the Father [*Theon*] just as Mary was pregnant with the Son of *Theos*, His only. And the sons of God to this day physically rest on the Sabbath, with their minds on and their hearts turned to their Father. These sons will put on Christ Jesus daily. They will always be in an attitude of prayer. But they will refrain from working with their hands—made necessary because these sons reside in tabernacles of flesh—on the Sabbath.

No person can come to Christ (i.e., be a part of, and a party to His wedding) unless first drawn by the Father (John 6:44). When the Pharisees grumbled about Jesus saying that He was the Bread that came down from heaven, saying, *Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know*, Jesus answered,

Do not grumble among yourselves. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the Prophets, "And they will all be taught by God." Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me—not that anyone has seen the Father except him who is from God; he has seen the Father. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. (John 6:43-47)

The prophet Jeremiah writes,

Behold, the days are coming, declares *YHWH*, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares *YHWH*. (Jer 31:31–32)

This new covenant has the laws of God written on hearts and minds (v. 33 & Heb 8:10), and this new covenant will be made with Israel that will not then be two physical nations separated following Solomon’s disobedience and death, but one spiritual nation (Ezek 37:16-26). This new covenant will be made with “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession” (1 Pet 2:9), who once “were not a people, but now you [who have been drawn and chosen] are God’s people” (v. 10). This new covenant will be made with spiritual Israel, a drawn and chosen (John 15:16) nation that will be raised up on the last day to marry the Bridegroom, a nation with spiritually circumcised hearts (*cf.* Rom 2:29; Deu 30:6).

I was drawn (or *called* if a person wants to use that word) at a particular moment in 1972. I was no more asked if I wanted to be called than I was asked if I wanted to be born into this world as an infant. This is the analogy as initially given when the Body of Christ was raised up on the cross with Him: birth-from-above was then not a conscious decision made by the disciple. Birth-from-above came without asking, came because the Father drew the person by giving the person spiritual life through receipt of the Father’s Breath. Today is a [indefinite article] day of salvation, not the only day. And today was the second day of the spiritual creation week, the day when the waters of humanity are separated through birth from above.

Today that was the second day of the spiritual creation week became today that is the third day.

Adam did not ask to be created. *Elohim* [singular in usage] took red mud or clay and fashioned a corpse from these basic elements. This corpse, complete with inner organs ready to begin functioning, appeared as a human being before *Elohim* [again singular] breathed the breath of life in his nostrils (Gen 2:7). Human beings, now, are spiritual corpses, made in the image of, and after the likeness of *Elohim* (Gen 1:27). These fully functioning, in the natural realm, spiritual corpses await receipt of the Breath of God (*Pneuma 'Agion*). When they, we, receive the Holy Spirit, we are born anew, or born a second time. We are born spiritually as Adam was born physically. Gestation isn’t in the womb. That portion of the analogy doesn’t pertain during this age when God has consigned all of humanity to disobedience (Rom 11:32) so that He can have mercy—grant spiritual birth—upon all as either part of the early barley harvest or the later wheat harvest.

But what happens if the Body is dead? Does the above scenario apply as it did in the 1<sup>st</sup>-Century? Or is there a gestation period during which repentance occurs, a period comparable to the period between when the twelve at Ephesus received the baptism of John and when they were rebaptized by Paul?

There is a period analogous to the maturation of Cain and Abel in the womb of the last Eve, and Esau and Jacob in the womb of Rebekah, but this period distorts the birth metaphor in a somewhat unexpected manner. If the Body of Christ is without spiritual breath, the definition of it being dead, then only death can occur in the womb of this last

Eve. A person drawn by the Father is born of Spirit. But if this person were to be placed in the womb of the dead Eve, the infant son of God would die for lack of breath. The womb of the last Eve is today a death chamber, and not a place of spiritual nurturing. However, if this son of God is kept isolated from the last Eve and incubated by the Father, then life could continue. The twelve at Ephesus were isolated from other Believers, with Ephesus becoming the first stop on that Roman mail route along which lay the seven named churches (Rev chaps 2-3). So those whom the Father draws during this period when the Body is dead will be incubated by the Father, and will spiritually mature in isolation from the dead Body of Christ, meaning that they will not be found in "Christian" fellowships.

In 1972, I operated a small gunshop on a part-time basis while still working for Georgia-Pacific, Toledo, Oregon division. Beginning to keep the Sabbath ended my employment with Georgia-Pacific; so the gunshop became my sole source of income, and everything was remaining afloat until the gas shortage following the Yom Kippur war brought travel to a standstill along the Coast of Oregon. I was then in my mid-twenties. I had a wife and three pre-school daughters, and I had to relocate to another area.

By mid-summer 1974, I was on Alaska's Kenai Peninsula.

In 1979, I sold my chainsaw-outboard dealership at Kenai, bought a boat, and started fishing commercially out of first Kodiak, then Dutch Harbor. There was a popular sweatshirt sold at Kodiak that said, *Kodiak Is Not the End of the World, But You Can See It from Here*. And so it seemed. From Kodiak, a person could deal with the world on whatever terms the person chose. I began writing, and I returned to repairing chainsaws and small engines for the local hardware store. I also escaped the turmoil occurring within Sabbatarian Christianity.

Disciples are not glorified as baby gods, a false teaching of fellowships that practice precept-upon-precept exegesis. When disciples are glorified, they will be younger siblings to Christ Jesus, like Him in body and mind. They will be fully mature sons of the Father, or they will not be glorified. The abiding characteristic of heaven is changelessness. Without time, a created dimension made necessary to allow for the movement of objects possessing apparent solidity, heaven requires that all there is must coexist with all that was and all that will be. Oneness (as in unity) is a dictate. Change is restricted to coexistence with what is. Thus, maturing in character requires initial maturity. Spiritual infancy and adolescence is spent within the physical creation where change is the abiding characteristic.

An important concept that is too often overlooked: many are drawn or called, but few are chosen (Matt 22:14) to attend the wedding feast. Those chosen will be fully mature in faith and fruit. A disciple who does not grow in grace and knowledge will be a spiritual stillborn, someone who tasted spiritual life but did not like its taste.

The presence of life and the absence of life cannot coexist in an entity at the same moment. Since the moment remains in the heavenly realm and doesn't become the next moment, possession of life is everlasting. Only in the physical creation where one moment will, regardless of whether desired, become the next moment can life become death. Thus, when rebelling angels were enchained in outer darkness, they were bound in time. They are confined to the creation where they can lose life as Satan will (Ezek 28:18-19) when he is cast to the earth (Rev 12:9-10). And when cast into time, he will



then know that his time is short, that he will soon have fire come out from his belly and be no more forever. He won't be happy, but will come as a roaring lion, devouring those he can by requiring human beings (all of humanity will then be born from above through the Holy Spirit being poured out upon all flesh — Joel 2:28) to take the mark of death to buy and sell. The beast represents death, the fourth horseman of the Apocalypse. The image of this fourth beast is the cross. The mark of the beast [χξς] (Rev 13:18) is the tattoo [*stigma*] of *chi xi*, or Xx (Christ's cross).

Spiritual life can be lost as long as it remains inside the creation. It is given through receipt of the Holy Spirit or Breath of God. A drawn and called disciple at the moment of drawing is made holy and receives life in the spiritual realm that can, however, be lost when the disciple's judgment is revealed. Those few who are called and chosen (again Matt 22:14) will be those that are mature in faith and character before their judgments are revealed upon Christ Jesus' return (1 Cor 4:5). The Bride will not be composed of spiritual infants, or hypocrites. Nor will the Bride consist of endtime disciples that have taken upon themselves the mark of death.

A man doesn't marry his body, but his bride. When the now deceased Body of Christ is resurrected back to life, it will be resurrected to become the Bride when glorified; so the Body had to die so that the Bride could live.

After I became convinced that if a person were to be a Christian the person would keep the Sabbath, I didn't justify not keeping the Sabbath. As a teenager, I was suckled on the *Zeitgeist* of rebellion that nurtured Vietnam War protestors and fed free love hippies even though neither mindset resided on the Coast until the last year or two of the decade. Rather, the 1960s was the decade of cheap military surplus rifles, and readily available reloading components. It was the decade of Ball C powder, a surplus spherical powder that had sat through a winter in two open rail cars and became extremely stable, producing some of the finest benchrest shot strings ever seen. It was the decade of 4831, available in 50-pound kegs for not much more than the shipping, a powder used in even inappropriate cartridges because of its price. It was the decade of button-rifled barrels, and fibreglas bedded rifle actions, and rollover semi-inlet stock blanks. And it was the decade that I didn't want to keep the Sabbath, didn't want to acknowledge a supreme being that could tell me what to do. For a dozen years, I knew about the Sabbath and the need to keep the laws of God, but I didn't because I remained hostile to God, exactly the mindset the Apostle Paul describes in Romans 8:7.

During the summer of 1972, seven or eight fellows from the pulpmill were sitting around my campfire, talking about the upcoming hunting season, about who was shackled up with whom, about black liquor spilling into the Yaquina River, about the price of logs and stumpage when one of the fellows asked, "Whatever happened to Dave Oleman?" Another fellow replied, "He got religion." Then Gary Gettmen, the pulpmill assistant superintendent, said, "You'll never know who will fall next."

I knew; I would be next. The thought overwhelmed all of my senses. It was almost tangible, almost a *thing* within my mind. I heard no voice, but I knew with absolute certainty that I was next. The presence of the thought disrupted even my objections.

Truly, I really didn't want to be religious. If I could have, I would have said the idea of me being next was the most ridiculous notion that had ever passed through my head, but I couldn't shake the intensity of the thought. It was like a door being opened and me

being mentally pushed through that doorway. I knew I had no choice about the matter. I was next.

And I was. The “*I’m next*” thought began a course of action that was truly unforeseen: I had started school as the biggest kid in first grade, with the best grades. At twelve and nearly six feet and 205 pounds, I was the largest freshman in high school and at the top of my class academically. Four years later, I graduated as valedictorian, and entered Willamette University, Salem, Oregon, on an honors scholarship as a sixteen-year-old math major. My ego was larger than it ought to have been. I didn't feel a need for God; didn't know if a god existed. If anything, I was mad at God before Mom committed suicide in October 1963. Even though I was still sixteen, I was declared an emancipated minor by the Marion County District Court. But with her suicide, I felt as if a burden had been lifted. I was still immature enough to be intolerant of mental instability—a week before Dad had died unexpectedly five years earlier, Mom had miscarried. She went through labor so birth hormones were still in her system. She hadn't finished grieving for the infant that wasn't to be when she was shocked by Dad's death. She suffered a nervous breakdown, but had to carry on as she was now fully responsible for five children, ages 3 to 11, with no support system other than Social Security (\$251/month), and a modest Veteran's Pension (\$119/month). We had no family in Oregon where we were living at the time. She didn't have a driver's license although she could drive. She didn't have any marketable skills. She had, figuratively, more on her plate than she could chew, let alone digest. And when Mom had sufficiently recovered from her breakdown to realize she had a problem (my Freshman year at Willamette) she leaned over the muzzle of my deer rifle, pulled the trigger with her thumb, and splattered herself across the ceiling, a harsh way to retell a grim reality.

Because it was expected of me, I traded the rifle away even though I had stocked the .30-06 myself.

Mom's suicide didn't diminish my interest in firearms. At the time, her death didn't seem to affect me other than producing the feeling of being unburdened. I didn't grieve for her, which bothered me for a decade. What I felt after her suicide was freedom. I could do what I wanted, and I did. I transferred to Oregon Tech and became part of the gunsmithing program there. I met my first wife while riding a bus from Reno to Klamath Falls Thanksgiving weekend 1964. She was a student at George Fox College, and the following July, we married at the Friends Church, Sherwood, Oregon. I was eighteen; she, nineteen and not pregnant. And before we married, her pastor insisted on counseling us. In addition to some good counsel, he gave her a tract that allegedly explained why the Adventists were a cult, and why the Sabbath had been changed. She studied the tract, checking every Scripture referenced, and what she found were contorted readings of text. I don't believe she ever attended a Friends Church service after receiving that tract. She felt the tract had been dishonest with Scripture.

After marrying, I left Oregon Tech to make enough money to support a wife. My intention was to lay out a term, then return. But I was involved in a headon traffic accident that left the other driver dead and me with a separated shoulder. So I didn't make much money during that term, and I laid out a second term, then a third term. By May 1966, I was making a thousand a month, and I had lost my incentive for returning to Oregon Tech. Rather, I opened my own gunshop in March 1967. And I still felt no need

for God in my life. I was busy having fun, making and spending money, shooting high power competition, killing many more deer than I was lawfully allowed. At best, God would have been an inconvenience, and keeping the Sabbath holy would have required revamping my lifestyle.

Oregon Department of Fish and Game opened Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge to a muzzleloading deer hunt in 1969. Bucks only. Three-point [western count] or better. The opening was intended as a quality hunt, and it was the year I participated.

By 1969, I had been building rifles for long enough that I had a local reputation for manufacturing accurate guns. Plus, my reputation for killing deer didn't hurt orders for rifles *like the one you shoot*. I was then hunting with muzzleloading rifles of my construction.

The chance to hunt Hart Mountain convinced enough high power shooters to order muzzleloading rifles that I stayed busy. I was becoming entrenched in Lincoln County. I figured I would build rifles for the remainder of my life, each rifle a little better than the preceding gun. I hadn't yet mastered engraving, or the type of metal artistry seen on fine 18<sup>th</sup>-Century European rifles. But my work was professional. I had become a journeyman gunmaker, and I was satisfied with life even though I wasn't making much money. We were living on venison, potatoes and green beans. Our nearest neighbors were a half-mile away. The stump ranch on which we lived butted against the holdings of large timber companies. Neither neighbors nor passing traffic could see the house in which we lived. It was for me a desirable life.

Our first daughter was born in 1968, our second daughter in 1970. Our third daughter was born in 1972—and then came the “*I'm next*” thought, baptism, and relocation to Alaska's Kenai Peninsula, where I fell timber and repaired chainsaws, fished commercially, and began writing. I never returned to building firearms.

The “*I'm next*” thought had troubled me for a couple of weeks when, with no logical progression of activities, my wife said she wanted to start tithing our income. I grudgingly agreed, something I wouldn't have done before, and I said, “Send the Adventists a check.” She said she didn't want to send a check to them. I said, “Forget it. You aren't sending one anywhere.” But that she had asked to send a check so soon after experiencing the “*I'm next*” thought was doubly upsetting. We hadn't discussed religion since we married seven years earlier. The only mention of religion was when I had told her to take our oldest daughter to Adventist Sabbath School a year or so earlier. She had. That was enough to cause the local Adventist minister to think he had a potential convert. However, after a couple of visits (during the second one he watched me slip hair from deer hides while we talked), he apparently concluded that I wasn't civilized enough for fellowship. I never saw him again, which suited me at the time.

In September, my wife asked if I would object to a minister visiting her. I was taken back by the question. Of course I wouldn't object, but I didn't understand her need to even ask. I had no fear of cross-contamination. I remembered enough Scripture from when I was thirteen to hold my own in a theological discussion. If anything, I was curious about who had attracted her interest. So I said, in typical male communication, “No, go ahead.”

After deer season, two ministers arrived, one a middle-aged man, one as young as I was. I went out to the shop, sold a customer a scope, and after waiting nearly an hour,

returned to the house. Bibles were hastily closed, not something that favorably impressed me, and the older minister asked if I could stock a rifle for him. It seems that he had broken a borrowed rifle's stock over the head of a deer. I wanted the story, and we talked about hunting for most of another hour before they left. We shook hands. I was impressed that the older fellow had a firm handshake, not that oft-described wet washrag shake of too many pastors.

As soon as the ministers were in their car, I wanted to know who they were, and whom they represented. My wife brought out a cardboard box a little smaller than an apple lug. In it were twelve lessons of a Bible Correspondence Course, plus dozens of booklets, a couple of books, letters, and her study notes. I picked up the top booklet, and in a sidebar were Matthew 24 and Revelation 6 placed side by side. As a teenager I had listened to Adventist pastors try to reconcile Revelation and Daniel, and I had not heard anything that seemed logical. What I heard would have taken much more faith than reasoning to believe so I didn't believe anything. But the juxtaposition within the sidebar of the booklet about Revelation seemed to make sense, seemed logical, and suddenly made the book seem understandable. I was surprised, pleasantly so. My surprise was also frightening, not an emotion I was used to feeling. If Revelation could be understandable, then maybe the Bible was more than myth. So in the next two weeks I read everything in the box; then set about reading the Bible in the following two weeks. I read supposed proofs of the Bible's authenticity, but these proofs were less important than passage after passage making sense. The passages were logical. They reflected a deity that wasn't interested in torturing humanity forever; that had a plan to save all of humanity, not just those people missionaries reached. But I wasn't completely convinced. So when the ministers returned in a month, I had questions for them.

"What about keeping the Holy Days? God says He hates your Holy Days." The Scriptural passages I referenced were Isaiah 1:14, and Amos 5:21.

A little timidly, the younger minister (I was rough enough looking to be intimidating) said, "I think the key word in those verses is, your."

I understood. The festival days listed in Leviticus 23 aren't the Holy Days of the Jews or of Israel, but the appointed festivals of the Lord (vv. 2, 4, & 37). The high Sabbaths were as binding upon circumcised Israel as was the weekly Sabbath, the first of the listed Holy Days. Therefore, since what was outside had relocated inside, with the law going from what the hand and body did to what the mind thought and what the heart desired, the high Sabbaths remained as binding on spiritually circumcised Israel as was the weekly Sabbath. They stand or fall together, the reason they are listed together. Baptizing and repackaging *your holy days* with hot cross buns and egg-bearing rabbits or with a jolly old elf in a sleigh drawn by flying reindeer doesn't make either the day or the icons spiritually palatable.

Acknowledging Christ required acknowledging a spiritual world, and the existence of life forms or energy beings of a mostly unexplainable composition (i.e., angels) that watch me and everyone else all of the time from a dimension or dimensions to which I had no physical access. Suddenly, I wasn't so powerful, or important. With a rifle of my construction I could reach across 400, 500, even 600 yards to take a life. If I pushed my ability, I could reach across a half mile. I could lift hundreds of pounds, could push full-size pickups around. I could glance at the lean of a 200 year old tree, then fall that tree in

three or four minutes. But what I could do was nothing compared to what angels could do, let alone to what Christ had done when He spoke the creation into existence.

The natural inclination of human males, apparently produced by testosterone, is too perceive themselves as invincible. Intellectually, the male might well know that is not the case, but at a hormonal level, we are young poultry cocks, ready to whip the world if it gets in our way. Thus, being drawn into religious fellowship initiated a war between the laws of God and the lawlessness of the male's natural inclinations. This war must be won by the mind, with spiritual maturity developing through fighting this war. The new self, when the person is born of Spirit, is a son of God that is neither male nor female, and this new self dwells in the same body of flesh as dwells the crucified old man until this old man weakens and loses his or her breath. A newly called disciple is analogous to a circumcised Israelite and his infant son living in a fabric tent in the Wilderness of Sin. This circumcised Israelite will not, with the exception of a Joshua and a Caleb, enter God's rest because of unbelief that became disobedience when he tried to enter God's rest on the following day (*cf.* Num 14:11, 35, 40–41; Ps 95:10–11; Heb 3:19 & 4:6). The disciple's crucified old self will not enter God's rest, but will die in a wilderness of sin because of unbelief that becomes disobedience. During the seven endtime years of tribulation, spiritually circumcised disciples will spiritually die because of unbelief that becomes disobedience when they try to enter God's rest on the following day. The weekly Sabbath is a type or a diminutive form of God's rest (Heb 4:9). Christ Jesus' millennial reign is a type or sample of glorification, the reality of God's rest. There remains for the sons of God the keeping of the type until arriving at the reality—humanity can no more escape living through Christ's millennial reign than can an Israelite escape keeping the weekly Sabbath, for the Sabbath becomes an inclusionary marker for who is known of God. The law of God written on hearts and minds under the spiritual second covenant includes all Ten Commandments, not most of them. Again, the commandment against murder goes from being what the hand does to what the mind thinks (hatred) and the heart feels (anger). The commandment against adultery goes from being what the body does (the sexual act) to being what the mind thinks and the heart desires (i.e., lust — it's not okay to look but not touch). The Sabbath commandment goes from what the hand does (work) to being what the mind thinks and the heart desires on the seventh day. The Sabbath commandment cannot be spiritualized away by saying, *I think about God every day*, nor does it apply to another day. All a disciple can do is break this commandment that is now written on the heart and put into the mind, or the disciple can keep it. Until the Son of Man is revealed (Luke 17:26–30), breaking the commandment is under the covering of Grace if the disciple is not a hypocrite, knowing to keep the commandment but choosing not to for reasons of convenience. But when disciples as the Body of the Son of Man are revealed or uncovered, breaking the commandment will be rebellion against God and will result in God sending a great delusion over disciples so that these disciples cannot repent. These disciples will then spiritually die while physically remaining alive for a while.

The natural mind is hostile to God, and will not, indeed cannot keep the commandments, especially the Sabbath as evidenced by all of those things that are done on the Sabbath, the busiest shopping day of the week. For me, keeping the Sabbath meant no more hunting on opening day of deer season. I had that year, 1972, with a rifle of my

construction killed a large mule deer buck opening day as well as having had a chance at a possible record-book buck. I was already making plans for the following (1973) hunting season, but the Feast of Tabernacles would occur during the same week as Oregon's shortened mule deer season. For me, keeping the Sabbath changed how I lived. Keeping the Sabbath required that I put God first in everything I did. Eventually, it meant putting God first in everything I thought. The strength of the first of the great commandments, to love God with all your heart and with all your mind, lies in keeping the Sabbath in a culture that is organized around celebration of another day. The world is the product of the natural mind, which is not really *natural*, but has been acquired from the broadcast of the prince of the power of the air. Again, human nature as presently perceived is the nature of the Adversary. The *naturalness* of humanity's nature will change once Satan is cast from heaven and is no longer able to broadcast disobedience as the prince of the power of the air. My nature changed—not so suddenly that I was aware of the change, but after two years, I could clearly perceive that my thoughts were not what they had been. Three decades later, 2002, the crucified old man finally died, I think. In the fall of 2004, I knew he had died, for that mental thorn was extracted.

Returning to 1972, the older minister who had broken the rifle stock over the little buck's head brought me the gun on their second visit. Both ministers promised to return in another month. And I set about, as best I could, to prove the Bible true or false. What I found in that month was what others had found before me: the Bible held up to every test I imposed upon it. I also found, as I had before, that it didn't say what the majority of Christians says it does. I wasn't of their reader community. I was of a very small community then identified as part of the cultic fringe to the mainstream Christian movement. The fact that I read the text like few other Christians did wasn't particularly troubling. Nor is it troubling that I now read the text as even fewer "Christians" do.

An Elijah to come (Mal 4:5) would not have to restore all things if all things were as they ought to be. The textual evidence is that before the great day of the Lord begins, the day on which the arrogant and the evildoer will burn as stubble, this Elijah to come, the glorified Christ Jesus, will restore what has been lost while Israel was in mental bondage to the king of Babylon. John the Baptist, about whom Jesus said no greater man was born of woman, was the physical shadow of the Elijah to come, who will be Christ Jesus working through, principally, the two witnesses during the first half of the seven endtime years. Christ Jesus will restore all things that have been lost by Christianity. Just as the physically circumcised nation lost the things of God while in Egyptian bondage, the spiritually circumcised nation has lost the things of God while in Babylon. And just as the physical nation wanted to return to Egypt, so will the spiritual nation want to return to sin or lawlessness, with rejection of the Sabbath after being liberated from bondage to sin as the nation's defining transgression. The physical nation that left Egypt was rejected because of unbelief that became disobedience when it attempted to enter God's rest on the following day. The spiritually circumcised nation that rebels when the lawless one is revealed (2 Thess 2:3–12) and comes under a great delusion that will prevent it from repenting will attempt to enter God's rest on the following day.

If an Elijah to come will have to restore all things, then Christendom today has it wrong, what I was disillusioned to learn a dozen years before I was drafted into the then dead and still dead Body of Christ.

In 2002, on Thursday of the second full week in January, about 10:12 CST, as I was pulling into the parking lot at Southeastern Illinois College where I was teaching, I heard, with mind or ears I cannot say, the distinct and forceful words, “It’s time to reread prophecy.” What I heard seemed an alien presence in my mind. The words were ones I could not put out of my mind. After teaching two scheduled sections of Composition, I returned home, and for really the first time since being “drafted” in 1972, I started writing about “religious” subject matter. Before the day ended, I realized that what I had been taught for nearly thirty years was almost as far from what the Bible disclosed as are the lawless teachings of the visible Church.

For five years now, I have been on a journey of discovery, not because I wanted to make this journey but rather because I was drafted for the task. The evidence of this claim will be in what’s written, and what’s written will be radical and unlike anything anyone else has said. It cannot be otherwise. For if it were otherwise then there would have been no need to draft another to regurgitate what others have already said.

Bruce Bawer doesn’t understand how much his mind will change when he is born of Spirit; nor can anyone else. I know I could not have anticipated how much my mine changed. And even after being twice drafted, I would not have anticipated the ten days in September 2004 when those things buried in the dark recesses of my mind—things that were not of God—were extracted in a manner that can only be described as the stripping away of filthy garments ... as a youth, I was in a few fights. As an adult I have been in tense situations. I know the feel of adrenaline, and the feel of adrenaline dissipating when physical action hasn’t occurred. For those ten days in September, my body responded to what was happening as if I were about to engage in a fight. Adrenaline ran. But nothing physical occurred or was even likely to occur. And my muscles trembled, severely at times, because of the absence of physical activity—the fight was entirely within my mind and in a dimension I could not consciously enter. But afterwards, the change was profound and I finally understood what it meant to be circumcised of heart and mind. It is only after making the journey from spiritual Babylon to heavenly Jerusalem that a person can turn around and see how far he or she has come. Today, Babylon lies so far on the other side of Sabbath observance that even its illusions appear dusty and lifeless, tired and shallow, uninteresting.

I’ve fished some of the best waters this world has to offer. I held the one-kilo, fly-caught tippet world record for Dolly Varden char for a while. I have hunted deer, elk, moose in Oregon, Idaho, Alaska. In that lawless period of my early twenties, I once took sixteen bucks in fourteen days with a muzzleloading rifle of my construction, all in fair-chase conditions if the tags would have been mine. But the thrill of the hunt is short-lived. There is nothing this world offers that measures up to its promise. The best this world has to offer is not good enough, but is a hollow filling of a deeper yearning. And I would have kept on dancing, as the song goes, if God had not intervened by drafting me to do a job that visible Christendom will oppose, for who wants to be told that the person’s “born again” experience is not genuine? Who wants to be told that if the person were truly born of Spirit, the person would not be filled with rage when told that the person’s lawlessness will send the person into the lake of fire; the person would, instead, repent of his or her transgressions of the commandments.

The prince of this world stole the lifeless Body of Christ late in the 1<sup>st</sup>-Century CE, when Christianity was a radical sect of Judaism. Genuine Christianity remains a radical sect of Judaism.

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