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RELIGION

Savior's Day
Ron Schwartz
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Two Stars (out of Five)

Imagine having a front row seat to witness the forces of Satan and the forces of Christ battle it out in a cataclysmic battle for world supremacy. Imagine furthermore that you're a member of the victorious forces and that you've survived to tell your life-changing story to the world.

Paul Barnes a pastor in a small Arkansas town gets such a chance in Ron Schwartz's didactic and formulaic novel *Savior's Day*. Taking a page from Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* and Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life* Schwartz has Pastor Barnes swept off by an angel who conducts the good minister on a tour of the heavenly realm and its warring inhabitants. Barnes also gets a glimpse of the struggles between Satan and God for the souls of humanity here on earth as well as a glance of the coming apocalyptic battle between Christ and Satan.

Barnes' ministering angel transports him to the beginning of time and the cosmos when humanity was but a twinkle in God's cosmic eye. He witnesses Lucifer's stubborn and arrogant spirit for even before the creation of the earth and humankind Lucifer challenges God's power: "Yes I refuse servitude to You but so would they if it were not for Your intimidation. Prove that I am wrong if you can!" Of course God responds by proposing a test of his servants: let Satan loose in the world and give humans an opportunity to choose to follow either God and goodness or Lucifer and evil. All subsequent events—the fall of Adam Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac the trials of Job the life ministry and death of Jesus—are simply chapters in this eternal trial.

Schwartz's chapters are episodic allowing various events in this cosmic scheme to unfold in a dizzyingly staccato fashion. After Adam and Eve succumb to temptation the angel points out the fabric of the world in words that become the theme of the novel. "The servants of the Almighty stumble through their lives never understanding the purpose for their existence…This present dispensation is all about the judgment of Satan. The Lord Almighty created the earth and put man here as a result of Satan's accusation…Mankind must make a choice without proof of the Almighty's existence…and follow after His ways without ever having seen Him prove Satan wrong."

During the latter half of the novel Barnes gets a front row seat at the Great Tribulation—when Satan rules the world for one thousand years before Christ's return—and attributes everything from communism to rock music to Satan and his Antichrists. This part of the novel typically and incorrectly reads apocalyptic literature as prophecy so that symbols in Revelation must correspond to some event or object in the modern world.

Although it is simplistic and moralistic Schwartz's novel certainly will appeal to readers of the *Left Behind* series who crave more information about the end times and God's victory over Satan.

Henry L. Carrigan