

REST OF SABBATH DAY

HOW THE ICONOCLAST TWIST THE TEXT'S MEANING.

UNDERMINING FOUNDATIONS

Ancient and Modern Ideas of Spending the Day Which the Lord Has Hallowed

—Rev. Dr. Talmage's Plan For Christmas Instead of Lasy Man's Rest On That Day—A Timely Deliver.

Entered according to Act of Parliament of Canada, in the year 1904, by William Bailey, of Toronto, at the Dept. of Agriculture, Ottawa.

Los Angeles, Cal., Oct. 2.—At this time, when renewed attempts are being made by the enemies of religion to undermine the old established foundations of faith and to revolutionize the Christian Sabbath, this sermon makes a vivid contrast of "the old time religion" and the new. The text is Psalm xi, 3, "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?"

We should hold sacred the dust of our dead. That is true, but we should never build the hillock of the grave so high that it will dam back the onward flow of the "waters of knowledge" and change the "river of progress" into the "stagnant pool of ignorance and sloth." When the past generations did their work they did it well for the time and the conditions in which they lived, but the dead generations would not do as they did in the past if they were living now. We would not cry "halt" to the "forward march" of scientific investigation; neither would we compel the church of the Lord Jesus Christ to "mark time" by the grave of a Justin Martyr, a Calvin, a Wesley, a Luther, a Knox, or bivouac with eternal somnolence in the chambers of a Westminster Abbey, where the honored ecclesiastical fathers gathered July 1, 1643, and composed the Presbyterian Confession of Faith and our Longer and Shorter Catechisms.

But, though we would not consider our ancestors infallible in their opinions nor absolutely wise in their ways of living, yet on the other hand, we must grant that our ancestors knew a great deal more than some of us are willing to give them credit for. Through our forefathers' "lightning expresses" were only canals and stage-coaches and sailing boats, in which most of us would be afraid to cross Long Island Sound, let alone the Atlantic Ocean, that is no reason why they did not know how to develop Christian men and women as successfully as do we. Through our ancestors for the most part had no books save that of a Bible, a "Pilgrim's Progress" or a Doddridge's "Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul," that is no proof that they did not know as much of God and hold the truth in its purity as thoroughly as do we who have access to such vast modern libraries, and yet to-day we find a spirit of "extremist iconoclasm" abroad. Man's prying hands are digging up the old foundations and destroying the old altars and ridiculing the old ways merely because they are old. I would not have you bend the knee before the hillock of an ancestral grave as though it were a shrine, but I would have you respect and not destroy it, but use that hillock of a grave as the stepping stone to a higher throne. The living may in some things be right where their Christian ancestors were wrong, yet we have only to look around at the modern innovations and observe the effect they have on the community to be convinced that in some things our Christian ancestors were right and the modern innovators deplorably wrong.

In the first place, I protest against the iconoclasm which is undermining the foundation stones of our ancestral Sabbath. Its desecrators have been going up and down the length and breadth of the land asserting that religious worship can become as much a form of dissipation as drink or over-eating or over-exercising can be. They make a wrong application of our Lord's words that the "Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." They affirm that it is absurd for a business man who has been at hard work for at least six days of the week from 7 o'clock in the morning some-

times until 10 or 11 or 12 o'clock at night to be compelled to get up on Sunday in time for an early Sunday school, then attend two long church preaching services, and then perhaps to attend a Christian Endeavor Society besides. They contend that Sunday should be a day of rest and that what a man needs upon the Sabbath day is relaxation. He should go to bed Saturday night after a hot bath with his mind perfectly at ease. As he crawls into bed he should be able to say to himself: "Now, I can lie here just as long as I please. If I can awake at 9 o'clock, all right. If I can sleep to 12, better still. Then after I awake I will have a cup of coffee and a roll brought to my bedside, and I will eat a little and then stay in bed for another hour reading the newspaper. Then after dinner I will take my children out to one of the public parks or down by the seaside and get a sun bath and a view of God's trees and valleys and hillsides, or I will go to one of our great art galleries and look at the pictures. It is impossible for me to go and see the painters' and the sculptors' masterpieces on any other day. Therefore the city art galleries should be opened on Sunday. Then in the evening hour I will go to church if I feel like it. If I do not desire to do so I will go to bed again and rest—yes, just rest. By such a system of rest I shall be invigorated and shall return to my work the next Monday strong in body, clear in mind, more loving to my family, the human race at large, and to God himself. That," says our iconoclast, "is my idea of the Sabbath day. I do not think a hard-working man has a right to make his Sunday a day of hard work in church-going, so that he works harder on the Sabbath than he does on any other day of the week."

Sabbath iconoclasts, is that the way you would have man spend his Sabbaths? Well, already your modest teaching in reference to the Sabbath too well has taken root. Your premises are wrong, for you know not to what conclusions they tend. To see whether your grandfather's Sabbath or your own is the better I would have you compare the two side by side. Thirty, fifty years ago the man who made Sunday a day of pleasure was looked upon as a blasphemer, an out and out enemy of God, of the church and of the better elements of the social community. When Sunday morning would come even the horses and the stock of the farm knew it was a day of rest. The family would arise a little later than usual. Then they would linger a little longer at the breakfast table. Then the sweetest music of the world would begin to sound. The old village bell would send its silvery notes rolling down the valley. Then, after morning prayers, the horses were hitched up, and father and mother and all the children rode to town in the same big wagon. Then the pew was a family pew, and all the members were there. Then came the sermon, then the journey home, then the quiet yet bountiful dinner, then the afternoon for reading or restful quiet, then the singing of the hymns around the old-fashioned piano. Then the evening church service again or, if the farm was too far away, the evening prayers and early bed. You know, O man, that old-fashioned Sabbath day meant more than mere cessation from worldly work. It meant quiet communion with God. It meant Bible study and sacred readings as well as mere rest. Do you wonder that such a Sabbath as our fathers observed was the very foundation of church life, of Christian home life, of Bible reading and of consecration to God?

Alongside of this beautiful Sabbath day of rest I want you to place the modern Sabbath, with its so-called liberal ideas. First, where do we find the vestibule of the Sabbath? Namely, Saturday night. To bed early? Oh, no! Saturday night has come. In our large cities the street cars are crowded. Where are the people going? Some to the theatres; others, alas, to places of still more evil resort! Men and women, tired from work now, are turning this Saturday night into the hardest kind of work. They are dissipating for pleasure's sake. To the non-churchgoer, as a rule, Saturday night is only too often a time for free indulgence of every desire that is bad.

Sunday morning is here. Where do we now find most of the non-churchgoers? Again crowding our railroad trains and cars; picnics, ball games, outdoor parties, where the breweries

and the wine sellers get their biggest revenues. The beautiful pictures of the family Bible which we used to study as a boy have given place to the silly pictorials of the Sunday newspaper. Everywhere on the Sabbath six simply runs riot. In many cities even the saloons and play-houses are full. Instead of the quiet family group going to the village church, now almost every country road near an adjacent city has its yelling rioters, half drunk or entirely debauched, who are off for a day of sin. Do you mean to tell me, sensible man, that the modern way of spending the Sabbath is as profitable a day of rest and communion with God as were the Sabbath days our forefathers observed?

The rigid observance of God's day as a day consecrated to himself is the most important foundation stone of the church of Jesus Christ. Without it no true gospel consecration can exist. I know that in some homes the lines were too tightly drawn and in them the Lord's day was gloomy and was a weariness to the children.

I protest, in the second place, against the iconoclasm which would eliminate from our lives the divine principle of consecration to the Father of others. Profane iconoclastic hands have been undermining the foundation stones of our sacred Sabbath. Aye, these enemies of God have been doing more; they have been sneering and ridiculing the beautiful parable of the good Samaritan. They have been declaring that a man's neighbor belongs not to the family which lives next door to him. The only neighbor who has claims he would recognize is the wife or child who lives within the four walls of his own house. He has been asserting that a man's chief duty in life is to himself and his own. After the members of his immediate family have eaten enough and have a well filled wardrobe, a comfortable house to live in, then a man has fulfilled his chief duty to society. His doctrine is, "Care for yourself and let others care for themselves in the same way."

The Golden Rule with our ancestors was a practically and not a mere theory. "Where are you going to-night, mother?" the father often asked. "You look tired. You ought to be going out to-night." "I know it," she would say, "but I must go. Our neighbor is very sick. I am afraid she will not get well. They have sent for me to come and spend the night with her. I have fixed everything for breakfast. If I do not get back in time in the morning, why, you and the girls can get along somehow, but don't worry. Make the children go to bed early."

The daintiest delicacies ever cooked in the mother's stove were not for the growing boys, with healthy, vigorous appetites. They were for the poor consumptive young girl who used to sit day after day upon the neighbor's veranda in the noon sun, smiling at us as we trudged away to school. My how we cast longing eyes at those jellies! We then at times almost wished we could be sick, at least for a little while, to get a taste of them. And how warm and comfortable the mittens looked which mother knitted for the poor children living over the hill! And when the farmer who lived down in the valley was prostrated with typhoid fever and lay for months,

hovering between life and death, don't you remember how your father and the neighbors took turns plowing his field and sowing his grain and getting in his harvest? They say that that sick man was once a strong athlete. However that may be, when upon his sick bed he heard what his neighbors had done and how they had kept the wolf of hunger from his door he cried like a little child. He became just such a sick man as Ralph Connor depicted in one of his best-seller novels.

I deplore also the iconoclasm which is robbing this country of the sanctity of home life. The iconoclast's profane hands are ruthlessly laid upon our ancestors' Sabbath observance and our forefathers' doctrine of "Do to others as you would have them do unto you." They go further than this. Those same profane hands are also snatching away our ancestral home enjoyments as well. They are saying to modern man: "Man, do not be an old-fashioned granny. Do not think because your grandfathers found most of their enjoyment in the society of your grandmothers and your uncles and aunts that you have to find most of your wives and children's company to be a 'stay at home.' Do not forever build for you clubhouses, where you can find nightly fellowship with strong and brilliant men. Come out of that little hencoop of yours. If you want to give a reception to your friends, do not give it in your home. It is too small. Hire a big hall in the centre of the town, where you can receive in better style. There, instead of having a few cakes baked by your own hands and some ice cream which you made in your own freezer, you can have a fine caterer furnish an elaborate supper; instead of having your own daughter sing a simple song or your little boy recite a piece you can have the finest of orchestras furnish the music. If you want speaking, you can hire a professional elocutionist to recite. This is an age of progress."

Do you, my brother, think for one instant that the advent of the modern clubhouse and public reception hall and Delmonico banquets is a moral improvement for modern men over the old-fashioned quilting parties and merry-making frolics which once made the rafters of the old farmhouse creak like the beams of a ship at sea and bend almost like William Tell's bow? Do you think this? I do not. I believe that any enjoyment which a man is compelled systematically to find outside of the society of his wife and children and home is a depleting, enervating and ultimately degrading enjoyment. I believe that any enjoyment which systematically makes a mother relegate the care of her children to nurse girls and to hired hands is an

enjoyment which is poisoned through and through by evil influences which will ultimately bring forth harvestings not for God, but for Satan.

But, lastly, I would state that the iconoclasts of this day are trying to sidetrack the chief purpose for which our forefathers and foremothers lived in reference to a parent's care. Instead of leading a parent to the altar of Jesus and saying, "Oh fathers and mothers, the chief desire of your lives should be to consecrate your children at these altars and have them make a public confession of Christ here," they would break these altars. They would say: "Here is the statue here. Send your boys to college and give them an intellectual education." "Here is the statue of Midas. Sacrifice here, that you may leave them money." "Here is the statue of fame. Make out of your children great orators or painters or scores and hundreds of parents working by day and night to give their children—what? To give them to God and the higher life as their parents tried to do? No. To give them to a worldly success, which those parents in their hearts know may only lead their children to moral ruin and perhaps to eternal death.

O man, I ask of you one question. It is a blunt question. Will you answer me? What would you sooner have had your father to be a great speaker, a great financier, a great general or a simple, noble, pure hearted and devoted servant of Christ as he was and is to-day in heaven? You answer well. There is but one right answer. Then, if the noble, pure, gentle Christian life of your father meant so much to you, can you not, will you not give to your boy the same Christian heritage? By the sacred altar of God's love will you not follow their example? Will you not carry out the dying wishes of your now redeemed and glorified parents and consecrate yourself to your Divine Master? Will you not have and now lead your boys and girls to the feet of Christ and consecrate them to the Master also? Shall not the chief purpose of your Christian parents in reference to their children be duplicated in the chief purpose of your life, to bring to Christ your children and your children's children?

To-day let us have some of the old fashioned purposes and ways and habits of our forefathers. When we are dying may we never be ashamed to utter the words which Dwight L. Moody said to his children. You all have read them: "May we not be ambitious to make money. May we not be ambitious for worldly fame and honors. May we simply be ambitious to find a consecrated, earnest place to work in God's vineyard and have in that vineyard our wives, our children and all our friends working by our side in the Master's name." That purpose is a noble purpose. That purpose God will bless as he has blessed that holy purpose in the lives of the old fashioned folks who are now in heaven awaiting the home coming of their children. That purpose forms the true foundation, the maker and builder of which is the living and true and pardoning and redeeming and ascended and glorified Christ. May God answer the fulfillment of this prayer for pulpit and pew alike.

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