

Commentary—From the Margins

A Work to Do

I don't remember for sure what year it was ... I think it was January 1990. An acquaintance and I had talked about skiing in Europe, and in particular that area of the Bavarian Alps that includes parts of Germany and Austria, close to Italy. We departed on New Year's Day, and while we visited many places including several world class ski resorts, we also dipped down into Italy where we visited the Vatican including the Sistine Chapel, and then on to some of the historic ruins in and around Rome. I only want to talk about one small part of that trip, but it was the only part that I truly remember — and that was the side trip I made to the Mamertinum prison ... (Ben Kizer. *Gifts of the Journey*. 2nd Edition, Private printing:2015. p 314)

My brother Ben retired from the U.S. Forest Service about a decade ago, and has since written of his retirement being *a one-way trip into insignificance*, a phrase he borrowed but has found appropriate ... for his son Jabe, granddaughter and grandson, he undertook to write a memoir in which he both defines himself and gives an account of what he did with his life—and it is actually quite a bit. However, the time he spent in the Mamertinum prison seems to be of disproportional importance:

The Mamertinum prison was the place where Paul was held prisoner in his final days. In Paul's day it was no more than an underground cistern that had been turned into a prison with only one small hole in the top to lower the prisoners down into it. Today, it has a stairway on each end, an altar with a sign commemorating the imprisonment of both Peter and Paul (not at the same time), and an upside down cross; turned upside down because of the tradition that Peter was crucified that way. Above it is the church of San Giuseppe dei Falegnami. (*Gifts*. Chap 7, p 314)

As I wrote in yesterday's Commentary, the only evidence that Paul was a prisoner in Rome comes from the Book of Acts, a Second Sophist novel, and the Pastoral Epistles that, despite their claim of Paul being their author, use language from a half-century after Paul's ministry ended. And with there being no canonization of Scripture until centuries after Sabbatarian disciples were squeezed into the shadows, hunted down, and utterly marginalized if not liquidated, the actual history of the Christian Movement in the middle and late 1st-Century and early 2nd-Century CE cannot be retrieved from historical documents. And though several doctoral dissertations have been written about "Church history" in the 1st-Century, what has been discovered is what's recorded in Paul's epistles: "For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work" (2 Thess 2:7 *ESV*),

with the heart of this mystery of lawlessness being worship of God on the day when Jesus, as the reality of the Wave Sheaf Offering, ascended to heaven.

Paul might well have been imprisoned near the old Roman forum. Certainly the Roman Church has capitalized on the Acts' narrative as Arab property owners in Jerusalem have capitalized on Luke's account of Jesus' birth. But pilgrimages shouldn't be a part of Christian worship. Doing what is right; doing good should be the core of the Christian experience; of the Christian's life—

How does the Sabbatarian Christian do good when he or she is marginalized and forced onto the fringes of society? How does the lone Sabbatarian, isolated from relatives by his or her Sabbath observance, isolated from the community in which the Sabbatarian dwells by public events being only scheduled on the Sabbath (*because that is when everyone has the day off*), do good on the Sabbath? Is the Sabbatarian's isolation doing anyone "good"? Certainly, the Sabbatarian's isolation is a witness against his or her allegedly Christian neighbors. But too many Sabbatarian Christians have succumbed to the isolation and have either returned to some form of mainline Christendom, or (equally bad) joined themselves to the heretical Sacred Names Movement for the fellowship of just having someone with whom to worship on the Sabbath.

Keeping the Sabbath in a world geared to commence on the one day when most everyone is off work is hard on the psyche ... if Paul was held a prisoner in the Mamertinum cistern, would he have been more greatly imprisoned than a Sabbatarian convert in, say, the State of Illinois' penal system?

Ben writes,

[A]s I walked down the stairs into that old cistern, the cold stone walls spoke a deafening silence. Less than 10 feet tall and barely 20 feet across near what is now the back wall was the stone pillar where Paul was chained. I couldn't even image how he felt. The seen world was passing him by as his life neared the end in a cold, dark, damp place. I couldn't help but think that he was probably wondering if he had made any difference or even if he was in God's will. His circumstances were contrary to past hopes, not meeting the expectations of others, and I'm sure different [from] what he had envisioned. I remember thinking that he was still human and had all the same feelings and emotions that I had. ... He was cold (he had asked Timothy to bring him his cloak), he obviously felt disapproval (he pleaded with others not to be ashamed of his state), he felt rejection (he had said "all of Asia has forsaken me"), and his message seemed to have no relevance. ... Paul, that giant of faith, taught by God himself, surely must have wondered if anything he had done was relevant. (*Gifts*. p 315)

The problem even Jesus on the stake discovered is that every Christian has to die alone: "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, 'May God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' (Matt 27: 46 *ESV*).

Because Matthew's Gospel is about the glorified Jesus dwelling inside of every son of God genuinely born of spirit, every disciple will undergo this moment of loneliness and will have to intellectually overcome the isolation and sense of abandonment that comes with God letting the person die, written with a caveat: the Christian who lives into the Endurance in Jesus [the last 1260 days of the seven endtime years] may well not die

physically, but be changed in the twinkling of an eye from dwelling in a fleshly body to dwelling in a glorified body of primal energy.

What is interesting about Matthew's Jesus' last words on the cross is what's not said: the quotation is from Psalm 22:1*ESV*,

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? [physical]

Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?
[spiritual]

Matthew's Jesus only cites the physical position of David's thought-couplet. He doesn't cite the spiritual portion; for Jesus knows He is already saved. He has known this ever since the spirit of the Father [*pneuma Theou*] bodily entered into Him in the form of a dove.

Where Christians have problems, especially Sabbatarian Christians, is that they do not know if they truly have the spirit of God; they do not know if they have been born of spirit; they do not know if they have received a second breath of life. Many think they have been born of spirit; yet they continue as functioning parts of this present world. They worship on the day after the Sabbath. They keep Christmas and Easter. They are good people, doing good things, but they will, when facing martyrdom, continue into David's squared thought-couplet:

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?

O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer,

and by night, but I find no rest. (Ps 22:1-2 indented lines are spiritual portions of couplets *ESV*)

God will not seem to answer their prayers ... why should He? They have steadfastly resisted obeying Him even though they know what He expects from them. My brother Ben knows to keep the Sabbath, but was turned off from Sabbath observance by being compelled to worship what he didn't understand:

Lyle [Squier] was a Seven Day Adventist, and before long we were attending church with him. I felt the tug of the Spirit early, but it always seemed as though something took the joy out of "Sabbath School." It wasn't long before I dreaded Saturday morning. Saturday morning always meant getting dressed up, going into town, and having to be polite at social gatherings and potlucks after church. We couldn't eat pork, catfish (which we caught at Devils Lake) or anything else that was considered unclean according to biblical law. Other than hating Saturday morning, things were going good ... or so it seemed. (*Gifts*. Chap 1. p 8)

His juxtaposition of "catfish" and "Devils Lake" didn't escape my attention, but his complaint is really against Christ Jesus and in particular, how John Mark remembered what the Apostle Peter taught; for Mark writes,

And He called the people to Him again and said to them, "Hear me, all of you, and understand. There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him." And when He had entered the house and left the people, His disciples asked Him about the parable. And He said to them, "Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, since it enters not his heart but his stomach and is expelled? ...

And He said, “What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these things come from within, and they defile a person.” (Mark 7:14–23 *ESV*)

In this passage, used by Christians everywhere to justify eating common meats [foods], Mark has his Jesus name “coveting” as an evil thought that defiles the person ... if a person desires to be “common” and not “holy” as the Lord is holy, how would the person go about doing that—and then demonstrating to others that he or she is of *common humanity* and not of God? Would the person not retrace his or her steps back to Noah, thereby getting behind Abraham and all that Abraham represents? That would seem logical; for to Noah, the Lord said, “Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you green plants, I give you everything” (Gen 9:3 *ESV*).

There it is: for *common humanity*, everything that lives is food. Nothing is unclean. Nothing that enters the stomach can defile the flesh although a great many Sabbatarian Christians will dispute that premise ... the premise is true; hence Seventh Day Adventists do not eat unclean [*common*] meats for health reasons. But that is not why the Lord told Israel to avoid *common* meats:

You shall not eat anything detestable.... For I am the Lord your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. ... For I am the Lord who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy. (Lev 11:43–45 *ESV*)

Now, a few questions need asked: did God bring you, a Christian, up out of Egypt? I didn't think so. So why would you not today be part of *common humanity*? Statistically, there is no difference between Christian divorce rates and the divorces rates of the general public. There is no difference between the Christian crime rate and the crime rate of the general public although there is some difference in the crimes committed ... by any standard a Christian wants to employ, greater Christianity continues as a facet of *common humanity*. But this should not be.

Before going farther from an important distinction: the inner self of a person [the spiritual son of God] cannot be defiled by any physical thing, including the weakness of the flesh. However, this inner self can be defiled by coveting. Therefore, the inner self that covets *commonality* is defiled—and why would a Christian want to eat a pork chop? The actual eating of the pork chop doesn't defile, but the wanting to eat a “common meat” will defile the son of God. Thus, if the Christian never covets a pork chop, it isn't likely that the Christian will ever eat a pork chop. Unclean meats aren't an issue.

Peter was, in the addendum chapter to John's Gospel, called by Jesus to feed spiritual lambs, newly born-of-spirit Christian disciples.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to His great mercy, He has caused us to be born again [*anagennesis*] to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, as was necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your

faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen Him, you love Him. Though you do not now see Him, you believe in Him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls. ... Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. *As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but **as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”*** And if you call on Him as Father who judges impartially according to each one’s deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. (1 Pet 1:3–9, 13–19 emphasis and double emphasis added *ESV*)

A long citation, but important in its context; for Christians—purchased by the blood of Christ from the pool of *common humanity*—are to be holy as God is holy. Christians are not to remain like their neighbors and relatives, but are to be different.

If Christians are truly born of spirit [born again, or *again born--’anagennesas*], they cannot rejoin the pool that is *common humanity* ... Christ Jesus will not permit them to do so; for He, Himself, was not fathered by Adam and was never “common” as a fleshly human person. And if He resides inside the person, the person will be “changed” by His presence. In a literal sense, the person will not remain as the person was: no inner change, no spiritual birth, no indwelling of the spirit of God. This person can claim to be a born again Christian, but it isn’t a warm fuzzy feeling in a person’s heart that represents being born-again. It isn’t an altar call, or a pledge to give your life to God. It is, put bluntly, no longer desiring to pinch the head off the person who has truly wronged you. It is coming to grips with yourself and being able to shed your old self as if sloughing off dead skin.

In a line I haven’t written for years, if Christians are to be the salt of the earth, then there cannot be many of them; for salt doesn’t make a main dish at a potluck. Rather a sprinkle of salt enhances the flavors of the main dish. And that is all the genuine Christians that there can ever be until dominion over the single kingdom of this world is taken from the Adversary and given to the Son of Man halfway through seven endtime years of tribulation.

On this note about the necessary scarcity of genuine sons of God, there are a couple of points that need to be hammered home: if you, as a Sabbatarian Christian, attempt to force unconverted children—little persons not born of spirit and who by their age and maturity will not be born of spirit for another decade or more—to attend Sabbath services, you will be guilty of preventing them from coming to Christ Jesus. You will do significant damage to spirits of these children, and almost always [verifiable by the history of the Sabbatarian Church] you will turn your children away from God and force them back into the pool of *common humanity*.

That is what happened to my brother; actually, to both brothers (Ben and Ken) and to one sister, as well as to all three of my daughters. That is also what happened to and with those who gained control of the governance of the former Worldwide Church of God and when having gained control, preceded to systematically dismantle and destroy the organization as an act of vengeance against having been forced to attend Sabbath services when they wanted to be with their friends—

In forcing children to attend Christian Sabbath services, parents do unintended spiritual damage to their sons and daughters. This doesn't mean that children are to be left at home. This means that "forcing" isn't the way to get children to attend Sabbath services. This means that parents need to address the Adversary's broadcast of peer pressure and ideological conformity, and somehow sell their children on why being "special" is important in a world of ordinariness.

What Ben writes is how he honestly felt and still feels today. However, his organizational abilities and experiences would be assets Christ could use if that childhood damage could be overcome—and it can be overcome by the Father drafting him as He drafted me into the Body back in 1972. Except, because my brother already believes he is where he belongs (or near where he belongs), he isn't willing to entertain striving to be holy as God is holy, which means separating himself from *common humanity*. Thus, as with a great many talented and basically good Christians, he will have to experience the ravages of greater Christendom's liberation from indwelling sin and death through being filled with spirit, their lives spared at the price of all uncovered (by the blood of Christ) firstborns physically dying on a second Passover day near in time. For Ben, that means wife, son, and granddaughter unless he/they decide to believe Christ and take the Passover sacraments of bread and wine on the dark portion of the 14th day of the first month of the sacred calendar.

Today, it is difficult to convince a child schooled in the public education system that the world was created in six days, and that Adam was the first man, living approximately six thousand years ago. Children just aren't that gullible. Nor should they be ... back up to the 7th-Century BCE, and see what is recorded in the books of the Kings of Israel:

Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem.... In the eighteenth year of King Josiah [he is approximately 25 years old; the prophet Jeremiah is about four years younger], the king sent Shaphan ... the secretary to the house of the Lord, saying, "Go up to Hilkiyah the high priest, that he may count the money that has been brought into the house of Lord, which the keepers of threshold have collected from the people. And let it be given into the hand of the workmen who have oversight of the house of the Lord, and let them give it to the workman who are at the house of the Lord, repairing the house ... and let them use it for buying timber and quarried stone to repair the house. ... And Hilkiyah the high priest said to Shaphan the secretary, "I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the Lord." And Hilkiyah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it. And Shaphan the secretary came to the king, and reported to the king ... Shaphan the secretary told the king, "Hilkiyah the priest has given me a book." And Shaphan read it before the king. When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his clothes. (2 Kings 22:1, 3–11 *ESV*)

Josiah did more than just tear his clothes: he went on a crusade—

Then the king sent, and all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem were gathered to him. And the king went up to the house of the Lord and with him all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the priests and the prophets, all the people, both small and great. And he read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant that had been found in the house of the Lord. And the king stood by the pillar and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people joined in the covenant. (2 Kings 23:1–3 *ESV*)

But apparently the people had their fingers crossed, for nothing good came from this covenant after Josiah died fighting a needless battle. However, before Josiah recklessly engaged Pharaoh Neco, he journeyed into Assyrian territory to destroy the altar at Bethel, which would seem an unnecessary act if he were not in search of another copy of the Book of the Law ... the Book of the Law would have been a scroll, lost for an undetermined period in the temple—about keeping the Passover, scribes record, “And the king commanded all the people, ‘Keep the Passover to the Lord your God, as it is written in this Book of the Covenant.’ For no such Passover had been kept since the days of the judges who judged Israel” (2 Kings 23:21-22). So it is possible that this Book of the Covenant had been lost for centuries; certainly it had been lost for decades. And with any scroll not in a protected state, the outer wraps would have been damaged and rendered unreadable. Therefore, it is probable that Josiah went to Bethel to find a copy of Genesis. And whatever Josiah found would have been in the 9th-Century dialect of the northern kingdom of Samaria, what scholars work-with today. Hence, the textual problems found in the Hagar story [Genesis chaps 16 & 21] would seem to come from the forced merger of the copy of the Book of the Covenant found in the dilapidated temple at Jerusalem and whatever Josiah found at Bethel.

This now addresses issues found in the Adam and Eve narrative ... as a prophetic parable, the Adam and Eve narrative is absolutely true, with Christ Jesus being the last Adam and with Eve representing the Christian Church. The three sons born to Eve are analogous to the three divisions that will be seen among Christians during the seven endtime years of tribulation, with all of greater Christendom filled with spirit at the Second Passover, but with this “all” dividing itself into a spiritual Cain and a spiritual Abel during the 1260 days of the Affliction, that period when the Adversary remains the prince of this world. Then following dominion being taken from the Adversary and given to the Son of Man, the world—consisting of a third part of the little ones (from Zech 13:9)—will be baptized in spirit, thereby they will be filled-with and empowered by the spirit of God and they will come under the good news proclaimed by *Philadelphia*: “All who endure to the end shall be saved” (Matt 24:13 *ESV*).

This third part of the little ones will form spiritual *Seth*, who will be accepted by simply enduring in faith and belief until Christ Jesus returns; enduring for the 1260 days of the Endurance of Jesus.

How much of the Book of the Covenant was lost when this book went missing in the Jerusalem temple will never be known. Certainly scribes in the Deportation wouldn't want to admit to having lost the Book of the Covenant through Judaism's neglect of the Law. So what endtime Christians have as sacred texts have interpretative problems that

might not have been present prior to the era of the Judges. Certainly scribes during the Deportation redacted the writings of Moses, seriously altering the textual representation of the Lord—and that is something Christians will have to deal-with as they can.

Sabbatarian Christians, Sabbath-observing Jews—both face a common enemy, the Adversary, who does and will do whatever he can to keep them inside the pool representing the *commonness* of his serfs. He has deceived the whole world, and to reinforce his deception, he has convinced even Christians to embrace their *commonness*. He would compel Sabbath-keepers to practice tolerance or even acceptance of homosexual relationships. He already has destroyed many Christian families through readily available pornography. But his greatest challenge is to keep Sabbatarian Christians mired in the muck of his cesspool of *commonness* when they have truly been born of spirit. That he cannot do although he can make a mess of the Sabbatarian's life.

My brother Ben will not believe what I have to say. He has heard too many people claim to be called by God to a work. That might well be true. But let it here be said, if I am correct that a Second Passover liberation of Israel will occur, I will feel great sadness in knowing how ineffective I was in delivering a message that should have scared all Christians into taking the Passover sacraments on the Passover.

The message isn't and won't be the problem. The work that went along with the delivery of the message will not have attracted enough support to be more than an Internet whisper. The work will be the weak link.

Ben talks about a District Ranger telling him that if he quit the Forest Service, he would be missed like the hole left in a bucket of water when he pulled his hand from the bucket. That is how much any of us will be missed when we quit a work. So I'm not quitting.

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