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### Newsbreak: SDA Theologians Meet With Non-Adventist Sabbathkeepers

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## SDA Theologians Meet With Non-Adventist Sabbathkeepers

*In December Adventist theologian Samuele Bacchiocchi got to share the Adventist perspective of the Sabbath with 400 non-Adventist Sabbathkeepers in an unusual conference on the Sabbath. Many of the participants are former members of the Worldwide Church of God, which recently dropped many of its foundational beliefs, including the Seventh-day Sabbath and tithing. Dr. Bacchiocchi was a principal speaker at the conference, giving five lectures. He sent us this report.*

Some 400 church administrators, professors, pastors, and lay members representing 17 different Sabbathkeeping denominations and organizations attended the second "Jubilee 95, Friends of the Sabbath Convention," held in San Antonio, Texas, December 23-25. The first convention of its kind was held at Dana Point, California, on May 28, 29.

The three-day convention was organized by Friends of the Sabbath, a group of Christians that left the Worldwide Church of God (WCG) in 1995 when their pastor general (president), Joseph Tkach, Sr., introduced doctrinal changes to bring the church more in line with the Protestant mainstream.

The changes included dropping the Sabbath, observance of the annual feasts, and the distinction between clean and unclean meats. The WCG has declared the practices to be part of the old covenant and no longer obligatory for its members. As a result, nearly 50,000 members and 500 pastors have left the denomination.

The Friends of the Sabbath organization was formed, not to start a new church, but to foster a deeper understanding and experience of the Sabbath at a time when this belief has come under fire. The organizers invited scholars and leaders of different Sabbathkeeping denominations to present papers on various theological, historical, and practical aspects of the Sabbath and annual feasts.

Sabbathkeeping churches and organizations represented included the United Church of God, the Global Church of God, the Church of God Seventh-day, the Church of God International, the Friends of the Brethren, the Philadelphian Church of God, the Association for Christian Development, the Bible Sabbath Association, and the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Our church was represented by George Reid, director of the Biblical Research Institute based at the General Conference, and me. Reid brought greetings and encouragement from the General Conference, and I delivered five lectures, four on the Sabbath and one on the spring festivals of ancient Israel.

*By Samuele Bacchiocchi, professor of theology and church history at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.*

The interest, reception, and response of the participants was wonderful. They attended the meetings, which ran from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., with just an hour break for lunch. The reason for such keen interest was that for many of the participants the Sabbath has become a testing truth, in some cases splitting homes down the middle, with one spouse wishing to remain faithful to the Sabbath and the other wanting to abandon it.

A man told me: "After observing the Sabbath for the past 30 years, I would never have imagined that I would fly across the country and pay a \$40 registration fee to attend a convention to learn more about the Sabbath. But after all the questions that have been raised against the Sabbath, I need to know more about it."

Sometimes it takes a crisis to lead people to seek a fuller understanding of their beliefs. The current crisis that has split the Worldwide Church of God, causing 50,000 members (nearly half the members) to leave the church because they wish to retain their commitment to the principle and practice of Sabbathkeeping, provides an unprecedented opportunity for Seventh-day Adventists to welcome those who are seeking for a new church. Many of them are dropping in on Sabbath morning to check us out.

### WORLD CHURCH

#### Prison Outreach: Priority One in Cayman Islands.

Members in the Cayman Islands have made prison evangelism a major priority,

reports Jeff K. Thompson, Cayman Islands Mission president.

Under the ministry of Herbert Nugent, a member in Grand Cayman, 24 inmates were baptized in the



Through the efforts of Herbert Nugent (kneeling, second from left) and other church members, prison inmates (behind) accepted Jesus Christ.