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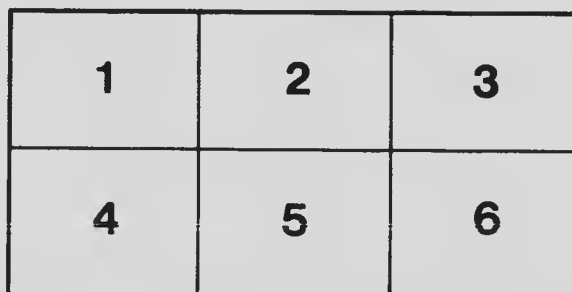
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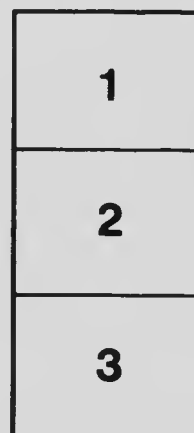
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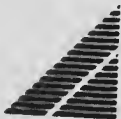
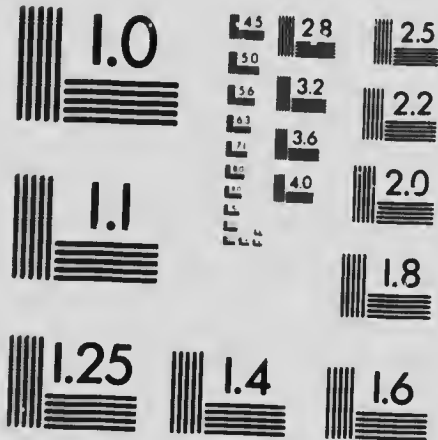
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SOME EVIDENCES, FORMS,
CAUSES AND RE-
SULTS OF

Sabbath Degradation

By F. H. BEALS, M. A.



SPECIAL APPEAL
TO VISITORS,
AUTOMOBILISTS,
LIVERY STABLE
PROPRIETORS
AND INSTRU-
CTORS OF YOUTH



Sabbath Degradation

By Rev. F. H. Beals, M. A.

[A paper read before the District Meeting of Kings County, Nova Scotia.]

In this discussion it is taken for granted that the Sabbath is a Divine institution; that its essential principle is the consecration of one seventh of the time to purposes of rest and sanctity; that it was instituted in Eden; that the changes, which have attended the restatements and interpretations of the principle, from time to time, have been incidental; and that in the Gospel age when the institution has become a memorial of our Lord's resurrection, we have the law fully developed.

The word "degradation" is used advisedly. Two other terms are frequently employed in a similar sense, namely "desecration" and "profanation," but these apply to individual or specific acts of the enemies of the institution. By Sabbath degradation is meant the process by which the institution has been shorn of its glory, and while still called by the holy name of Christ, has been so distorted in meaning and purpose that this memorial has become, to a great extent, a means of forgetting Him.

Some Evidences and Forms of Sabbath Degradation

Nothing in the history of the church is more humiliating or disheartening than the record of Sabbath degradation. There was a struggle between the early Christians, who observed the resurrection Sabbath, and the members of Jewish communities, who kept the system of Old Testament Sabbaths which Jesus had abolished. In this conflict the despised sect was successful, not only against Jewish opposition, but also in so overcoming the pagan customs of Rome that the Emperor Constantine legalized the Christian Sabbath, putting it on an equality with the Roman rest-day, which was observed once in eight days. And

at a later date, when the observance of two rest-days—one every seventh and one every eighth day—became too burdensome, the Christian Sabbath was made the sole legal rest-day of the Empire. But alas for this union of Church and State! For, instead of Christianity christianizing paganism, paganism paganized Christianity, so that the Sabbath became degraded along with other ordinances and the Dark Ages ensued. John Wycliffe's translation of the Bible was the beginning of a reformation in England which issued in Puritanism, whose Sabbath has been the butt of so much ridicule. The Puritans doubtless committed errors of judgment in this and other respects, but they made a serious, and judged by the character of the men their system produced, a successful attempt to reverence the ordinances of God.

But we are more particularly concerned with the conditions of the institution in our own country in this second decade of the twentieth century. Here the truth, to sensitive souls, is appalling. Until, say a quarter of a century ago, owing to the superior piety of the fathers, and to their influence upon the present generation, a good degree of respect for the Sabbath was maintained, but since that time the defenses of the institution have been broken down, one by one, until we have about every form of desecration of which the most depraved so-called Christian countries have ever been guilty. A bull fight in Madrid on Sunday in the year 1800 was no worse in principle than the tennis playing we had at Kingsport in the year 1914. It is common knowledge that shooting and fishing on the Sabbath are practised quite extensively. At sea-side resorts games are played, boats are hired and wares are bought and sold. To minister to this unholy traffic ilvery stables are run full blast, and automobiles, blyeeyes and private teams, in ever increasing number, join the degrading procession. An advertisement appeared recently in a popular magazine, which aptly illustrates the spirit of the present generation. On one page a family is represented as spending Sunday at home in the most dejected attitudes, and on the opposite page the members of the same family are pictured as off in high

glee for an automobile ride, while underneath are written respectively, "The Sunday before," and "The Sunday after." In an endeavor to estimate the significance of such an example of twentieth century business methods, one hardly knows which is most shocking, the sacrifice of the advertiser, the greed of the publishers, or the venality of the constituency.

Some Causes of Sabbath Degradation

1. One of the causes of Sabbath degradation, especially amongst the better classes of offenders, is a misunderstanding and misapplication of Jesus' interpretation of the Sabbath principle. He came not to destroy, but to fulfill the moral law, and His interpretation of the fourth commandment may be summed up in two pregnant precepts, namely: "It is lawful to do well on the Sabbath day," and, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." A careful study of the Scripture passages where this interpretation is found will reveal (a) that Jesus confirmed the sanctity of the Sabbath, and admitted the obligation of Himself and His disciples to conform to it—positively stating that they had not broken it; (b) that the exceptions of "necessity" and "mercy" besides proving the rule, are a guide as to the kind of work that is allowable on the Lord's Day; and, (c) that the highest good of man, individually and collectively, is an end, and the Sabbath a means to be used towards its attainment.

If this teaching of Jesus were followed what delightful Sabbaths we should have! How man and beast would hail their glad return! How God and humanity would be served! But the tendency is, instead of appreciating and using in right ways the liberty, which the spiritual interpretation of Jesus allows, to misapply His gracious words, distorting them into a license to serve self.

2. A second outstanding cause of Sabbath degradation is love of pleasure. It would seem as if the time predicted by Paul, when men would be lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, had fully come. Previous to the dreadful war that is afflicting our country, a large proportion of the people had gone well nigh crazy on the question

of amusements. Business affairs, to say nothing of religious obligations, had become secondary matters. Men and women, young and old, were vying with each other in finding new ways for gratifying their love of pleasure. It is hoped that the war, even at this distance, may have a sobering effect, and that our beloved Canada may come to herself.

3. A great deal of Sabbath desecration is caused by greed. We are sometimes at a loss to account for Jesus' attitude towards riches. He chose a life of poverty Himself. He declared it to be easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of heaven. In the parable of the Rich Fool He shows the tendency of increase of goods to absorb the owner's interest to the neglect of his soul. And in the case of the Young Ruler He makes his willingness to sell his possessions to provide for the poor, the test of his discipleship. Doubtless, the purpose of the Master was to discourage the tendency to make money at the cost of sacrificing God's commands. That sin threatens to characterize the twentieth century in this country, as it did the nineteenth in the United States. Already we have manufacturing plants operating seven days in the week. It is reported that a government official when remonstrated with for putting a Sunday train on the I. C. R. replied that there would be more Sunday trains before there would be less. This love of gain promotes the Sunday excursion and the Sunday theatre. It opens the livery stable doors, unties the pleasure boats and induces the merchant to break not only the law of God, but also the law of the land.

Some Results of Sabbath Degradation

The evil effects of Sabbath degradation are proportionate to the importance of the institution in God's plan for man's salvation. A broken cog will mar the working of the machine, the breaking of a wheel will put it out of commission altogether. The temple door may be off its hinges and no serious results follow, but, if a pillar crumbles, the structure comes to the ground. The Sabbath is one of the most important pillars in the temple

of Christian truth, and very serious results follow its degradation. What are some of these?

1. **God is dishonored.** The measure of the people's respect for the king's laws is the measure of his honor in the country. The exaltation of God as the Supreme Lawgiver is the essence of religion. To obey is better than sacrifice, because to disobey is to dishonor. God has set apart one day in seven to be used, in a special sense, for the service of Himself and of His creatures. A corollary of the command, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy" is "Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth." If an enemy were seeking means of bringing the Christian conception of the Deity into disrepute, he could find none more effective than the degradation of the Sabbath. The Devil understands this, and acts accordingly. This, apparently, a great many people do not understand, and so are found following the Devil's lead, in dishonoring God by violating the Sabbath law.

2. **Religious work is impaired.** Take the case of the fad of visiting pleasure resorts on the Lord's Day. The winter is scarcely over before arrangements are initiated to get away from the restful associations of country and village homes to the bustling scene of a shore resort. If the custom were confined to the indifferent, it would not so much matter. But Sunday School workers leave their posts, and, besides interfering with the work of the schools, set a bad example before the young people; for they argue that if a trip to the shore is good for the teacher it is good for the pupil. If it is right for the church member to go off in his automobile, leaving the church work, it is right for them to go on their bicycles. Hence it comes to pass that the season of the year best adapted to reaching the children through the medium of the Sunday School is being devoted to the gratification of selfish interests. The evergreen school has always been a problem. It used to be difficult to keep them running in the winter, now owing to lowered standards, the difficulty is to keep up their efficiency in the summer.

3. **Moral standards are lowered.** If a child accustoms himself to disregard one of a set of his parent's rules of conduct, the way has been opened for bringing the whole list into contempt. So the commandments of God stand or fall together. If our young people are allowed to break the fourth number of the decalogue, they must not be expected to have so much respect for the others. The awful slump in morals which we are witnessing today, when the most solemn agreements are reckoned as mere scraps of paper, when graft in politics, trickery in trade, and looseness in morals abound, is due, in large measure, to lowered standards consequent upon the degradation of the Sabbath. If the institution can be rehabilitated this brood of evils will slink away like cockroaches at the appearance of light; if not, then—the deluge.

4. **National decay.** The greatest question before the world is to what extent the war is an expression of God's judgment upon the nations. In the light of history it ought not to be difficult, to see that God does not design to be mocked, and that He uses war as a means of chastisement. When one understands not only that righteousness exalteth a nation, but that sin invites the judgment of God, he is prepared to consider the involved question as to what extent Sabbath degradation accounts for national decay. When Nehemiah came to put things in order at Jerusalem he found the Sabbath had been degraded, and he protested thus: "Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath Day? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us and upon this city? Yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the Sabbath." What is needed is ten thousand Nehemiahs who will undertake to restore and maintain a decent respect for this institution which Gladstone declared to be one of the chief pillars of the country's strength, and to warn the pleasure seekers and money grabbers that their thoughtless and wanton desecration of the Sabbath are so many nails in the country's coffin. It is interesting and encouraging to note that some in the old country are awaking to the gravity of the situation. From

an article in a recent issue of World Wide, in which the writer commends the sentiment of Lloyd George to the effect that the liquor traffic is a worse enemy than Austria or Germany, we quote the following as wise and relevant: "But it is not one man's oratory that is going to mend things, nor the approving echo in the hearts of thousands as they hear or read. It will be done if at all by the individual efforts of us millions at home, working out our own salvation with as much fear and trembling and agonizing, and tears, as it costs the millions in the fighting line to do their part in the same great enterprise. . . . The question is whether we shall have the courage and the faith to be consistent and to make the volte-face in a thousand details of life which such consistency will demand. If we have we shall not only win, but what is more, we shall deserve our success, and be able to bear it. If we have not, then perhaps a defeat that will break our hearts may be less fatal than a victory that would harden them further."

In view of the evil effects of this degradation, permit me to appeal to certain classes of influential citizens to assist in arresting the decay of this institution and in restoring it to its exalted place in the life of our country.

Appeal to Sunday Visitors

In the days of our fathers there was little or no Sunday visiting in Christian communities; but now it has become a common custom. We have the "week end" visitor, the "town cousin" visitor, the "pleasure resort" visitor, and the "church" visitor—all of whom, in varying degrees, serve the cause of Sabbath degradation. If you belong to either of these classes, let me remind you that your custom is injurious to yourself and to your victims. Your hosts are too courteous to tell you what a nuisance you really are. Your friends are not lacking in hospitality. If you will make your visit at a proper time, they will give you a royal welcome; but they resent the dissipation of thought and energy, which the Sunday visit entails. Your own homes and churches need your presence, and, on the whole, they furnish, or could be made to

furnish, as restful and as helpful conditions as can be found anywhere. However, if you must go on your travels, see that you do not make the trip to or fro on the Lord's Day, and that you support the worship of God in the community visited.

Appeal to Automobile Owners

It is because automobiling, for various reasons, lends itself so readily to Sabbath degradation that appeal is made to all owners to refuse to use their cars, or allow them to be used, for so base a purpose. There are lawful purposes to be served. Jesus is saying, "Bring them hither to me." Distant and invalid worshippers and Sunday School pupils, may be taken to the house of God. Comforts may be carried to the sick, the lonely, and the poor. But remember that in a very real sense, your machine is a product of Bible truth. There are no car factories in Timbuctoo. For from \$600 to \$1,200 you have become steward of an investment which makes you a veritable king among men. What a shame that Christianity should have produced an instrument to be used to defeat the purpose of its Founder! It is as if the memento of a loving mother should be used to mock her memory and maim her offspring. Everything considered, the action of the ancient queen, who ordered her chariot driven over the corpse of her father, is not to be compared for shamelessness and irreverence to that of the man who drives his car over God's commandment, thus lending his influence to the corrupting of the life of the country.

Appeal to Livery Stable Proprietors.

Yielding to the demand of ungodly tourists and local sports the livery stables of our country are rapidly becoming centres of corrupt and corrupting influences. The law which Jesus said He came not to destroy but to fulfil is, "Thou shalt do no work, nor thy servant nor thy beast of burden." In disregard or defiance of this command, in many stables the Sabbath is the busiest day in the week. Orders are booked ahead, questions of necessity and mercy are thrown to the winds, and everything possible is done to make it a day of profits. Your business may not have reached

this disgraceful level, in which case you are warned to beware; for when the love of pleasure and the love of gain co-operate it requires strong force of character to resist

To you who have fallen I appeal on the ground of your own soul's needs and the needs of the souls of your employees. You cannot afford to miss the help that Sabbath observance affords. What shall it profit you to gain the tourist's gold and lose your own soul? I appeal to you on the ground of your lordship over the animals you call yours. They are yours, in a sense; but, first of all, they are God's. He honors you by giving them into your charge. His will touches every hair on their bodies, every muscle and nerve of their wonderful organisms. They need a rest day as well as man, and He has made provision for that. See that they are not robbed of this right else they will rise up in judgment to condemn you. I appeal to you in the name of the church which is the foster-mother of your business, and whose work and worship you mar; and in the name of your country's honor and security, which are of infinitely more value than the foreigner's gold.

Appeal to Instructors of Youth.

It is upon you, parents, preachers and teachers that the heaviest weight of responsibility rests. It is your duty to maintain, in the face of powerful opposing forces, a proper attitude to the institution yourselves. Let no wanton desire to be like other people, or no fear of being singular, lead you to lower the standard. In your case it is apt to be the little foxes that spoil the vines. Your field of opportunity is large and ready for the seed. Be prompt lest the weeds preempt the soil. It is freely admitted that what has previously been said has been chiefly of a negative character. Yours is the privilege of setting forth the positive side of this great principle. Questions of history, sociology and economics, as well as of religion, are involved. Your purpose should be to produce a God-fearing generation, and, if you are faithful to this trust, when the eternal Sabbath dawns the Master will say to you: "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

