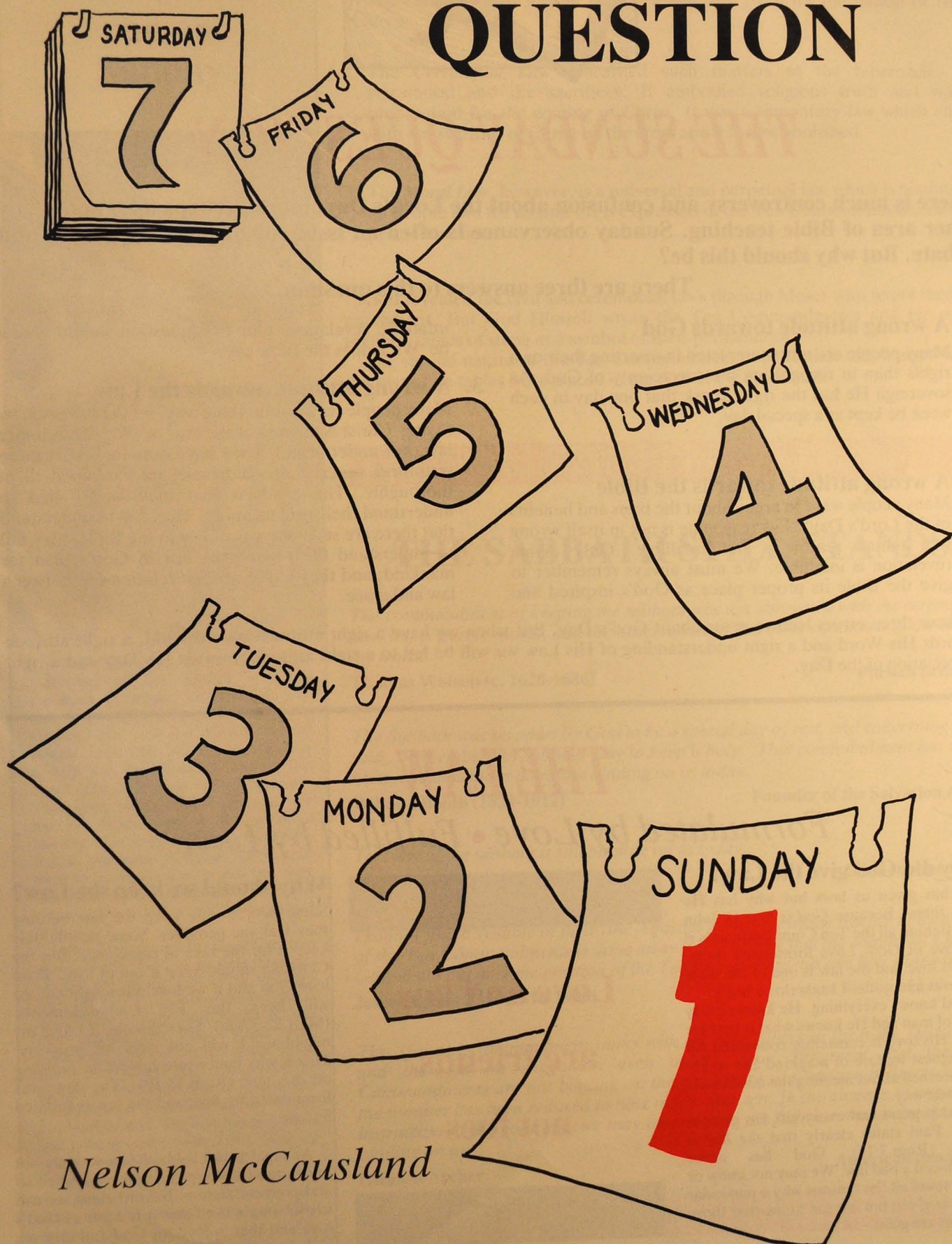


THE SUNDAY QUESTION



Nelson McCausland



THE SUNDAY QUESTION

There is much controversy and confusion about the Lord's Day, more perhaps than about any other area of Bible teaching. Sunday observance is often an issue for dispute, discussion and debate. But why should this be?

There are three answers to this question.

1. A wrong attitude towards God

Many people are more interested in asserting their own rights than in recognising the sovereignty of God. As sovereign He has the right to ask that one day in each week be kept as a special day.

2. A wrong attitude towards the Bible

Many people want to argue about the basis and benefits of the Lord's Day. Now reasoning is not in itself wrong but human reason is not infallible. Only divine revelation is infallible. We must always remember to give the Bible its proper place as God's inspired and

infallible revelation. Our first question should always be 'What does the Bible say?'

3. A wrong attitude towards the Law

Many people, in an unthinking way, set the law aside by saying 'Christ is the end of the law' or 'We're not under law, but under grace'. They have only looked at these scriptures superficially and have not examined them thoroughly. The result is that they have failed to understand their true meaning. They fail to understand that there are several types of law in the Bible; they fail to understand the role of the law in God's plan for mankind; and they fail to see the relationship between law and grace.

These three errors lead to error about God's Day. But when we have a right attitude towards God, a right attitude towards His Word and a right understanding of His Law we will be led to a right attitude towards His Day and a right appreciation of the Day.

THE LAW

Formulated by Love • Fulfilled by Love

Why did God give the Law?

God has given us laws but why has He given them? Because *God is love* (1 John 4:8). Behind all the Ten Commandments is the love of God. Love formulated them. God is love and the law is one of the ways He loves us.

God knows everything. He knows every need of man and He knows what is best for man. His love is constantly concerned for the highest welfare of mankind and so He is concerned about meeting the need in the very best way.

God is good and every gift He gives is good. Paul states clearly that *the law is good* (Rom.7:16). God has never introduced a bad law. We may not know or understand all the reasons why a particular law was given but we can know that those reasons are good.

**Love and law
are friends
not foes**

Why should we keep the Law?

Some people only keep the law because they fear the penalties. Some people only keep it for the sake of conscience. But the Christian should keep it out of love. If we love God and if we love our neighbour we will keep the Ten Commandments. (Matt.22:37-40). For example, if I love my neighbour I will not steal his property. That is why Paul wrote *Love is the fulfilling of the law* (Rom.13:10). The law was formulated by love and the law is fulfilled by love.

As regards the Sabbath law we may not understand all the physical, social, spiritual and political factors. Nevertheless, we can say in simple faith that it is a gift of God's love and that in love for God and man we will obey the law.

A LOOK AT THE LAW

The Law as delivered through Moses was threefold in nature.

1. The **Civil Law** was a legal system which was given for the nation of Israel alone.
2. The **Ceremonial Law** concerned such matters as the tabernacle, the priesthood and the sacrifices. It embodied religious truth and was a preparation for the coming of Christ. It was a temporary law which ended with the sacrifice of Christ on the cross and it is now abolished.
3. The **Moral Law**, however, is a universal and perpetual law which is binding on all people and for all time. It is expressed in the Ten Commandments and is a permanent law.

God revealed the civil and ceremonial laws through Moses who wrote them on parchment. But God Himself wrote the Ten Commandments and He wrote them on tables of stone as a symbol of their permanence.

The special nature of the Ten Commandments was further emphasised when the two stone tables were placed in the Ark of the Covenant.



THE SABBATH STILL STANDS

The commandment of keeping the sabbath was not abrogated with the ceremonial law, but is purely moral, and the observation of it is to be continued to the end of the world.

Thomas Watson (c. 1620-1686)

Puritan preacher

The Sabbath was set apart by God to be a special day of rest, and concerning it He said, 'Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy.' That commandment has never been repealed and is therefore binding on us today.

William Booth (1829-1912)

Founder of the Salvation Army

This law of the sabbath is still binding on us today.

Matthew Henry (1662-1714)

Bible commentator

I cannot find a syllable in their (the Apostles') writings which teaches that any one of the Ten Commandments is done away . . . I believe that the coming of Christ's Gospel did not alter the position of the Ten Commandments one hair's breadth.

John Charles Ryle (1816-1900)

First Protestant Bishop of Liverpool

This (fourth) commandment ranks with the nine others to form the Decalogue, and there is no suggestion even in the New Testament that the Ten Commandments are not binding on the conscience of Christian believers or that the number has been reduced to nine rather than ten. In the absence of any divine instruction to the contrary, we may assume that the fourth commandment is still binding on us.

Gleason Archer

American theologian



The Man who wouldn't run on Sunday

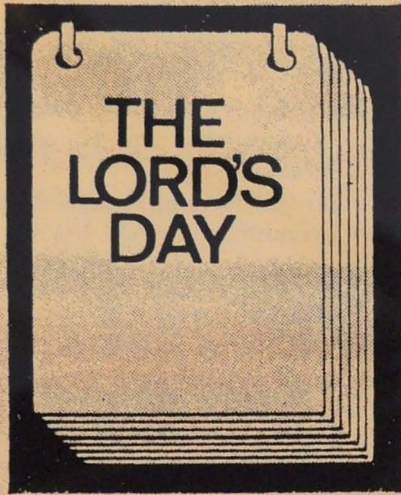


The film *Chariots of Fire* has introduced the name of Eric Liddell to many thousands of people. In 1924 Eric was chosen to run for Britain in the Olympic Games. He was the British record holder over 100 metres and it was certain that he would do well in the event. His heart was set on winning. Then came the news that the heats for the 100 metres were to be run on a Sunday. Eric cancelled his entry. The British Amateur Athletic Association tried to persuade him to run but they failed. He did not change his mind, even when he was asked to run by the Prince of Wales.

Instead he entered for the 400 metres although this was not his best distance. On the day of the race as he lined up with the other runners someone put a small piece of paper into his hand. The race started and Eric Liddell won, setting up a world record which stood for many years. After the race he looked at the little slip of paper and found written on it these words: 'In the old book it says, He that honours me I will honour (see 1 Sam. 2:30). Wishing you the best of success always.'

Eric Liddell became known as *the man who wouldn't run on a Sunday*. He was a true Christian who loved the Lord and His Day.

THE SABBATH IN THE SCRIPTURES



COMMENCED AT CREATION

The second chapter of Genesis states that when the work of creation was done God set apart one day in the week to be a holy day. *Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it.* (Gen.2:1-3).

The Sabbath is a creation ordinance. It was ordained by God at the very start of human history. Jesus said that 'the Sabbath was made for man'. Man was made by God on the sixth day of the creation week and so his first full day on earth was a Sabbath day. The God who made man knew that man needed a Sabbath day of rest and so as soon as He made man He made for man the Sabbath.

When the children of Israel were in the wilderness on their way to Sinai God fed them with manna. In relation to the giving of the manna God spoke about 'the rest of the holy sabbath' and asked *How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?* (Ex.16:22-29). We can know therefore that there was a Sabbath law well before the giving of the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai.

COMMANDED AT SINAI

The Ten Commandments were written by the finger of God on two tables of stone and later these tables were placed in the Ark of the Covenant. But this was not the start of the Moral Law. Long before Lamech knew that murder was wrong (Gen.4), Jacob knew that stealing was wrong (Gen.27), Joseph knew that adultery was wrong (Gen.39) and the Israelites knew that it was wrong not to observe the Sabbath day.

That is why the Fourth Commandment states that we should *REMEMBER the Sabbath day to keep it holy.* (Ex.20:8).

The commandment tells us who should keep the Sabbath and how they should keep it.

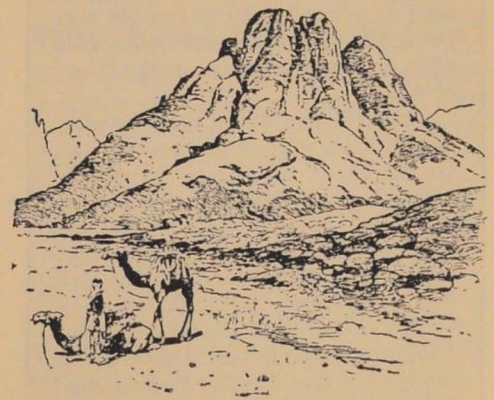
Everyone should keep it because the commandment was addressed to everyone — young and old, male and female. That keeping involves a 'resting' from the normal activities of the week and a 'keeping holy' by devoting the day to the worship and service of God.

The family man should not only keep it himself but see that his family follows his example.

The employer should not only keep it himself but see that all his employees are free to do so as well — *that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou.* He should not demand unnecessary work from his employees on the Sabbath. You and I may not be 'employers' but if we frequent shops and restaurants on the Lord's Day we are causing unnecessary work for others and so in effect we are breaking the commandment.

The Sabbath was a weekly reminder to the Israelites that God was their Creator (Ex. 20:11) and their Redeemer (Ex. 20:2 and Deut. 5:15).

Throughout the Old Testament there are repeated references to God's Holy Sabbath. From these it is clear that the observance of the Sabbath brings blessing whereas disregarding the Sabbath will bring the judgment of God.



COMMENDED BY CHRIST

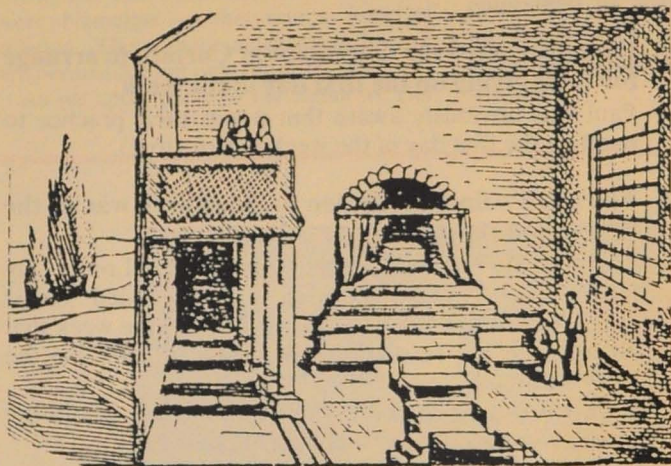
Where did Christ go on the Sabbath?

As his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day. Luke 4:16.

The name 'synagogue' means 'a place of meeting'. The synagogue was built in the centre of the town. It was the place where the people worshipped God. Services were held every day, but the most important day was the Sabbath.

What did Christ do on the Sabbath?

1. He attended the worship in the synagogue.
2. He healed many people. Mark 2:23, 3:1-5.



The interior of a synagogue.

THE SEVENTH DAY

Six days shalt thou labour . . . but the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God:

The Fourth Commandment does not state that *the seventh day of the week* is the Sabbath. Rather it refers to 'the seventh day', i.e., the seventh in relation to six days of labour.

The commandment does not determine which day of the week we should keep as a Sabbath, only that we should keep every seventh day. Every seventh day but the point from which to count is not given. The Christian Sabbath (Sunday) is as really the seventh day as was the Old Testament Sabbath (Saturday). There is nothing in the law which tells from what day to count.

3. He walked quietly through the cornfields with His disciples.

What did Christ say about the Sabbath?

1. He said that He was Lord of the Sabbath. Mark 2:28. It is His day.
2. He said that the Sabbath was given for the benefit of us all. Mark 2:27.
3. He obeyed the fourth commandment which tells us about the Sabbath but He spoke against the petty and often silly rules which had been added to it by the Pharisees.

In the Sermon on the Mount Christ spoke about the Moral Law and said *Think not that I am come to destroy the law* (Matt. 5:17). He recognised the Ten Commandments as a standard of right and wrong: *Thou knowest the commandments* (Mark 10:19).

SEVEN GREAT PRINCIPLES

1. **Ownership** . . . Sabbath of the Lord thy God.
2. **Worship** Keep it holy.
3. **Work** Six days shalt thou labour.
4. **Rest** Shalt not do any work.
5. **Love** Thou, nor thy son, nor thy stranger, etc.
6. **Example** The Lord rested the seventh Day.
7. **Blessing** Wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath Day and hallowed it.

PAUL AND THE SABBATH

There are three passages in Paul's epistles which might seem to suggest that Paul regarded the observance of the Sabbath day as an optional matter rather than an obligation.

Colossians 2:16,17 *Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; . . . and similar passages in Romans 14 and Galatians 4.*

However, the *sabbath days* mentioned here are not the weekly Sabbath of the Moral Law but the annual festivals of the Ceremonial Law. These were also known as *sabbaths* (see 1 Chron. 23:31 and 2 Chron. 31:3). It was these festivals to which Paul was referring.

The weekly Sabbath is part of the Moral Law of God and Paul said of this law that it was *holy, just, good and spiritual* (Romans 7). He also declared: *I delight in the law of God . . .*

To Paul the Lord's Day was a delight.

There remaineth therefore a keeping of a sabbath (AVm) to the people of God. Hebrews 4:9

The Observance of a Sabbath Day
is part of the eternal
Law of God.

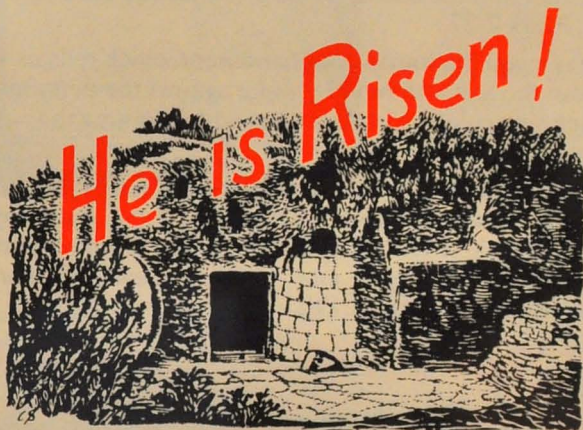
THE SABBATH AND SUNDAY

The day changed and the Sabbath preserved

Why does the Christian Church observe the first day of the week as the Lord's Day or Christian Sabbath?

1. Jesus Christ rose from the dead on the first day of the week.

Christ died for the sin of the world and then He rose again. All four evangelists record the fact that the resurrection took place on the first day of the week. By His resurrection He demonstrated the completion of His work of redemption. The Jewish Sabbath commemorated the completion of God's work of creation. The Christian Sabbath also commemorates the completion of Christ's work of redemption.



2. Jesus' first appearance to a gathered group of disciples was on the first day of the week.

Ten disciples were gathered together in the Upper Room and He appeared in the midst of the assembled group. The Lord of the Sabbath expounded the Lord's Word to the Lord's people on the Lord's Day (John 20:19).

3. Jesus' second appearance to the gathered group of disciples was on the following first day of the week.

The disciples may have gathered on other days during that week but any such meetings are not recorded in the Bible and the Lord reserved His next visit to them until the first day of the week (John 20:26).

4. The Holy Spirit descended on the disciples on the Day of Pentecost which was the first day of the week.

Jesus Christ who is the Lord of the Sabbath said that He would send His Spirit and the Spirit came on the first day of the week. This was the birthday of the Christian Church and three thousand people were converted on that day.

5. The early Christians met for worship on the first day of the week.

Many of the early Christians were converted Jews and they may have continued to observe the Jewish Sabbath. Nevertheless we find the early Christians also gathering for worship and fellowship on the first day of the week. On one of his journeys Paul arrived in Troas on a Monday but he had to remain with them until the first day of the week in order that he could preach to them. On that day they gathered to break bread and Paul had the opportunity to preach the Word of God (Acts 20:5-12).

6. Paul instructed the Christians at Corinth to arrange for their giving on the first day of the week.

Paul was obviously aware that it was their practice to meet on the first day of the week (1 Cor. 16:2).

7. The Lord's final revelation to the church was on the first day of the week.

The Apostle John was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day (Rev. 1:10) when the risen and ascended Christ appeared to him. It was on the first day of the week that he received the revelation which was to complete the Holy Scriptures.

(The word used in the earliest manuscripts is still the Greek word used today meaning Sunday.)

Just forty-four years after the close of the New Testament JUSTIN MARTYR, in his Apology, described a typical Christian service 'on the day called Sunday'.

TERTULLIAN, writing at the close of the second century, said that on the Lord's Day Christians, in honour of the resurrection of the Lord, must *defer all worldly business*.

ANATOLIUS (230-300 AD) declared that *the first day of the week is the resurrection day, and the Lord's Day*.

From about 250-313 AD Christianity was violently persecuted but Christian observance of the first day of the week continued none the less.

ATHANASIUS (296-373 AD) said that *the Lord transferred the sacred observance to the Lord's Day*.

THEODORE BEZA (1519-1605), the disciple and successor of Calvin, says in his commentary on Rev. 1:10: *The seventh day, having stood from the creation of the world to the resurrection of Christ, was exchanged by the apostles, doubtless at the dictation of the Holy Spirit, for that which was the first day of the new world*.

RICHARD BAXTER (1615-1691) summarised the position of Christians throughout the previous centuries: *It hath been the constant practice of all Christ's Churches in the whole world ever since the days of the Apostles to this day, to assemble for public worship on the Lord's Day, as a day set apart thereby by the Apostles*.

SUNDAY WORK

There are two questions which are frequently raised in relation to Sunday work.

What about such people as doctors and the police? Surely their work is necessary? What does the Bible say about that?

In Matthew chapter 12 the Lord Jesus Christ makes it clear, both by teaching and by example, that works of necessity, works of mercy and works of religion are permissible on the Sabbath. His disciples plucked the ears of corn so that they could eat — this was a work of necessity. He healed the man with a withered hand — this was a work of mercy. He spoke of the priests in the temple who worked on the Sabbath but were blameless — this was a work of religion. These three categories of work are permissible but only these.

As we apply these to life today we can

see that they cover such people as doctors, nurses, policemen and those employed in the essential and emergency services. Those who help to provide the water and electricity supplies and the others already mentioned can work with a clear conscience.

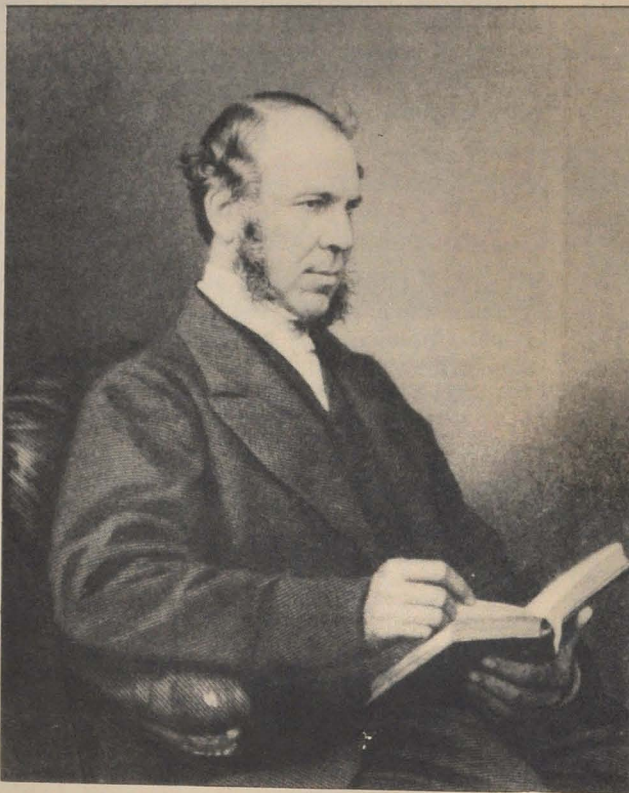
But even in these areas of employment work should be kept to the necessary minimum. Consider the farmer for example. To milk the cows can be regarded as a work of mercy but ploughing is not a work of necessity.

One would also hope that by means of adequate staffing levels and some type of shift system it would be possible for such workers to have some Sundays free from work.

What about those whose job is not one of necessity or mercy but who are compelled by their employer to work on the Lord's Day? What does the Bible say about this and what should they do?

Firstly, the Fourth Commandment spells out the right of the employee to have a Sabbath day of rest. The employer who denies his employee this right by insisting on Sunday work is acting unjustly.

Secondly, we can learn certain lessons from the example of early Christians who were slaves. They did not have Sunday as a day of rest. It was a day on which they were forced to work. Nevertheless, they observed the Lord's Day as much as possible. This was probably one of the reasons why so many of the Christian gatherings were early in the morning or late in the evening. Where there is a will there is a way! Their masters granted them very little free time but they readily and gladly gave that time to the Lord. The Apostles did not condemn those who got themselves into slavery but they did encourage them to seek to become free if possible (1 Cor. 7:21). Likewise employees who are compelled to work on Sundays at a job which is not one of necessity or mercy would do well to look out for another job that does not involve Sunday work.



BISHOP J. C. RYLE made this wise comment on the way in which the change from the Jewish Sabbath to the Christian Sabbath was achieved:

Undoubtedly the day was changed — it was made the first day of the week in memory of our Lord's resurrection, instead of the seventh — but I believe the Apostles were divinely inspired to make that change, and at the same time wisely directed to make no public decree about it. The decree would only have raised a ferment in the Jewish mind, and caused needless offence: the change was one which it was better to effect gradually, and not to force on the conscience of weak brethren. The spirit of the Fourth Commandment was not interfered with by the change in the smallest degree.

THE FIRST FIRST DAY

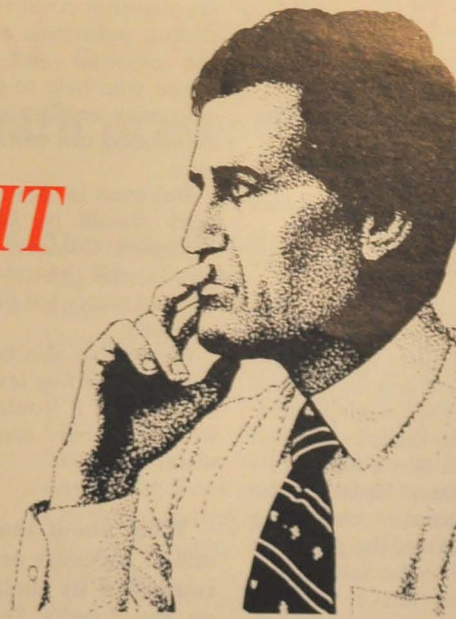
It is interesting to notice what the Lord Jesus Christ did on the 'first day of the week' — namely the day He rose from the dead:

1. He comforted a woman weeping because of recent bereavement (John 20.13).
2. He went on a fellowship walk with two downcast disciples (Luke 24.13.31).
3. He had an informal Bible study with them to overcome their confusion.
4. He visited their home, shared a meal and prayed with them.
5. He sent messages to His friends in other places (Matt. 28.10).
6. He went to have a private talk with a backslider (Luke 24.34).
7. He met with the gathered disciples, announced peace, promoted joy, counteracted doubts, explained scripture and told them what to do (Luke 24.36-48).

Christians owned a garage business which never opened on Sunday. A passing motorist had swerved off the road and finished up in the ditch. He called on them for help. Initially they said they did not work on Sunday, but nevertheless towed his car back on to the road, and saw him safely on his way. To the motorist's amazement they would not charge. They classified it not as an act of permitted employment, but as a work of mercy!

If all Sunday work was to be work without wages, there would soon be a nationally recognised 'sabbath'!!

SORRY! YOU'VE GOT IT WRONG



The Sabbath was just for the Jews

NO. *The Sabbath was made for man* — not just for the Jews but for all mankind. **The Sabbath started at the creation**, long before Israel or Judah were born, and it was given to Adam, the father of the whole human race.

The Sabbath is Old Testament Teaching

Yes, it is Old Testament teaching but that is only half the truth for **it is also New Testament teaching**. Moreover the Old Testament is not obsolete. The Word of God consists of both the Old and the New Testaments.

Jesus constantly criticised the Sabbath

NO. He said that He was the Lord of the Sabbath. He did not criticise the Sabbath but He criticised what the Pharisees had made of it and done to it. They had added to it all sorts of man-made rules and regulations and true Sabbath observance was buried beneath all these. There were thirty-nine forms of labour which were prohibited on the Sabbath and each one of these had innumerable details. Some other ludicrous laws were that it was wrong to kill a flea unless it was biting you or to eat an egg which a hen had laid on the Sabbath! Bishop Ryle said: *I find Him (Jesus) speaking eleven times on the subject of the Sabbath, but it is always to correct the superstitious additions which the Pharisees had made to the Law of Moses, about observing it, but never to deny the holiness of the Day. He no more abolishes the Sabbath than a man destroys a house when he cleans off the moss or weeds from its roof.*

But didn't John Calvin play bowls on Sundays?

NO. There is not a single piece of reliable or contemporary evidence to support this. **Calvin actually preached against Sunday sport**. This myth was first mentioned in a book written about 250 years after Calvin died.

And didn't John Knox hold dinner parties on the Sabbath?

This is a rather misleading description of what Knox actually did. On some occasions he would invite guests to share an evening meal with him in his home and he used

these occasions as opportunities to speak to them about the Christian faith. This is indeed **a good example** to us for the Lord's Day can give extra opportunities to share our faith with others. The term 'dinner party' suggests entertainment, merriment and probably overeating. That is very different from the type of evening meal which Knox shared with his guests.

But wasn't it the Pope who brought in Sunday Observance and changed it from Saturday to Sunday?

NO. The public holiday aspect of Sunday started with Constantine in 321 AD but he was a Roman Emperor, not a Pope. Christians had been observing the Lord's Day for almost 300 years before that.

Why should Sunday be different? Shouldn't every day be kept holy?

Yes, that's true, every day should be kept holy. A 'Sundays only' religion is wrong because it is not Biblical. **But a 'Sunday every day' approach is wrong because it is not practical**. The Bible says *Pray without ceasing* but who would deny that in practice it is best to set aside special times for prayer. In the same way our Christianity should be a 'seven days a week' religion but God has shown the wisdom of setting aside one special day a week.

There is a hymn that speaks about Sunday as a 'Day of Gladness' and a 'Day of Joy'. I don't think there is much joy and gladness about your type of Sunday.

The problem is not with the Lord's Day. The problem is probably with you. The key to enjoying the Lord's Day is knowing the Lord of the Day as your Saviour and obeying Him as your Lord. Some people say that they find a day for rest and worship is just too long. A few hours, yes, but not a whole day! I wonder then what they would make of heaven. **The Lord's Day is a foretaste of heaven** and in heaven we will have eternal rest and worship. If they don't enjoy the Sabbath how can they hope to enjoy heaven?

Lovers of the Lord's Day

Let every one that loveth Christ keep holy the first day of the week, the Lord's day.

Ignatius One of the early Christian fathers
(c.35-c.107 AD) who lived in the time of John the Apostle.

Make the Lord's Day the market for thy soul.

John Bunyan Puritan preacher and author
(1628-1688) of *Pilgrim's Progress*

Did you ever meet with a lively believer in any country under heaven — one who loved Christ, and lived a holy life — who did not delight in keeping holy to God the entire Lord's Day?

Robert Murray McChesney Scottish Presbyterian minister
(1813-1843)

A Sabbath-breaking or Sabbath-neglecting people are notoriously irreligious . . . the Pharisaical way of observing it is one extreme . . . the European way is worse still.

Charles Hodge American Presbyterian
(1797-1878) theologian

I believe there is an enormous responsibility on Christian believers themselves to set a good example by treating the Lord's Day as a very special day of the week.

Lord Tony Pandy Former speaker
of the House of Commons

We ignore the Sabbath at our peril. We keep it to our inestimable benefit.

Verna Wright Professor at Leeds University

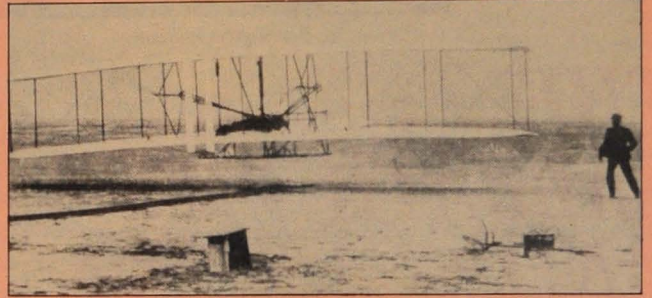


John Bunyan

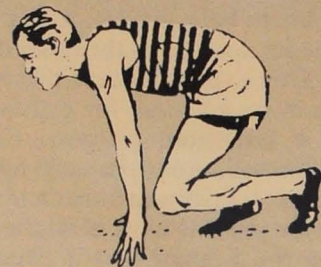
The Wright brothers Wilbur and Orville were pioneer aviators who achieved the first powered and controlled aeroplane flight. On 17 December, 1903 they made history when their aeroplane left the ground and flew for twelve seconds. Later that day they flew 260 metres. At last man had begun to fly.

Wilbur and Orville Wright were brought up to have a respect for the Lord's Day for their father was a godly Christian minister who loved the Lord and His day. One day the King of Spain came to see Wilbur and his aeroplanes. *His majesty would like to see you fly*, requested an attendant. *I am very sorry*, Wilbur replied, *but we never fly on Sunday.*

It was better to say NO to the King of Spain than to disobey the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the King of Kings.



The beginning of a new era. An exciting moment during the take-off in the first powered flight of the Wright brothers at Kitty Hawk.



Tom Farrell was a great athlete and represented Britain in the Olympic Games.

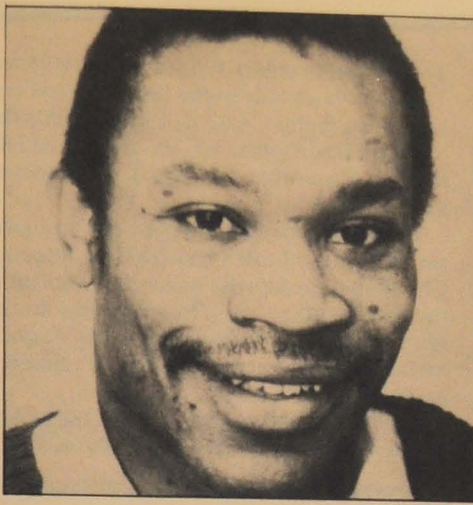
In 1956 He broke the British Games' record in the 440 hurdles. He was running very well but he refused to take part in a competition against Russia and France. Why didn't he run?

Well, he said, *That particular race was on a Sunday and Sunday is God's Day and I do want to give it all to him.* Tom Farrell knew that Sunday is God's Day and that all of the day belongs to God.

Secondly, he said, *There are so many grand Christian folk who have brought up children to keep the Lord's Day that I don't want to make it more difficult for any fellow, knowing how boys respect an athlete's word.* Tom Farrell wanted to set a good example to all the young people who are interested in sport.

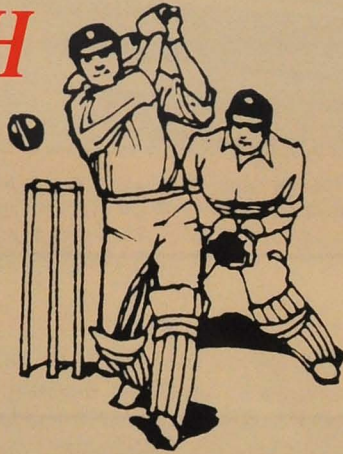
Thirdly, *I do want God to have all the glory for anything that I do. Because after all, it is in His wonderful grace alone that this has been brought about.*

What a great example from a great athlete!



Barrington Williams

THE SABBATH AND SPORT



God made the Sabbath holy and we are to keep it holy. The Sabbath should be set apart from the other days of the week and dedicated to God's special use. If this is done fully and positively there can be no room for games and sport. We should employ it for those purposes for which God intended it to be used, i.e., physical and mental rest, spiritual refreshment, worship and instruction.

The Bible does not provide a list of all the activities which are prohibited on the Sabbath but it does refer to work, labour and pleasure seeking.

Labour and Work

There is a dual command regarding the other six days of the week and this is expressed in the AV as *six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work*. Thus we have (1) *labour* and (2) *thy work*. *Labour* is 'abad' in the Hebrew and means 'serve' referring to our daily job. *Work*, however, is another word in Hebrew 'melakah', which does not refer merely to the daily task or service but more widely to things done. The Coverdale translation, which is used in the Book of Common Prayer, expresses the significance of these words very well: *Six days shalt thou labour and do all that thou hast to do*. This last expression obviously covers all our own pursuits, which include games, hobbies and entertainments. The Sabbath should be kept free from such things.

Delight in God

The prophet Isaiah states that *on the Sabbath we are not to seek our own pleasures and entertainments but rather we are to delight in God*. (Is. 58:13,14)

'NEVER ON SUNDAY, SAYS TOP JUMPER'

That was the headline in one of the tabloid newspapers and the *top jumper* was BARRINGTON WILLIAMS from Cannock in Staffordshire, an Olympic-standard long jumper. In January 1987, he won the British indoor long jump championship. He was then chosen as a member of the British team for an international competition against Hungary. Barrington discovered, however, that the competition was to be on a Sunday. *That seemed to settle it, he said, but the Hungarians changed the day so I could get there.*

If it comes down to it, God comes first and athletics second. Sunday is God's day.

I have made a promise to the Lord that I will not take part in sports events on Sundays, he says. Even if it is at the very top I will jump on Saturday night and Monday morning, but not on Sundays.

As a Christian Barrington Williams puts God first in his life.

The preparation for and the playing of a game of hockey or football together with any travelling involved would occupy a good part of the Sabbath. What a sad misuse of a sizeable portion of God's day. God wants a whole day and not just what is left over after we have arranged and played our sports.

Sunday sport generally involves the creation of unnecessary Sunday work for others. If we have a genuine love for other people we should do nothing which would unnecessarily deprive them of a Sabbath day of rest. Even private games lead eventually to public games and so give rise to work.

Participation in Sunday sport by individual Christians or by teams representing Christian organisations impairs and mars their Christian witness whereas a right observance of the Sabbath is a good witness to others. How we thank God for the fine example of men like Eric Liddell and Barrington Williams.

Surely, for Christians, it should be sufficient to follow the example of John who was *in the Spirit on the Lord's Day* (Rev. 1:10). If we are truly in the Spirit we shall not be found on the tennis court or cricket field or by the river with a fishing rod. There is no need for an express order: *Thou shalt not play games*. God's Word is clear enough for those who want to obey Him.

MICHAEL JONES . . .

During the Rugby World Cup in June 1987 the **New Zealand All Blacks** played their semi-final game against Wales on a Sunday. This created no problem for most of the players but 22 year-old New Zealander Michael Jones, a back-row forward refused to play on the Sabbath. Why did the international rugby player make that decision? Here is his explanation: *Since I was young I have not played on Sundays, and I do not intend to start now. Sunday is the Lord's Day. Rugby is very important to me, but there are other things in life. It is up to the individual but I certainly feel happier adhering to my principles and standards of not playing on a Sunday. It would be hypocritical to change my mind now just because there is a World Cup semi-final coming up. I would love to play in terms of the opportunity, but I put God first.*



THE CIVIL SABBATH

The Sabbath, as a political institution, is of inestimable value, independently of its claims to Divine authority.

Adam Smith
(1723-1790)

Political Economist

I am in favour of Sunday legislation and a strict observance of the Christian Sabbath.

William McKinley
(1843-1901)

25th President of the United States

CIVIL GOVERNMENT

The biblical view of civil government is that it is not a human invention but rather a divinely ordained institution appointed by God for the benefit of the human race. The apostle Paul declared that:

The powers that be are ordained of God. Romans 13:1.

But governments are not only ordained of God, they should also be obedient to God. The Bible should be our rule of faith and practice in everything, including the realm of politics and government. It is the duty of the state, whether it recognises it or not, to govern in accordance with God's Laws. Those laws are found throughout the Bible but they are summarised in the Ten Commandments.

THE BIBLE

One of the most important features of the Coronation Service is the presentation of the Bible to the Monarch. At this presentation thirty years ago the Archbishop of Canterbury said these words:

Our most gracious Queen, to keep your Majesty ever mindful of the Law and of the Gospel of God as the rule for the whole life and government of Christian Princes, we present you with this Book, the most valuable thing this world affords.

Here indeed is a vital aspect of the true concept of government — it is government in which the Law of God is the rule of government.

THE STATE AND THE LAW

The state is, however, only interested in the law of God in so far as it relates to its own sphere of authority. While it is not the duty of the government to compel men to worship

there is a duty to preserve as far as possible the God-given right to rest and worship for each individual. This right is included in the fourth commandment which explicitly states that on the Sabbath,

Thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou. Deuteronomy 5:14.

Those who work in shops or places of recreation provide us with a service and may be termed 'our servants'. We ought not to cause unnecessary work for them on the Sabbath for they are as much entitled to a Sabbath day of rest as anyone else. Should anyone be kept unnecessarily from the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of the Sabbath? If we have genuine concern for others should we add to something which is detrimental to their welfare? We should do all in our power to reduce Sunday work, and so fulfil the commandment,

Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Matt. 22:39.

NATURAL AND CIVIL LIBERTY

We often encounter those who say that Sunday legislation is negative and restrictive and a denial of their freedom. In any society, however, a government must limit or restrain the natural liberty of man somewhat, the individual surrendering a part in order to have the rest better protected. Traffic regulations for example require you to stop at a red light and deny you the 'right' to drive through it even if you wished to. This is restrictive and prohibitive but it is rather sensible!

Sunday closing legislation and Sunday closing policies may be prohibitive in their form but they are positive and protective in their purpose.

Sadly, however, some politicians today are seeking to sweep aside these laws. If we love the Lord and His Day we should pray about this. We can also write to our MP or to the government telling them that we want to see these laws preserved.

The Sabbath day in England lies bleeding; and oh! that our Parliament would pour some balm into the wounds which it has received.

Thomas Watson

There is not too much religion in the land now. Destroy the sanctity of the Sabbath, and there would soon be far less. Nothing, in short, I believe, would so thoroughly advance the kingdom of Satan as to withdraw legal protection from the Lord's Day.

Bishop J. C. Ryle

TWO SORTS OF DESECRATION

The Lord's Day commonly known as Sunday can be marred by private as well as public desecration.

The Christian may grieve over Sunday trading and Sunday work in factories. He may be saddened by Sunday sport and Sunday opening of cinemas. These things are not works of necessity or mercy and are a public desecration of the Sabbath.

But the private desecration of the Lord's Day is sometimes ignored. Does the Christian have a similar concern about his own private use of the day or does he misuse its precious hours? Does he regard it as just another day which will provide more opportunity for watching television or reading the newspapers? Does he seize the hours of the day for parties, picnics and pleasure? Is he able to rise early and enjoy the hours of God's Day or does he find that impossible because of the late hours he has kept the night before? Does the student use it to catch up on homework? Before considering the public desecration of the Lord's Day we must ask if we ourselves are guilty of its private desecration.

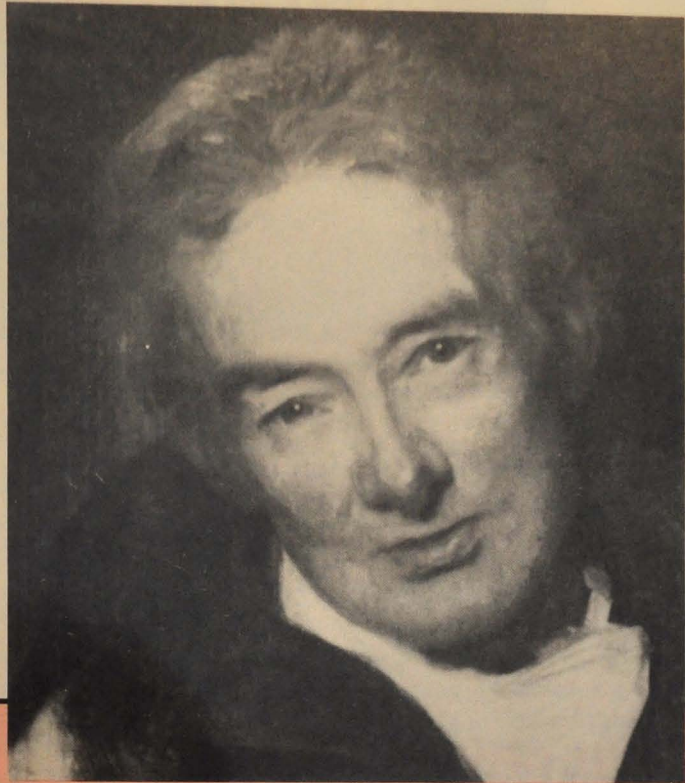
HALF DAY

The Sabbath day is exactly the same length as every other day of the week. It is twenty-four hours long. Yet some people seem to think that the Sabbath is shorter than other days and that it is really only half a day or less. Usually they manage to get along once to church and so give the first part of the day to God but they keep the rest of the day for themselves. For most of the day God is forgotten. The commandment of God, however, is that we should remember to keep the WHOLE day HOLY as the Sabbath of the Lord.

WORK AND REST

Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work. The Christian who is concerned about obeying the Fourth Commandment must pay attention to these words. Do we use the time and the opportunities of the six days to their full advantage? Do we use the hours of each day wisely or do we waste them foolishly? Are we disciplined in setting aside a time each day for prayer and Bible reading? Do we give a full and honest day's work to our employers? Are we punctual and conscientious?

If we use those six days properly we can look forward to the Rest Day knowing that our work is completed and that we are ready for the Sabbath. Moreover, we will certainly need that day of rest and so we will approach it with thankfulness as well as readiness.



SLAVERY ABOLISHED BY SABBATH KEEPER

William Wilberforce is best remembered as the politician who campaigned against slavery. Through his efforts the slave trade was abolished in 1807 and finally in 1883, the year of his death, the Slave Emancipation Act became law.

There are other aspects of his life which do not, however, receive equal emphasis. William Wilberforce was a Christian who was converted through studying the Bible and he had a special love for the Sabbath.

In a letter dated 4th September, 1800 he wrote:

There is nothing in which I would recommend you to be more strictly resolute than in keeping the Sabbath holy. I can truly declare that to me the institution of the Sabbath has been invaluable.

Wilberforce declared that he could only attribute his powers of endurance to his regular observance of the Lord's Day. By contrast he said that he could name several of his contemporaries who had suffered mental breakdown and premature death because of their neglect of Sabbath rest.

THE STUDENT AND THE SABBATH

Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work; But . . . the sabbath . . . in it thou shalt not do any work . . .

For the student, whether in school, college or university, that work is studying. It is mental work rather than physical work but it is nevertheless work. God tells us that He has given us six days for work but that on the Sabbath the student should set his studies and his text-books aside. The mind needs a rest from its ordinary work just as much as the body needs rest. Both mind and body can do more work by resting one day in seven than by labouring all the seven days. If we are to do our best work we need time to relax mentally.

1. Regular homework, study, projects and assignments.

Make sure that you plan your week wisely to get all your work done in time. You have six days. Use them properly and do not waste them.

2. Special revision at examination times.

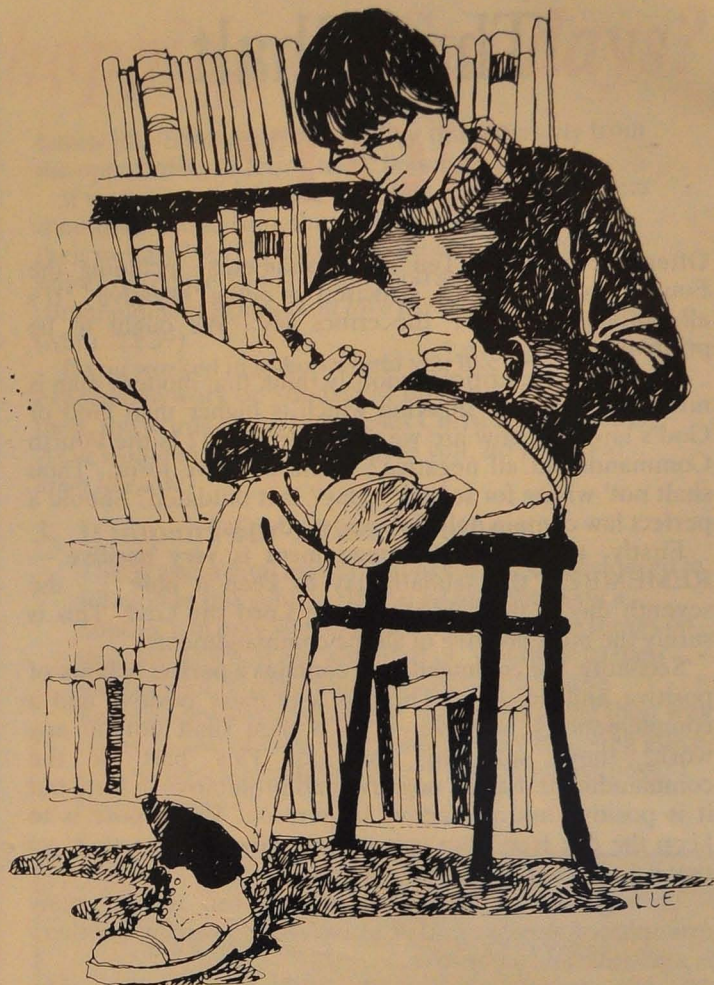
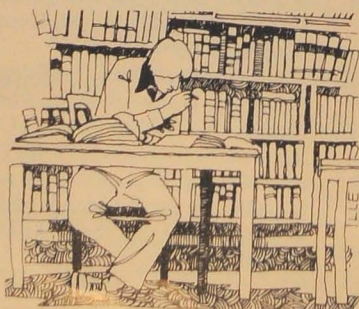
There may be at exam times a temptation to spend some of the Sabbath day in final revision. Perhaps you fear that you are not ready and you hope that you will be able to make up for past slackness by last-minute cramming on the Lord's Day. But that is wrong. The last minute rush will never make up for previous neglect and the loss of your rest-day will leave your mind tired and jaded.



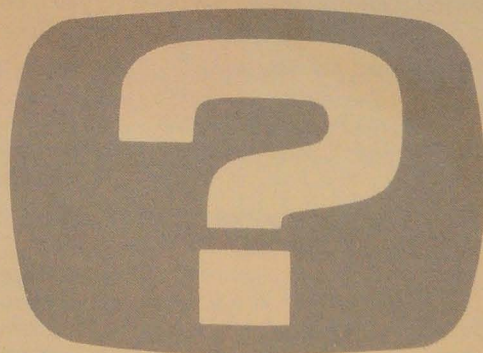
Verna Wright, who is a Professor of Rheumatology at Leeds University, has written that:

As a University teacher I warn my students against over-studying before exams and in particular advise them not to revise on Sundays.

The student should observe a Sabbath-rest just as much as the manual labourer. As the student keeps a Sabbath rest-day he rests his mind and he honours God. To such God says, *Them that honour me I will honour.* (1 Sam. 2:30)



WHAT ABOUT TELEVISION?



Just as we should not allow sport to crowd into God's Day so we should be careful not to allow television to creep in. Are we really keeping the day holy if we spend the afternoon or evening in front of the television set with our minds concentrated on sport, films and other entertainments? Is this really the way that God wants us to spend His day? Is this the purpose for which He gave us the Sabbath?

Thou Shalt **NOT!**

Often we hear the Ten Commandments, including the Fourth Commandment, criticised as being 'negative'. 'It's all "thou shalt not",' the critics say. 'We ought to be positive, not negative.'

Some of these critics obviously think that modern man is now on a plane of thinking which is higher than God or God's law. But how are we to answer them? Is the Fourth Commandment all negative? Is the negative form, 'Thou shalt not' wrong for society today? Is it outdated? Should a perfect law contain only do's and no don'ts?

Firstly, **the Fourth Commandment is very positive** — REMEMBER the sabbath day to keep it holy . . . the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God. This is surely the most positive of all the commandments!

Secondly, **the commandment contains a perfect balance** of positive and negative. There is a primary positive and a complementary negative — in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, . . . This part of the commandment may be negative and prohibitive in form but it is positive and protective in purpose. Its purpose is to keep the day free from unnecessary labour and activity so that we can keep it holy unto God.

Throughout the natural world we can see so many examples of 'positive and negative', e.g., in electricity there is a positive and a negative.

The law of God is perfect (Ps. 19:7) and complete. The Fourth Commandment contains all the principles and all the positive and negative obligations for the right observance of God's Day.

Some people trample the Sabbath into the ground. God's Day is holy and precious but they profane it and tread it into the dirt. The Bible commands such people to stop desecrating the Lord's Day.



Turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; . . . and . . . honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words; Isaiah 58:13

Normal week-day work, normal personal pleasures and conversation about week-day matters should be put aside.

Instead we are commanded to
Call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, and to delight . . . in the LORD;

This tells us that the Sabbath should be a day of delight in the Lord and that our activities and conversation should be associated with the things of God.

Finally, God promises joy, honour and blessing for those who honour Him and observe His Day.

**Would God be pleased
with the way you spend
His Day?**

SATAN AND THE SABBATH

Satan hates the things of God — the Bible, the Gospel and the Sabbath — for these are the pillars of the Christian faith. He is the great deceiver and the great destroyer who deceives men about these things and who works to destroy them. In particular he wants to deceive men about the Sabbath and to destroy it.

A French atheist declared that, *If you want to kill Christianity, you must abolish Sunday.* That was done by the French Revolution of 1789 which abolished the Christian day of rest in 1792. It replaced

the seven day week with a ten day week and created an official rest-day every tenth day. For a period of thirteen years from 1792 to 1805 French *Sundays no longer existed.*

Satan is a real being and a powerful being who is at work in the world today. He is the *god of this world* (2 Cor. 4:4), the *prince of this world* (John 12:31) and the *prince of the power of the air* (Eph. 2:2). Where the Sabbath is under attack we can be sure that there the Devil is at work.

Why shouldn't I go shopping on Sundays?

1. It increases work for others

The Bible commands us to abstain from all unnecessary work on the Sabbath.

Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work. (Ex. 20:9,10).

But the Bible goes further and commands us to refrain from causing unnecessary work for others. *In it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor . . . thy manservant, nor thy maidservant.* Those who work in shops provide us with a service and may be termed our servants. We ought not to cause unnecessary work for them on the sabbath for they are as much entitled to a sabbath day of rest as anyone else. Should a Christian be involved in depriving them of that which is their God-given right?

2. It ignores the welfare of others

Do we have a genuine Christian concern for the welfare of those who work in shops? We ought to. The sabbath day of rest brings with it physical, mental, and spiritual benefits. It also contributes to the strengthening of

family life. Should anyone be kept unnecessarily from the opportunity to enjoy these benefits?

If we have an authentic Christian concern for others should we add to something which is detrimental to their welfare? As Christians we should do all in our power to reduce Sunday work, and so fulfil the commandment, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself* (Matt. 22:39).

If you worked in a shop would you like to be expected to work on Sundays? I think not! Consider then, the words of the Lord Jesus Christ in Luke 6:31. *As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.*

3. It impairs our witness to others

This is also a vital matter and needs to be considered in relation to this subject. If you go into shops on a Sunday you may well embolden others to do things on that day which, if not repented of, would be to their eternal ruin. Furthermore, if you help to cause unnecessary work for others, thus obstructing their way to the House of God, where the Gospel of saving grace is preached, you will find it very difficult to witness to them personally.

Pride and Presumption

There are those whose thinking is 'I recognise what the Bible says BUT . . .' and they then proceed to explain why in their particular situation they wish to evade the sabbath law. That word 'but' is very significant. What pride! What presumption! Such people are in effect saying 'I know what the Bible says BUT I know better and I am wiser than the Almighty'. Let us remember that *the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.* 1 Corinthians 3:19.

*A Sabbath well spent
Brings a week of content
And health for the toils of tomorrow,
But a Sabbath profaned
Whate'er may be gained
Is a certain forerunner of sorrow.*

*Lord, help us, we pray,
To keep holy Thy Day,
Thy Word to delight in for ever!
The Saviour to love,
His mercy to prove,
Then naught from God's love shall us sever
Sir Matthew Hale*

Hearers AND doers

If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them. John 13:17.

It is not enough just to know the truth about the Sabbath, we must put it into practice. Knowledge should lead to doing. D. L. Moody commented on this verse:

To obey the truth and not know it is impossible.

To know the truth and not obey it is unprofitable.

Know . . . do . . . happy — these three are linked together and someone has said of them *What God hath joined together let not man put asunder.* Knowledge and action will lead to happiness.

God wants us to be doers of the Word. He wants us to do two things in relation to the Lord's Day.

1. GOD WANTS US TO OBSERVE THE SABBATH.

As we spend God's day in God's way we bring glory to God and we receive blessing from God. We also show to others that we love the Lord Jesus Christ and wish to obey Him.

2. GOD WANTS US TO PRESERVE THE SABBATH.

The Lord's Day Observance Society seeks to preserve the Sabbath and to defend it from those who want to destroy it. By supporting the work of the Society, by praying for its witness, by distributing its literature and in other ways you can share in that task.

Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, . . .
James 1:22.

Nelson McCausland, M.A., Dip.Ed., the author of this booklet, is a graduate of Oxford University. Formerly he was a science teacher in a large secondary school. He is now the Northern Ireland Secretary of the Lord's Day Observance Society.

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