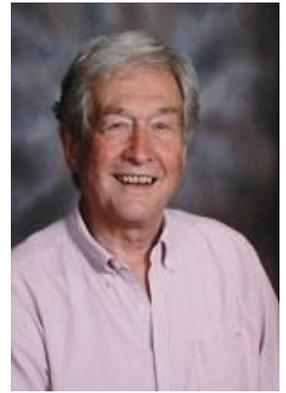


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## THE SABBATH

- 1 I have been troubled lately about the Sabbath. Are contemporary people missing something?
- 2 The Commandment says, “Honour the Sabbath Day to keep it holy...” What can that mean today to contemporary North Americans?
- 3 I can remember from my youth my Father, a Lutheran pastor, not allowing his children to shop or to go to the movies on a Sunday. That would be to make other people work. Dad wanted to avoid that.
- 4 It was much easier to follow Dad in those days, when everything was closed up on a Sunday. In most cities, so called blue laws meant most businesses closed up completely on a Sunday. And of course there were no mammoth shopping malls, those enormous testimonies to the legacy of unbridled free market capitalism..
- 5 These days, Sundays in North America are like any other day. The malls are open on Sundays. Even corner convenience stores, mom and pop stores, are forced to remain open, if only to compete.
- 6 The Sabbath, strictly speaking, is Saturday, not Sunday. But since antiquity Christian piety has transferred the honouring of Saturday to Sunday, recalling the Resurrection of Christ. Present day Adventists are excepted. They keep Saturday holy, to a large degree.
- 7 But not only Adventists. Roman Catholic parishes these days are discovering that the Saturday evening Mass is the most popular, the most heavily attended, of the weekend. Can other Christian churches follow their lead, and schedule Holy Communion on Saturday night as well?
- 8 The liturgical day since antiquity has always begun on the evening previous – Christmas Eve, Easter Eve. So we’re “honouring the Sabbath” with a Saturday evening service as well: Mass, The Eucharist, Holy Communion, the Lord’s Supper.
- 9 In any case, today every day of the week – even Sunday – has become a day, not for relaxing, tuning out, and honouring our God, but instead for buying and selling. Like any other day of the week. Even childrens’ sport events and practices are held on Sunday mornings these days.

10 But are we losing something? Is human health, among other things, at risk by all this commerce? These paragraphs represent a meditation on the risks of NOT “honouring the Sabbath...”

11 What might it mean for contemporary North Americans to honour the Sabbath? Here are some thoughts on the subject.

12 Remember first that the Sabbath is meant to be a gift to the human species. The Sabbath is meant to be a day when you don't have to do anything. It's pure grace.

13 Can we teach ourselves, at the very least, to follow my Dad's dictum? To resolve not to shop, not to force others to work by our shopping?

14 There is something positive to be gained, it seems to me, by not capitulating to the madness that unbridled free enterprise has forced upon us. Is it really necessary to devote seven full days out of each week to buying and selling?

15 I am aware that many people have complicated schedules these days. Perhaps Sunday is the only day they have to buy or sell.

16 And in my view it needn't be Sunday. The trade union movement of the early 20th Century gave us the five day work week and the weekend.

17 But contemporary schedules have suggested alternative “weekends” and alternative “Sundays”. So today we are free to choose which day of the week to serve as “Sabbath”. When we will relax from buying and selling. When we will simply enjoy family time together. Or simple solitude.

18 We are cheating ourselves – and it will show up in our physical ailments, I am certain – if we do not set aside some time – one full day of twenty four hours each week – when we “do not labour”. Following the example of today's Adventists.

19 They – and the ancients – have something to teach us. Every human being needs rest. The gift of respite. Permission to opt out – with regularity – from the enduring and persistent rat race. Even clergy.

20 Can you endorse that view? Can you strive to find one day in your week – one in seven is enough – and call it your personal Sabbath? Remember, it's a gift!

21 You'll live longer, I guarantee it.

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