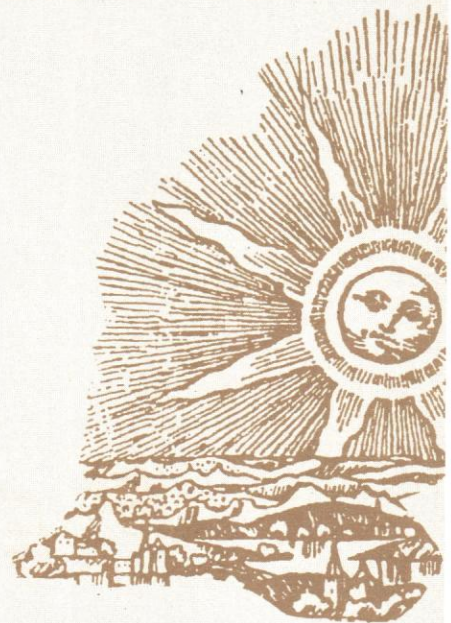


THE *Sabbath Sentinel*

MAY 1993

The SABBATH 
from Creation to Eternity



THE BIBLE SABBATH ASSOCIATION

 BIBLE
SABBATH

INSIDE FRONT COVER

The Creation engraving featured on the cover is taken from the 1634 edition of the *Biblia Sacra* (Holy Bible) with commentary by Nicholaus de Lira. Our "Creation to Eternity" theme is echoed in a prototypical statement by Dr. Nicholas Bound in his *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 1606, as quoted by J. N. Andrews in his *History of the Sabbath and First Day of the Week* (1887): "The first commandment of the Sabbath was no more then first given when it was pronounced from heaven by the Lord, than any other one of the moral precepts, nay, that it hath so much antiquity as the seventh day hath being; for, so soon as the day was, so soon was it sanctified, that we might know that, as it came in with the first man, so it must not go out but with the last man; and as it was in the beginning of the world, so it must continue to the end of the same; and as the first seventh day was sanctified, so must the last be." Dr. Desmond Ford's comments on pages 6-7 were made impromptu in response to verbal questions at a Summer Gospel Congress meeting in 1986. — MG



Desmond Ford



THE GOOD NEWS!

"And this is the testimony:
God has given us eternal life,
and this life is in his Son.
He who has the Son has life;
he who does not have
the Son of God
does not have life."
— 1 John 5:11, 12 NIV

EDITORIAL

MY BROTHER'S KEEPER

You know the story.

Cain had just murdered his brother. God decided to investigate, "Where is your brother Abel?" "I don't know," Cain replied, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Good question.

Noah could have asked it when God commanded him to build the Ark while he preached to the antediluvians.

Moses thought he knew the answer when he killed an Egyptian for beating a Hebrew slave.

David should have asked the question when his lust for Bathsheba sent Uriah to his death.

Praise God Jesus Christ knew both the question and the answer when he sweat blood in Gethsemane!

Am I my brother's keeper?

Did we learn the answer when six million Jews died in the gas chambers?

Am I my brother's keeper?

Did we remember the answer when Pol Pot destroyed one third of the population of Cambodia?

Am I my brother's keeper?

Did we apply the answer in Desert Storm?

Am I my brother's keeper?

Do we remember the answer as we watch 200,000 Moslems die in a war of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia?

Am I my brother's keeper?

Do we apply the answer when we see inner-city homeless digging for food in the dumpster behind McDonalds?

Am I my brother's keeper?

Do we know the answer when we read the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19, 20? "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Am I my brother's keeper?

Can we be Christians and *not live* the answer?

— SC

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The Bible Sabbath Association is dedicated to promoting the seventh-day Sabbath. As a non-sectarian association for Sabbathkeeping Christians, BSA accepts members who acknowledge Jesus Christ as their Savior, believe the Bible to be the Word of God, and uphold the seventh-day Sabbath. BSA takes no official position on other theological issues, and publishes *The Sabbath Sentinel* as a forum to promote understanding and share items of interest to Sabbathkeeping groups and individuals.

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BIBLE
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Sacked For Sabbathkeeping

SHERRY CLEVELAND

In the April issue of *Link*, the SDB newsletter for Australia, we are told that the Australian government and the media are promoting a seven-day work week in the hope that the additional day will benefit people and increase business profits. Adopting this system would also mean that those used to having their sabbath off could expect conflict with their work schedules.

Case In Point

Jan Powell, a 47-year old saleswoman works for a Sydney shoe store. When she was told that her Monday to Friday schedule was being changed to a Monday, Sunday, Saturday schedule she decided to take her case to the NSW Anti-Discrimination Board. She and the shoe store had a previous understanding that she would not work week-ends and Jan did not want to be sacked for sabbathkeeping.

What may come as a surprise to Sabbathkeepers is that Jan Powell is a member of the Church of England and as such believes Sunday, *her* sabbath day, is a holy day that should be spent in church and with family.

Are We The Only Ones?

For years many seventh-day Sabbathkeepers have believed that they were the only ones discriminated against because of their day of rest. Many of us were taught that persecution of all types would be inflicted only on Seventh-day Christians. But is that true? We see from Ms. Powell's case that the conflict is broader than we thought.

Whether we believe God's rest day falls on Saturday or Sunday is not the issue with most employers. The real issue is that we can't work and our employer doesn't understand why.

Why Does It Happen?

So why are employers so discriminating about our rest days? Is it because they hate Christianity, or Christians? Is it because we don't conform to their beliefs? Is it because employers want control over employees? If we believe discrimination occurs because employers do not respect our beliefs maybe we're only half right. Let's look at the problem from two very different perspectives, ours and theirs.

Our Perspective

We believe God made the seventh day holy and commanded us to rest from our work on that day (Genesis 2:2; Exodus 20:8-11). Therefore, we will not show up for work on our rest day, the Sabbath. It's just that simple for us. We (the employee) may or may not be very concerned about the employer getting his job done on our rest day, that's his problem.

The Employer's Perspective

The employer needs a job performed by an employee. If the job involves work on our rest day, he still needs that job done. He's willing to pay to have the job completed. He may or may not be concerned about the employee's belief system. He just wants the job done so he can satisfy the customer, pay his expenses and make a living.

What Can We Do?

How can we help our employer understand? Sometimes, in our zeal to witness we put ourselves in a position to be discriminated against by our attitude, words, or our lack of ability to see another perspective. Do we say we won't work or we can't work? Do we explain that we worship a loving God who knew when He created us that we would need a day of rest? Perhaps *how* we introduce our belief is just as important as sharing our belief.

Of course there are situations where we have done everything right and still get sacked. But many times we could avoid conflict by building an understanding employee/employer relationship right from the start.

Starting Out

When we apply for a job it is imperative from *both* perspectives that we simply explain that as a Bible-believing Christian we cannot work on Saturday. It is extremely helpful at this point to add that we are most willing to work as needed on other days or evenings to get the job done. The employer will readily appreciate that you are willing to accommodate his needs. Because of schedule constraints placed on him he may not hire you, but even if he doesn't he certainly will respect you.

Verbal Agreements

If an employer agrees to hire you, it might be a good idea to get an "exception clause" in writing. "I agree to work (days/times) except Saturday." We all presume verbal agreements are reliable, but wouldn't it be *better* to have it in writing? Anticipating change and being prepared may prove helpful in the future.

Being an A+ Employee

When we tell an employer we're a Christian he will be watching to see how we live and how we work. Is our Christianity a way of life, or is it just a way of avoiding the office on Saturday? Does our employer see Christ living in us? Does he see that our beliefs are much more than a set of do's and don'ts such as, "I don't work on Saturday." Does he see our honesty, our integrity, our ability to get along with fellow employees, our desire to be the best employee God has given us the skills to be? Being an A+ employee will go a long way toward helping an employer make allowances for our beliefs.

What About Discrimination?

In the mid '80s I worked as a secretary for a director at a large manufacturing company. I took some teasing about not working on Sabbath. I'll never forget one particular Friday. It was my birthday and the general manager of the plant decided to recognize the occasion by sewing the sleeves of my coat shut. Knowing my desire to leave work before my Sabbath started, he had planned to frustrate my objective. After work, when I tried to put my coat on, I had several options in reacting to his play. I could have hollered loud and that I was the clear object of his discrimination against my religion. I could have filed a written complaint against his actions. I could have sat down with him and explained why I did not appreciate his prank. Or I could have laughed with him at his feeble attempt to frustrate my Christianity, and tried to show him I could tolerate his apparent lack of understanding for my beliefs. I opted for the latter because it left the door open for future witnessing.

There's Always An Option

As someone aptly said, "Business pursues selfish goals while Christians pursue unselfish goals. That's why the two are not always compatible."

Christians of every persuasion will

sometimes be discouraged, disgusted and appalled by the work place because we are in the world but not of the world. Regardless of the situation, we always have options. We can do a better job, go back to school for more education, change careers, start our own business, put up with our situation or appeal to a higher authority.

It is important to remember that any workplace is a ready-made missionfield, an opportunity to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ. Take courage, Jesus got "sacked" for His beliefs. He understands our needs and frustrations; why not talk it over with Him? He always has the answer we need.

Note: If you have been the target of religious discrimination in the workplace, Len Hale (Church of God 7th day) would like to hear from you. Mr. Hale is currently researching and compiling information on cases of conflict over religious beliefs. He will want to know your name, address, place of employment, dates and facts concerning your work situation. If you would like to take part in his research, please address your letter to: The Workers Sabbath Issue, Church of God 7th day, c/o Len Hale, 807 Meadows Lane, Pocola, OK 71902.

S

Mailbox

Influencing Civil Government

If we are "Citizens of the Kingdom of God" (March, 1993 TSS Editorial) we will be walking in the footsteps of our Lord and living our lives as closely as we can manage to His example. At no time did our Lord attempt to influence civil government by any means, militant or otherwise. His work was to provide us a lifeline and to prepare a people for his kingdom, and he never strayed from his purpose.

He did cleanse the temple in a very forceful manner, but that was his Father's House, not civil government. The Christian's work today is to teach the Master's way and to keep the temple clean and free from worldly practice. Our Lord never gave us a commission to cleanse the world or weed out the tares. He, Lord of the Harvest, is going to take care of that.

I have read the Book and never noticed a condemnation of homosexuals. What He did condemn was the *practice* of homosexuality. "When your brother sins against you, go and show him his

fault," you say. Right! But I find no command to pick up the phone or pen and petition government to force him to conform to your version of "righteousness."

Let's forget the moral "leaks" of our time and place and get on with the job our Lord gave us to do. He is returning soon and there's a lot of teaching, helping the unfortunate and "temple cleansing" to do before he gets here!

Audrey Tanner
Punxsutawney, PA

We strongly agree with you that Christians are never to "force" their beliefs on anyone. Does a letter or phone call to a government official constitute force? Did Christ attempt to influence civil government when he sent his prophet Jonah to Nineveh? Were his plagues on Egypt an attempt to influence Pharaoh's government? Were Nebuchadnezzar's Divinely-inspired dreams the Lord's attempt to influence the course of events in Babylon?

We heartily agree with the concept that the Lord hates sin but loves the sinner. Does God condemn and punish the homosexual as well as the sin of homosexuality? According to Romans 1:27; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-6; Leviticus 20:13 and 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, we believe the answer is Yes. Therefore, as Christians who love the Lord, our fellow man, and our country, aren't we individually obligated to utilize all legal, legitimate means to teach, inform and warn?

No Laughing Matter

I used to laugh at the charges of a liberal media. I'm not laughing any more. Since the homosexual issue came up I have started thinking. It seems every time homosexuals are presented an effort is made to make this act seem as normal as possible. Yet whenever a Christian view is presented it is never from a moderate, reasonable, thoughtful Christian. It is always a radical right wing disgusting individual chosen to represent Christians in an attempt to discredit them. I do not want to see the extreme right take over or see our country run by religious fanatics. While there are no groups or individuals I hate as a Christian there are many actions I do hate: drunkenness, homosexuality, theft, murder, and adultery. This does not mean I am homophobic — I am simply a Christian trying to practice my religion.

Becta
Honolulu, HI

Worth the Wait

Yes, it was worth waiting for! We anxiously awaited each day's mail for a copy of TSS in its new format. The slight delay has already been overlooked and forgiven in view of the great effort and the necessary sacrifices. Words cannot adequately express our approbation and sincere appreciation to all involved.

Lawrence & Lottie Burrell
Fairview, OK

New Look

The new look of TSS is great! I'm glad BSA has adopted this new format, but I'm even gladder to see the same fine reporting of news from around the world of interest to Sabbatarians is continuing.

Jeanne Yurke
SDB pastor in NJ

Thanks! We'd also like to include the dates and locations of important upcoming convocations sponsored by Sabbathkeeping denominations and groups. If you're receiving official schedules from your church that would be of general interest to our readers, please pass them on to us.

Who's Who?

I am happy to become acquainted with you through the pages of TSS, and want to welcome you. I like your "Coming Soon" corner. In the March issue you showed a picture of the Mike Cleveland family — I'd guess Mike is your son. His article about Abraham is an excellent one. It was good to read Dick D. Wiedenheft's article on Hungary. The article about the Iowa Essenes was startling to me. I do like Michael Galimore's art work very much. Is Jonathan his son?

Leroy Bass
Washington Island, WI

Thank you for your interest. Mike Cleveland is our nephew, Jonathan is Michael Galimore's son. All three are much loved in the Lord!

Expanding BSA/TSS Membership

I want to comment on the new format of TSS. Complements to all involved! I am a past President of the BSA and former Board member. We have not been very successful in expanding BSA membership and TSS readership. Hopefully that will change.

John Bevis
Paint Rock, AL



The SABBATH from Creation to Eternity

DESMOND FORD

COVER STORY

The following was transcribed from Dr. Ford's address in July of 1986 at Chattanooga, Tennessee.

What God has joined together we should always be reluctant to put asunder. In the decalogue, no one finds fault with nine out of the ten commandments. No one doubts that nine out of the ten commandments have always been binding on all men — Jew and Gentile. When you have crawled over three that no one can debate: Worship the Lord thy God only, (You) shall not make any graven image, (You) shall not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain — when you finally get over those hurdles and you come to the one that is the most voluminous of the ten, taking up two thirds of the space of the entire decalogue — when you come to that one, people have a question, which may explain why God said, 'Remember!'

There are three primary issues which you should consider in connection with this: (1) did the Sabbath really come in at the beginning; (2) does the decalogue summarize moral duties for all time; (3) what was the attitude of Jesus?

Was the Sabbath Instituted at Creation?

There is no Bible memorial that begins long after the event it is to memorialize. Every Bible memorial begins at the time of the event it commemorates. For example, consider the Lord's Supper. If some people's logic concerning the Sabbath was applied to the Lord's Supper, we would not yet be keeping it. Some people say that the Sabbath only came in with the Jews, who are millenniums down the road after creation, even though the Sabbath is supposed to commemorate creation. Every Bible memorial begins with the time of the event it memorializes: the stones that were put in the River Jordan, the circumcision when God called out a covenant people, the Lord's Supper — every one begins at the time of the event. When Jesus said the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the

Sabbath, he is talking about the time when things were made. He says, "when man was made, the Sabbath was made."

The book of Hebrews, chapter four, says God spoke of the seventh day at the foundation of the world. I think that the evidence is that the Bible position is that the Sabbath is for all men from the beginning. You know that it was for the first man, and it was probably for the last man — and all in between. That is supported by this, the fourth commandment talks about work, rest, and worship. As long as you are human, you need all three. Some people try to live without working; they can't do it very successfully. Some people try to live without resting. My friend, if you ignore the Sabbath principle, you will get all of your Sabbaths together in an early grave! We need to rest, and we need to worship, and this is God's provision from the very beginning.

Does the Decalogue Summarize Moral Duties for all Time?

Keep in mind that every great gift can be abused. The higher the value, the more it can be abused. The higher a thing is the more it can be perverted. Consider the gift of speech. No other creature has it. Human beings have it. My, which one of us has not been wounded with a lasting scar when someone's tongue turned into a sword?

Now, my friend, the Bible says the Sabbath is made for man; the Bible says the Sabbath is honorable — calls it honorable. Yet it has been prostituted in an abominable way as though it was the only badge that you are a saint of God, as though it was the way to heaven, as though it distinguished you from all the lost. Those are terrible perversions! The majority of God's people are not Sabbathkeepers. Now, I believe that the majority of the people in the Kingdom of God from this dispensation will probably never have been Sabbathkeepers.

We have dealt with two things: was the Sabbath from creation for all men? I

think that the burden of evidence is "Yes." The Ten Commandments — are they taken for granted for all men? Every time the New Testament refers to the decalogue it upholds it as a standard. It does not uphold it as a method because you cannot earn salvation by obedience. But, it always upholds it as a standard. Take the book of Colossians. People have used Colossians 2:16 against the Sabbath. If you take chapters three and four, it names at least nine out of ten of the commandments of the decalogue, and I believe ten. Remember the comment in 4:15 that speaks about the church that meets in Nympha's house? They had a regular time for worship in that group, and there is no hint anywhere in the new testament of any other possibility than the seventh day. That is the only one that seems difficult; every other commandment is stated plainly. I think the fourth commandment is inferred in "the church" that meets "in her house." That is the second point — the decalogue is always upheld as the standard in the New Testament.

What was the Attitude of Jesus Toward the Sabbath?

Consider the attitude of Jesus: he risked his life to clean up the Sabbath, dear friend. Campbell Morgan says the reason Jesus went to the cross, humanly speaking, was because he defied the Pharisees over their perversions of the Sabbath. You can't find a syllable from Jesus against the Sabbath. It is a symbol of the rest we have in Jesus because of His finished work on the cross. That is the right use of it. The rest of the Sabbath is meant to be an outward sign of the rest we have all week long because we trust in the finished work of Jesus.

I do believe the day is coming when the world, finding the church falling to bits, will say, "Hey, why is the church in such a mess?" One reason is, Sunday has become "Fun-day." Sunday people do not keep a day at all. If they keep anything, they keep 60 minutes, and I do not mean the TV program. I think the day will come when attention will come back to the worship day. Calvin said, whenever the worship day is lost, the church is surrendered to devils. I think (that) there is truth in that.

Question: "When we read about the Jerusalem Council in A.D. 49 in Acts 15, and the requirements that were being put upon the Gentiles, do we find the Sab-

bath day or anything in the decalogue there?"

Does that mean that the Gentiles could dishonor father and mother? Or that they could kill? No, all it means is that in the things where there was dispute among converts to Christianity and the Jews, these certain things were urged upon believing Gentiles. You see, it says in the same context, you need not tell them any more, brethren, for it is heard every Sabbath day when Moses is read in the synagogues. So the duties given there are only the debatable ones. There is nothing said there about "Thou shalt not kill."

Question: "Do you also see Sabbath as a test in the last days?"

I will give you one man's opinion. Come along with me to Revelation chapter 13. It says, "And all the world worshipped the Beast." Which of the commandments of the decalogue does that violate? Number one says to have no other gods before me. All the world worshipped the beast. Then it says that they made an image to the beast. Which does that violate? Number two. Then it says in verse seven that they blasphemed the name of him that dwells in heaven. Which commandment is that against? The third one. And then, when you come to the end of the chapter, it says that they worshipped the creature rather than the Creator. It says the number of man. Not the Creator, but the creature. Which commandment warns us against forgetting the right worship of the Creator rather than the creature? The fourth.

I believe that there will be a test, not perhaps in all the traditional senses in which some of us have been taught in every aspect, but I believe the time is coming when those who believe in the Bible and the Bible only are going to scrutinize all their religious performances. For instance, baptism. I was sprinkled as a baby, and then, I was immersed. I think the time will come when all Christians will say, "Well, baptism does not save anybody, but I would like to do what my Lord suggested." What did Jesus suggest — sprinkling as a baby — or immersion?

I think the time will come when people will want to be so Bible-based that they will say, "We're not going to be led by the nose, by the traditions of our favorite denomination. What does the Bible say?" I think that they will examine it.

I think that they will examine the Lord's Supper. They will say, "Now, what is the Lord's Supper really doing? Is there a sense in which God is conveyed to the soul through this ordinance whereby Christ is present mystically, or is it just a pure symbol? What is the real meaning of the Lord's Supper?" I think that they will come to the day of worship. Only when the scroll is unrolled will we know the whole story, but I, myself, am inclined to think that the matter of worship is the most important issue before sinners after faith in God.

Question: "It is divisive when you take on both sides of that issue. Does it not become extremely difficult if you are dogmatic on the issue?"

It is divisive. I can only say that the most important things in life are divisive. The fact that you are a Christian puts you very much apart where you work, where you live, the position you will take in the trade union, and in all sorts of areas. I suppose what we have got to strive to do is to disagree without being disagreeable and to keep things in priority. A day does not save anybody. Only Jesus Christ saves. There are some things that are important that are not all important.

Question: "If this is a test of salvation, it does become of the utmost importance. If it can be kept in proper perspective, that is fine, but if we see it as a last-day test, it is very divisive."

It is our relationship to Jesus Christ that saves us, that is all. But, in the beginning of the Bible, nothing was said about faith, hope, or love — only obedience — Genesis, chapter three. Because obedience was the evidence of whether or not you had faith, hope, or love. Maybe it will be that way at the end, too.

When you read the story of creation, for each of the first six days it says that there was morning and there was evening. It does not say that about the seventh day. It does not mention that there was an evening — the reason being that the seventh day becomes a symbol of eternity, which will know no evening. When you come to Hebrews, chapter four, it refers us back to the creation Sabbath, and then it says, "There is a Sabbath-rest that remains for the people of God," meaning eternity. So, the reason that the symbolism of the evening is missing from the record of the first Sabbath is only because it is a type of eternity which will know no evening.

S

The Sabbath

"Never was any of God's ten commandments so wrested and abused in exposition, as the fourth commandment; for the fourth commandment enjoins a day definite, fixed, and certain, which day is the seventh-day, which Moses and the prophets taught the church of Israel. But the fourth commandment doth no where enjoin a time, or a day uncertain and indefinite."

— George Carlow, *Truth Defended, ... concerning the Sabbath*, page 25, (1724) reprinted 1847

"In this Scripture (Hebrews 4:1-11) we have three rests introduced: (1) the Sabbath as instituted in the Creation of the world; (2) the rest of the land of Canaan; (3) the final rest prepared for the people of God."

— G. G. Rupert, *Time, Tradition and Truth concerning the End of the World*, page 39, 1914

"We return now to Colossians 2:16, the only text in all Scripture which, on the face of it, is antagonistic to the fourth commandment. Colossians 2:16, strictly translated, warns against human legislation detailing behavior with reference to 'a festival, a new moon, or Sabbath.' ... To keep our exegesis in proportion, we must note that, as Paul's strong language about the law in general has to be balanced with his passages of approval, so in the present passage we must not settle for a one-sided interpretative view. In the very next chapter of Colossians, we find the principles of the Decalogue involved again and again. Most of the Decalogue laws are referred to in this epistle, and therefore to jump to the conclusion that the Edenic Sabbath referred to in the heart of the Decalogue was the object of Paul's attack, would be premature and inaccurate. That Sabbath has no ceremonial elements or minute behavioral rules. Paul is not opposed to all eating and drinking, though he says in 2:16, 'Let no one judge you in eating and drinking.' Neither is he against all Sabbathkeeping. It is eating and drinking and Sabbathkeeping within a certain context that he is repudiating — a context of legalistic ceremonialism connected with asceticism and the worshipping of angels according to rules of mere human devising."

— Desmond Ford, "The Sabbath and Colossians 2:16," *The Forgotten Day*, pages 105-106, 1981

The Lord's Day Re-examined

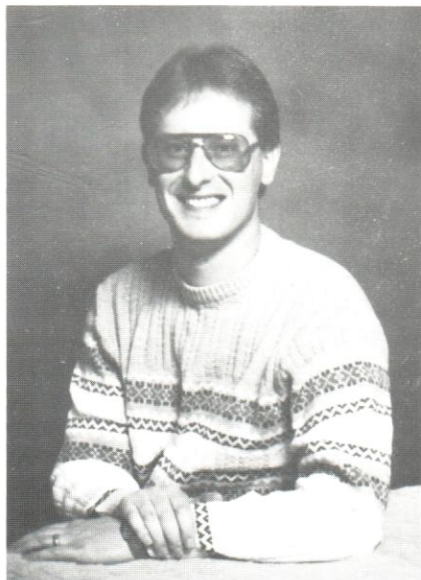
RODNEY NELSON

The overwhelming consensus among seventh-day Christians is the reference to "Lord's day" ("kuriake hemera") in Revelation 1:10 refers to anything *but* the first day of the week. This pre-dominant view is supported by various seventh-day scholars using several different alternate interpretations of the phrase "kuriake hemera." These alternative interpretations of Revelation 1:10 were summarized in the January, 1993 *TSS*. These interpretations can be summed up as follows:

1. The "Lord's day" refers to the eschatological, final "day of the Lord." This position is advocated by several first-day commentators as well as Samuele Bacchiocchi in his book *From Sabbath to Sunday*, pages 123-131.

2. The "Lord's day" refers to an annual Easter Sunday celebration which later developed into a weekly Sunday observance in honor of Christ's resurrection. This view was first advocated by C. W. Dugmore (1962), and has been supported by seventh-day scholar Kenneth Strand, among others.

3. The "Lord's day" refers to the weekly seventh-day Sabbath. This interpretation is primary among the general laity in seventh-day denominations. This view is held by such notables as Desmond Ford.



Rodney Nelson and his wife Sherry make their home in Corvallis, Oregon

4. Subsidiary considerations mentioned from time to time by commentators on this text are: (1) a possible linkage between "Lord's day" and a pagan Roman "Emperor's day;" and (2) an association between the "Lord's day" and the Mithraic worship of the sun.

The previous interpretations each have their strengths and weaknesses. Following will be a discussion of their individual weaknesses.

Day of the Lord

Following the traditional interpretation of Revelation 1:10 referring to the weekly first day, the most popular view among scholars is to view the "Lord's day" reference as another way of saying "day of the Lord." Revelation 1:10 simply states that in vision John beheld the second advent of Christ on the day it occurs. Therefore, John did not see the vision on a particular day of the week, but saw in vision the day of the Lord's coming. Bacchiocchi has catalogued the arguments for this view very succinctly:

1. The context of the entire book of Revelation is symbolic prophetic imagery. This would include the immediate context of Revelation 1:10. The context is eschatological (1:7, 8, 12-18). A threefold time dimension is shown in 1:19 which views history as past, present, and future from a prophetic perspective. The conclusion, therefore, is the reference to "Lord's day" must necessarily be a symbolic reference rather than literal due to the symbolic context of Revelation itself.

2. The content of John's vision could not have been viewed in a single day. This point assumes the content to be the entire book of Revelation. Therefore, John could not receive all of this in one sitting, one vision, or one day. Evidence for this is found in 4:2 where John is again seen in vision using terminology similar to 1:10. This indicates John was in vision on another occasion.

3. The language used in Revelation 1:10 can be an indication of emphasis. In short, the grammar usage in "Lord's day" can put emphasis on "day" rather than "Lord's" in identifying whether

attention is given more to the day of the vision or the vision of the day. Thus, to say that John was in the spirit on the Lord's day would mean that he was actually witnessing the very *day* of the Lord, rather than seeing the vision on a certain day of the week.

4. A comparison of texts (Revelation 1:10 with Acts 22:17, 18) reveals a similarity of structure which itself reveals the primary focus of John's vision. First, the verb usage in both passages seems to indicate what was viewed rather than when it was viewed. Paul's vision in Acts 22:17, 18 indicates that Paul saw the Lord. John's vision, on a similar line, indicates he saw the Lord's *day*.

Bacchiocchi cites a few other subsidiary arguments to bolster the above interpretations, but his overall case is summarized in the above arguments.

Does the interpretation of "Lord's day" as "day of the Lord" hold up under scrutiny? Many scholars from both the seventh-day and first-day persuasions hold that it does not. Following are a brief list of these problematic areas.

"Day of the Lord" Critiqued

a. Why does John not employ the widely used Greek expression for the "day of the Lord" ("hemera kurioo") found in the Septuagint as well as the New Testament? Though the terminology bears some similarity, as pointed out by Bacchiocchi, the difference is in this instance more important than the similarity. There is more here than a minor variation in terminology. The uniqueness of the phrase "kuriake hemera" lends itself to a more concise and specialized usage rather than simply saying "day of the Lord" another way.

b. The context of Revelation 1:10 does not confirm only an eschatological description. Upon reading chapter one in its entirety, one finds it very difficult to divide the literal situation of the vision from the vision itself. First, the context of verses 9 and 10 reveals that John definitely describes the place *where* the vision was received (Patmos); *why* he was there (persecution); *who* was exiled (John); *what* John saw (the resurrected Christ in glory); and *when* he received the vision (on the Lord's day). Why would John go to such effort to literally set the stage for the content of the vision itself and then refer to "Lord's day" as a prophetic symbol? Thus to insist that because the book of Revelation deals primarily with symbolic im-

agery automatically means the phrase "Lord's day" has no literal application is to perhaps make John too esoteric. A proper hermeneutic would dictate a literal understanding where it fits the context and a symbolic interpretation where it applies. In context, Revelation 1:10 is not clearly a symbolic text.

c. The contention is made that John could not have received the entire contents of Revelation in a twenty-four hour period. Therefore, many would assert, to understand 1:10 as referring to a literal day is asking too much. But a problem arises with such an assertion. First, to assert that John could not have received the contents of Revelation due to time constraints is to assume something which cannot be proven. Who of us has been the recipient of such a visionary experience to test the time factor of such an experience? This assertion is conditioned by the modern scientific mind which seeks to quantify and qualify every phenomenon of existence. Second, the writers of the New Testament clearly recorded their experiences and inspiration at a later date after the experiences and visions were witnessed. Therefore, it is highly probable that John could receive the visions in one day, yet record the content of the visions at a later date.

d. The comparison between Revelation 1:10 and Acts 22:17, 18 is well taken, yet over-emphasized. It ignores one important factor. Paul's experience is clearly described as "I ... *saw* the Lord speak." John's experience is described as "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I *heard* behind me a loud voice." John clearly did not see anything until he turned around in verse 12, yet Bacchiocchi infers that "the immediate result of the vision was for Paul a *view* of the Lord, while for John that of the Lord's *day*." Thus he believes John *saw* the Lord's day just as Paul saw the Lord *speak*. There is an important difference. John did not see the Lord's day. He did see the voice in verse 12, but what he saw was where the voice came from, not the day on which it came.

e. The grammatical usage in 1:10 regarding emphasis upon the day of the vision opposed to the vision of the day is a valid point. However cogent such an argument may be, interpreting its significance remains open. Bacchiocchi states: "John's use of the adjective rather than of the noun *may* well reflect his desire to emphasize the very day of

Christ's glorious coming into which he was taken in Spirit." Additionally, as noted previously, John does not use the expected Greek terminology for "day of the Lord." This fact seems to neutralize any supposed grammatical trickery inherent in Revelation 1:10.

The "day of the Lord" interpretation, though meriting serious consideration, is not a fully satisfactory interpretation. It has too many problematic areas for dispute. To state that John was literally in the Spirit on a symbolic day seems inconsistent and arbitrary.

Annual Easter Sunday

The next and most recent interpretation is that Revelation 1:10 refers to the annual Easter or Passover celebration of the Lord's resurrection. Support for this view is expressed in the following:

1. There is no firm evidence for believing the *weekly* first day was important to New Testament writers.
2. There is no record in the New Testament supporting regular worship on the first day of the week.
3. Certain "Lord's day" allusions in the *Didache* and *Apostolic Constitutions* (a second-century catechism) can refer to an annual rather than weekly first day celebration.
4. Baptized Christians took their first communion at Easter which indicates that Easter Sunday was preeminent over the weekly Sunday.
5. A connection can be made between an annual first day celebration with Jewish Passover traditions. Thus, early Christians adopted the Passover celebration in honor of the risen Christ. First Corinthians 5:7, 8 may indicate such an early custom.

"Annual Easter" Critiqued

The above assertions are problematical because of one important fact: the annual Passover celebration was in dispute in the Roman province of Asia, the location of John's revelation. The dispute was over the exact date upon which the Passover should be celebrated, whether Nisan 14 (irrespective of the day on which it fell) or always on the Sunday following the Jewish Passover. The Asian church believed the celebration should fall on Nisan 14 which rules out a first day observance of the Paschal feast. This factor leaves an annual Easter-Passover interpretation of Revelation 1:10 completely up

in the air. As Strand has pointed out, even if it is shown that the annual Sunday Passover celebration developed into a weekly celebration, it still "does not solve the problem of Revelation 1:10." Why? Because the Asian church did not celebrate the resurrection on the Sunday following the Jewish Passover. Thus, an annual Sunday celebration certainly did not develop into a weekly Sunday celebration in honor of the resurrection of Christ in the province of Asia, though it probably did in other areas of the Roman Empire. these factors weigh heavily against interpreting Revelation 1:10 as referring to an annual Passover Lord's day celebration on the first day of the week.

The Seventh Day Sabbath

The general belief among many Sabbathkeepers is that "Lord's day" refers to the seventh-day Sabbath. The chief reason for this is due to the fact the Sabbath is referred to as "the Lord's holy day" (Isaiah 58:13), and Jesus stated he is "Lord even of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:28). The main problems with this assertion follow.

"Seventh Day Sabbath" Critiqued

a. The connection cannot be held on hermeneutical grounds. The method of association is the proof-text method which tends to divorce a text from its context. For example, the usage of Mark 2:28 in support of this position is emblematic of this problem. Jesus is not claiming the Sabbath as his day (in the possessive sense: "Lord's day"), but stating that his authority as Lord extends even over the Sabbath day. Thus his position as Lord allows him to have authority over the day itself.

b. Linguistically, the Greek in Mark 2:28 for Lord is "kurios" and not "kuriake" as in Revelation 1:10. There also exists no linguistic connection between "kuriake" (Revelation 1:10) and "hemera tay hagia" (Isaiah 58:13). The word "kuriake" does not appear in the Greek Old Testament (Septuagint).

c. If John used "Lord's day" as an alternate expression for the seventh day Sabbath in the Revelation, why did he not use it in his Gospel as an appropriate designation of the Sabbath? It would seem he would since his Gospel was written near the time Revelation was written.

With the above considerations in mind, it would seem the Sabbath interpretation of Revelation 1:10 fails. There is no arguing against the idea that the

Sabbath is God's holy day. This is not in dispute. What is disputable is whether a commonly understood usage, such as "Sabbath," became known by another Biblically unique term such as "Lord's day." The fact is nowhere in the New Testament is the Sabbath known as the "Lord's day." It is possible that by the middle of the second century, some did understand "Lord's day" as a term referring to the Sabbath. However, the use of "Lord's day" referring to the first day is incontrovertible by this time and was the prevalent terminology for that day.

"Emperor's Day"

The first consideration is an association between "Lord's day" and a Roman "Emperor's day." Some have argued that John and Asian Christians may have coined "Lord's day" to contrast with the pagan "Emperor's day" in order to avoid any association with Emperor worship carried on by pagan Rome. Following are arguments for this view:

1. One meaning of "kuriake" is "imperial." Bacchiocchi claims the word "'kuriake' was used for the Emperor, the noun as a title for him and adjective for that which pertained to him."

2. The Christian population was at odds with the Roman Imperial cult by its refusal to worship the imperial image of the Emperor. This was especially the context in which Revelation was written. Thus, the historical situation to which Revelation was written provides reason to believe that "Lord's day" was a deliberate attempt to contrast imperial power with the Lordship of Christ.

3. It is known that an "Emperor's day" did exist in Asia Minor at the time John's Revelation was written.

The above considerations certainly provide food for thought. However, some problems exist.

"Emperor's Day" Critiqued

a. No evidence has been found for the existence of an imperial "Emperor's day" which would contrast with "Lord's day."

b. Evidence lacks that an imperial "Lord's day" occurred with any frequency, either monthly or weekly.

c. The Greek words for "Imperial" and "Lord's" are radically different.

d. It is unlikely that Christians or John would have drawn attention to such a

distinction between days due to the probability such action would provoke resentment from pagan neighbors.

In addition there is a possible association between the Mithraic worship of the sun on a particular day and the Christian "lord's day." Such a position infers that Christians of John's day were influenced by pagan sun-worship which was the derivation of the Sunday "Lord's day" observance. Such a view ignores one important fact: if this were true, why would John write the book of Revelation? Revelation was written for the exact opposite reason envisioned by this argument, namely, that Christians syncretized their observances by adopting pagan religious beliefs, such as the worship of the sun. There is no evidence for this in either Biblical or immediate post-apostolic literature. Revelation was written to Christians in Asia Minor who were under persecution from the pagan Roman power. It seems unlikely that such an environment would foster adoption of pagan images. Furthermore, persecution always acted as a galvanizing force for fidelity to the gospel in the early church. It was not until times of peace that the church began adopting pagan practices and "Christianizing" them. Rather than arguing for a supposed adoption of Mithraic sun-worship by the early church, it seems more likely that John was making a deliberate distinction between a pagan "sun-day" and a Christian "Lord's day" in order to set Christianity over against pagan practices.

With the above propositions analyzed and critiqued, what alternatives remain? The only alternative left, other than complete mystery, is the traditional interpretation of Revelation 1:10 — that "Lord's day" was a title given to the first day of the week, celebrated either weekly or on some other basis. Is such a view antithetical to an understanding of early church practices regarding worship patterns, specifically seventh-day observance by early Christians? This writer believes not for the following reasons.

The Lord's Day as the First Day

What evidence supports the traditional viewpoint? The traditional linkage between Revelation 1:10 to the "first day" texts of Acts 20:7 and 1 Corinthians 16:1, 2 simply does not follow as there is no direct correlation between them. It is inferred that all three discuss the same day. However, each must be in-

terpreted on its own merit and context.

Revelation 1:10 is a unique passage which requires a different approach. The above two texts do not shed light on its interpretation. They are simply seen as corollaries. With this disclaimer made, what can be said about Revelation 1:10? The following considerations are seen as compelling evidence for the traditional interpretation of referring to the first day of the week.

1. The uniqueness of the expression "kuriake hemera" lends itself to the idea of a new *designation* for a particular day. This rare Greek word, "kuriake," only appears again in 1 Corinthians 11:20 ("Lord's supper"), suggesting a usage and development not previously seen in apostolic Christianity. The only event which would inspire such a significant development would be the resurrection of Christ as Lord. Therefore, the development of a "Lord's day" would not result from simply a commemoration of an event; rather, the event signifies an act of God in salvation history akin to Passover or Exodus.

2. The context of Revelation 1:10 strongly suggests that the resurrection event was in sight when John saw and later recorded his vision. Therefore, a linkage can be made between the day on which John saw his vision (Lord's day) and what he saw in that vision on that day (the resurrected, glorified Lord). When John turned around (verse 12) in response to the voice speaking to him, he saw the glorified Christ in his resurrected glory as First and Last (verse 17). Verse 18 culminates the vision of Christ by declaring, "I am the *Living One*; I was *dead*, and behold *I am alive for ever and ever!* And I hold the keys of death and Hades." This vision of the resurrected, victorious, and glorified Lord on the Lord's day can hardly be coincidental.

3. The rule of historical precedent in arriving at tradition is a powerful fact to consider respecting this matter. Historical precedent simply states that subsequent usage of a term or concept is derived from a common thread of origin. Consistently, in the post-apostolic literature of the mid- to late second century, the Lord's day is seen as referring to the first day of the week. Admittedly, the material often cited from the early second century as proof that Lord's day is the first day is con-

trouversial and not indisputable. However, one must be honest enough to inquire how later usage of "Lord's day" become synonymous with the first day of the week. Where did such a precedent occur? I would argue from apostolic recognition.

4. In arguing against the Lord's day referring to the first day of the week, critics often point out there is no apostolic declaration or precedent for declaring this to be so. This is true, but perhaps this is not the point at all. It can be argued justifiably that the apostles did not always have to authorize a practice in order for the practice to become acceptable tradition. All tradition in the early church did not require an apostolic *imprimatur* to be seen as legitimate and permissible. When we in the Protestant tradition insist this be the case, we in fact restrict the freedom of the early church in their time and milieu. Perhaps tradition is more fluid than often thought.

What all this means is that a custom or tradition, such as Lord's day observance on the first day, may not necessitate or require an apostolic command in order to legitimate its practice. In fact, what John may be doing in Revelation 1:10 is *recognize* a custom of Lord's day observance which was practiced in those churches. Obviously, when he wrote that he was in vision on the Lord's day, he assumed his readers would understand what he referred to by the phrase. This indicates common understanding of a tradition in place at that time.

5. Corollary with the above argument regarding tradition is the development of church polity seen within the apostolic era as an example of developing tradition. A careful comparative reading of Paul's first letter to Corinth (A.D. 50-55) with Clement's first letter to Corinth (A.D. 95) reveals a development respecting the understanding of "office" as it pertains to church leadership. In addition, a change can be seen between Clement's letter to Corinth and Ignatius' (A.D. 110) writings in which bishops (plural) became bishop (singular). Such developments occurred not because of apostolic precedent, but due to factors not fully understood or appreciated today. It is good to remember that Revelation 1:10 is probably a recognition of a developing tradition respecting the Lord's day which was not condemned but recognized by John as a church custom, albeit without apostolic authorization

and without apostolic condemnation.

6. It is often pointed out that the phrase "Lord's day" is not seen in John's Gospel or Epistles. If the first day was seen as the Lord's day, then why did not John refer to the first day as the Lord's day in his other writings?

This is a valid point. However, John's Revelation was addressed specifically to the seven churches in Asia whereas his Gospel does not seem to be limited to any geographical area. It can be argued that Revelation's terminology of "Lord's day" was significant especially to that province. This argument is bolstered by the fact that all the controversial second century references to Lord's day were addressed to Christians in Asia (*Didache* 14:1; Ignatius' *Epistle to the Magnesians* 9:1).

With the above said in support of a

first day interpretation of Revelation 1:10, an observation must be made. The uniqueness of the passage and it's language cries not only for attention, but careful, objective consideration. This article is my attempt to critique and offer another perspective on this ambiguous passage.

It is believed enough has been shown to prompt questioning of each school of interpretation respecting the "Lord's day." In conclusion, Revelation 1:10 remains in many ways an obscure text. This obscurity must weigh heavily on any dogmatic assessment of the passage. Each approach to interpreting Revelation 1:10 is not without its problems. Therefore in making a decision, the weight of the evidence must be the final judge.

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