

Do We Need The Sabbath?

BY

REV. ROBERT HILL, D. D.

TYLER, TEXAS



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Tyler, Texas



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FOREWORD

The last General Assembly elected me chairman of the Permanent Committee on The Sabbath and Family Religion. An extensive correspondence through the year in the discharge of the duties of that office has brought to my notice that there is need for some pamphlets bearing upon the subjects, the Sabbath particularly. Our Committee has several very good ones on Family Religion, although more, I am sure could be used to advantage. But there is nothing on the Sabbath later than the pamphlet issued by the Assembly in 1895, twenty years ago.

This present paper is issued in the hope that it may be found suggestive. And may go some way toward placing our Church in the front rank of those who are earnestly striving to "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy."

R. H.

Do We Need The Sabbath?

To Israel God says, "Moreover also I gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between Me and them that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them." Ezek. 20:12. The Divine appointment of the Sabbath is a sign of God's friendly interest in man. It is impossible to think of any reason for the existence of the Sabbath apart from the most beneficial and uplifting considerations for the welfare of those in whose behalf it was given. No enemy of man would ever have bestowed upon him so rich and gracious an institution. He Who ordained the Sabbath was well-disposed toward the toiler.

The faithful observance of the Sabbath is a sign that man is well-disposed toward God. It is a sign that man prizes that serenity of spirit and that quietness of conscience which attend the faithful discharge of his duty toward his Creator more than the material gain which might come to him through disregard of the Divine Will.

The neglect of the Sabbath is a sign that the will of God has been thrown aside; that selfishness, worldliness, and disregard of the rights of others have crowded out all high ideals of conduct; that the worship of Jehovah has been forced to abdicate in favor of the worship of the calf; and that national, religious, and social disaster are on the way.

The claims of the Sabbath upon the most earnest consideration of men are enforced by a study of the origin, object, and right observance of the day.

I. ORIGIN.

The Sabbath is of Divine origin. "And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it." Gen. 2:2, 3. The Sabbath is linked with Paradise. The Sabbath and the family are the only things which survived the wreck when sin carried down into unutterable disaster the order, the harmony, and the purity of Eden. Between the Paradise that was and the Paradise that is yet to be, the Sabbath and the Christian Family are God's appointed bonds of union; two, and yet one in spirit and mutual helpfulness. They are spiritual Siamese twins. They cannot live apart. Dishonor to either is destruction to the other.

Man was made on the evening of the sixth day. His first complete earthly day was the Sabbath. Man began his history with a day, not of toil, but of communion with God whose representative and masterpiece he was. This was his first perfect Sabbath, and it is his last until the dawning of that perfect and eternal Sabbath toward which the longing eyes and yearning hearts of earth's toiling and suffering multitudes are turned in hope. "There remaineth a keeping of the Sabbath for the people of God." Heb. 4:9.

It is not, therefore a Jewish ordinance. The Fourth Commandment did not introduce the Sabbath. Before the Children of Israel reached Sinai, while they were in the Wilderness of Sin the manna was given and they were strictly enjoined to gather twice as much on the sixth day, for none would be given on the Sabbath. And on the sixth day Moses addressed the people saying: "Tomorrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord." Ex. 16:23. The

Sabbath had been known and observed for twenty-five hundred years when the law was given on Sinai. Hence the Fourth Commandment begins with the word "Remember," as calling attention to something already existing; and also as impressing its future observance.

Neither can the Sabbath be traced to any human origin whatever. Its claims are so contrary to all the selfish heart desires; its spirit is so transcendent; its obligations so far-reaching, and so constantly in opposition to man's most cherished plans and deeply laid schemes, that it bears upon its face the stamp of its celestial origin.

II. OBJECT.

The object of the Sabbath is two-fold—rest and worship; and each of these has to sustain it, arguments of the most satisfying kind. Rest is supported by four arguments.

1. ECONOMIC.

Does man need a regular, periodic rest day in every seven? Let us go back to Eden. There, in the beginning, we are told, "And on the seventh day God.....rested.....from all His work." Gen. 2: 2, 3.

Why did God rest? Was He weary with His exertions? Had the work of the six days proven so arduous as to drain the Infinite of all strength and make it necessary for Him to recuperate before undertaking the providential control of the world He had just made? "Hast thou not heard that the Everlasting God, the Creator, fainteth not, neither is weary?" Why then did He rest? Why does it not say simply that God ceased from His labors? The answer is to be found in the well-known fact that God teaches both by example and precept. In the

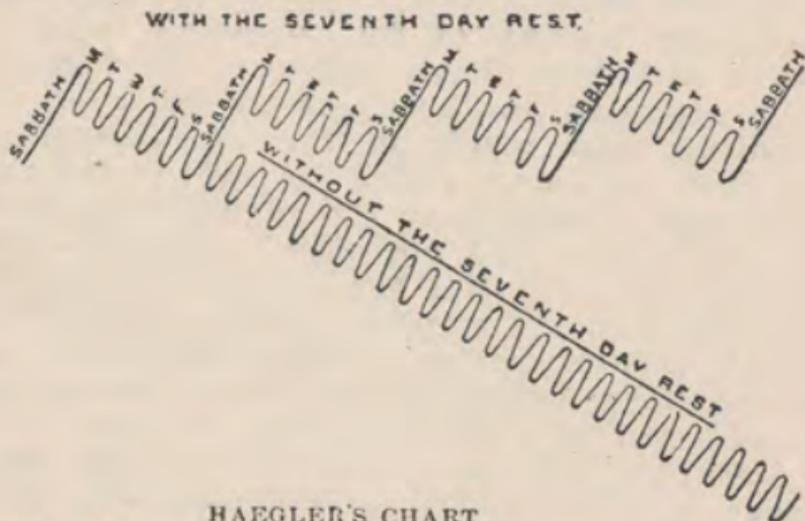
early days of the race very few laws, and these of the simplest kind, were given. It was not until Sinai that anything like a complete code was promulgated. And yet the Sabbath had been observed in all the intervening centuries. God rested, not because He was weary, but to teach man that six days of work were to be followed by one day of rest. And what could more solemnly impress this lesson than the example of God Himself? God made man so that he would demand one-seventh of his time for rest or pay the penalty both in the quality and quantity of the work he would do. So Lord Macaulay says, "While industry is suspended, while the plough rests in the furrow, while the exchange is silent, while no smoke ascends from the factory, a process is going on quite as important to the wealth of nations as any that is performed on busier days. Man, the machine of machines, compared with which all the contrivances of the Watts and Arkwrights are worthless, is repairing, and winding up; so that he returns to his labor on Monday with clearer intellect, with livelier spirits, with renewed bodily vigor."

Sir Robert Peel declares, "I never knew a man to escape failure in either body or mind who worked seven days in the week." Simply in the interest of economic efficiency the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad, several years ago made a ruling in connection with the running of trains which released six thousand men from Sunday labor. And the late Major Thomas, for many years president of the Nashville, Chattanooga and St. Louis Railway would not permit Sunday excursions on his line. Some time ago the president of the American Federation of Labor said in an address, "In my judgment it is necessary for the progress of our people, the perpetuation of our race, the

liberty of our country, the moral, material and intellectual advancement of our people, that one day of rest in seven should be the universal rule. Seven-day workers are positively poor workers, lacking the vigor, stamina, and character so necessary to the maintenance of sterling manhood and womanhood. I regard it as absolutely dangerous to all our interests and to our progress that the workers should be required to toil more than six days in the week." These sane and measured words contain a truth unassailable.

2. SCIENTIFIC.

Dr. Haegler who carefully investigated the subject from a scientific standpoint says, "As in the case of temperance, so in that of the Sabbath, it is not a Christian doctrine only but a certainty of science that the best health and the longest life cannot be attained without Sabbath rest." He illustrates the point with the following chart to wise living:



Each downward short stroke represents a day's work, which is not quite equalled by the upward restorative stroke of the night's

rest, so that one is a little weaker every morning, a little wearier every night, as the week's work goes on. In the case of a certain laborer, taken for example, the normal work overdraws his oxygen one ounce, and the normal night's rest only restores five-sixths of it. Losing one-sixth of an ounce per day, he is six-sixths of an ounce short on Sabbath morning, a whole ounce short, a whole day behind—in the same condition physically on Sabbath morning, in the same need of rest as on Monday night. He is therefore called to a whole day's rest to balance his account with nature.

If he habitually disobeys this Divine law of weekly rest he "runs down" more and more until he is as far from what he ought to be, as is shown by the chart, about which doctors do not disagree. One breathes less oxygen and uses more during ordinary work than when at rest, absorption of mind checking the respiration to the extent of 12,960 cubic inches in eight hours.

Oxygen being but another name for vital force, the bearing of the foregoing facts on health and strength are apparent. Dr. Haegler calls attention to the chemical facts of expenditure and repair in the constituents of the food, as demonstrated by Pillenkofer and Voit, who showed that the nightly rest after the day's work did not afford complete recuperation to the vital forces and was insufficient to keep the mind and body in tone, but that if this reparation is not supplemented by an occasional longer period of rest, the system is subjected to a gradual falling of pitch.

Scientists tell us that after Sunday rest, telegraph wires are better conductors on Monday. Diamonds, rubies, and sapphires look rested and refreshed after being placed away in darkness for a time. Machinery must rest. Machinery allowed to rest one day in seven,

lasts longer than if run constantly. Work animals need rest. In the days when wagon trains took the long journey across the continent, it was observed frequently that horses which were allowed to rest on Sunday, finished sooner and in better condition than those which kept to the trail every day. Nature rests through her long winter sleep and the world is the richer for it.

When William Wilberforce was in the midst of his immortal fight on behalf of the slaves in British dominions, he declared that he owed his mental vigor through the long strain to the periodic return of Sunday and attending God's house. Writing to a friend, he said, "If you do not observe the Sabbath and the Lord's house you will either kill yourself or your mind." When Mr. Gladstone was once asked to speak into a phonograph that his voice might be preserved, this is the message he left to posterity: "I owe my life and vigor, through a long and busy life, to the Sabbath day, with its blessed surcease of toil."

3. SOCIAL.

The Sabbath is a boon to the family of the working man. It is his only day with that small community which is dearest of all on earth to him. Many men must leave home for their daily work before their children arise in the morning. Often they do not get back home until they have all retired to rest. From Monday morning until Saturday night thousands of hard working men never look into the waking faces of their children. How unpardonable is any industrial system which would force such conditions to continue the whole week round. Has a wife no right to her husband's companionship? Shall a child be deprived of becoming acquainted with his own father? Must a man

be a slave to the industrial juggernaut which crushes all social instincts out of him, and so completely converts him into a machine, that he might well ask himself wherein is it any advantage to be made in the image of God?

Every man and woman who thoughtlessly or deliberately forces one single man to do unnecessary work on the Sabbath day is no friend to the laborer; is doing an injury to an innocent family; is guilty of an act of un-Christian selfishness; and is violating a fundamental law of God. Let all Sunday travel be abolished as far as practicable. Some must work on the Sabbath. The demands of this complex life make it necessary for some to deny themselves the privileges of the Lord's Day. But let that be reduced to the minimum, and let every man who must work on Sunday have some other day, that the proportion of one-seventh for rest be not destroyed.

4. RELIGIOUS.

"Thou shalt not do any work" is God's command with reference to the Sabbath. This gives a moral aspect to Sabbath rest and makes its non-observance not only an injury to man but a sin against God. The body is the temple of the Holy Ghost. Abuse of that temple is sacrilege, certainly as serious as abuse of a house of stone and brick. All men will agree that it is a sin for any man to deny his horse one day of rest after a week of honest, uncomplaining toil. Is it not much more a sin for him to deny his own body, and mind, and soul? A man can be much more severely tried than any of the lower animals because of his finer organism, his refined spiritual constitution, his keener sympathetic responsiveness.

But more important even than rest, though it has so many arguments to sustain it is

WORSHIP.

We have the example of the Lord. "Jesus as His custom was went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day." From the beginning the Sabbath was designed to afford man a time and opportunity to come into the presence of God. This is indicated in Genesis 4:3, "In process of time it came to pass that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord, And Abel, he also brought." The brothers came together to worship. It is reasonable to suppose that there must have been some understanding as to a fit time for worship and also a fit place or we would find it difficult to explain how a man with the jealous disposition of Cain would agree to go with his brother who was utterly different. That this supposition is a reasonable one is borne out by the literal rendering of the words translated "in process of time." Literally the expression is "at the end of days." And when was the end of days but the Sabbath on which God ended all his labors and rested, and which He sanctified and ordained to the perpetual physical, mental, and spiritual refreshment of His creatures?

What is worship? It is the loving approach of a soul to God. Analyze the feelings which bring a truly reverent and loyal worshipper into the Presence of the Almighty Friend and we will find that gratitude, obedience, desire, and joy are always present.

Gratitude—"What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits?" asks the psalmist, and he concludes his statement of the things he will do in the 116th Psalm with, "I will

pay my vows unto the Lord. . . . in the courts of the Lord's House." A soul fully conscious of the great salvation provided for him finds his heart swells with thankfulness as often as he calls to mind the sacrifice of Christ, the gift of the Holy Spirit to abide, and the power of God to keep him always. And where is there a more fitting place to give expression to all he feels than the courts of the Lord's House? And when is there a more fitting time than the day the Lord has sanctified?

Obedience.—"Speak Lord, for Thy servant heareth," is the continual frame of mind of a true worshipper. And what does God say upon this subject? "Neglect not the assembling of yourselves together." "Come into His courts and bring an offering with you." Over and over and over again words of similar import are found in the Bible. Indeed, the very existence of a church upon the earth is a command to come and worship God. And as often as the Sabbath rolls around and the doors are thrown open God speaks and tells us to enter and worship.

Desire.—"One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple." The beauty of the Lord is true beauty. It can be known only by those whose desire is for God. In the secret of His tabernacle to those who love Him and long to be transformed into His image He reveals Himself, and they like Peter and John are transformed and transfigured by the glory.

Joy.—"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." "In Thy presence is fulness of joy, at Thy right hand are pleasures forevermore." Every ele-

vating and purifying sentiment of the soul is connected with regular and joyous attendance upon the services of the sanctuary, and there is no place or time where and when, the spirit of man and the Spirit of God come so closely in contact as in the house of God on the day He has Himself appointed.

III. OBSERVANCE.

The reasonableness of the observance of the Sabbath and the benefits to be derived from it are testified to us by many witnesses.

The United States Supreme Court says: "Laws setting aside Sunday as a day of rest are upheld not by any right of the government to legislate for the promotion of religious observances, but from its right to protect all persons from the physical and moral debasement that comes from uninterrupted labor. Such laws have always been deemed beneficial and merciful laws, especially to the poor and dependent, to the laborers in our factories and workshops, and in the heated rooms of our cities, and their validity has been sustained by the highest courts of the States."

The President of Cornell University protesting to the students against using the Sabbath for discussing athletic and social affairs said, "The observance of Sunday is the temporal sign that man belongs not only to time, but to eternity. I earnestly hope that Sunday may be observed as a day of physical rest and spiritual meditation."

Voltaire declared, "I despair of destroying religion while millions meet together for worship on the first day of the week."

Dean Farrar says, "The Sabbath is not forced on us as an irksome obligation, but granted to us as a precious boon."

S. D. Gordon says, "A man's attitude toward God's rest day tells his attitude toward God."

In an army order of November 1862, President Lincoln observed, "The importance for man and beast of the prescribed weekly rest, the sacred rights of Christian soldiers and sailors, a becoming deference to the best sentiment of a Christian people and a due regard for the divine will, demand that Sunday labor in the army and navy be reduced to the measure of strict necessity."

Every applicant for a position in the Bank of England is presented with a list of twenty questions to answer. The first question on the list is "How do you spend your Sundays?" Those who keep the Sabbath are to be trusted.

During the Hudson-Fulton celebration one of the attractive features was the proposed trial flight of Mr. Wilbur Wright. The weather was unfavorable until Sunday. On Sunday the conditions were ideal and everybody thought he would take advantage of this opportunity which would probably be his only one. Great crowds had gathered under this impression. But Mr. Wright quietly said he had never taken his machine out on Sunday, and he would not do so under any circumstances. He waited and on Monday made his successful flight.

"It is lawful to do well on the Sabbath Day" said the Lord of the Sabbath. Inactivity or what is equally as bad, aimless activity will not honor the Sabbath. It is a day of rest, but not a day of idleness. Works of necessity and mercy belong to the very spirit of the day, and cannot be ignored. All that tends to lighten the burdens of suffering humanity; all that gives expression of God's love to a fallen and needy world; all that removes the soul from the sordidness of this world and gives it a view of the better things beyond; all that un-

chains the enslaved spirit and does even a little toward making it free in Christ Jesus; all such things are right upon the Sabbath day.

The Lord's Day, the Lord's House, and the Lord's Book are a holy trinity designed to raise fallen man from the lowest depths to which he can descend and set him in his proper place in the heavenlies. The neglect of any one of these is inevitably followed by the neglect of both the others.

"O day of rest and gladness,
O day of joy and light,
O balm of care and sadness,
Most beautiful, most bright;
On thee, the high and lowly,
Bending before the throne,
Sing, Holy, Holy, Holy,
To the Great Three in one.

To day on weary nations
The heavenly manna falls;
To holy convocations
The silver trumpet calls,
Where Gospel light is glowing
With pure and radiant beams,
And living water flowing
With soul-refreshing streams.

New graces ever gaining,
From this our day of rest,
We reach the rest remaining
To spirits of the blest.
To Holy Ghost be praises,
To Father, and to Son;
The Church her voice upraises
To Thee, blest Three in one."

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