

# **DAY of DESTINY**

## **THE MYSTERY OF THE SEVENTH DAY**

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### Preface

This book was accepted for publication by Review and Herald Publishing Association more than a decade ago. In fact, its acceptance seemed enthusiastic and unanimous. But then, suddenly and unexpectedly, it was dropped. The only reason alleged by the Book Editor of those days, in a letter to the author, was the following: The book was too un-popular to guarantee the sale of at least 5000 copies within a limited period of time, necessary in order to "break even."

A couple of years later the manuscript was accepted for publication by Andrews University Press, but again unexpectedly dropped. This time the reason given was: The book was too popular (not sufficiently academic, particularly in its style).

The author happens to know some other reasons why the men whose verdict is decisive in matters of this order, will tend to go against the publication of such a book. And the reader will soon understand a good deal--and, by and by, more and more--of the great battle which is here going on.

But the more urgent would it seem that the book be made available to a wide group of readers who will be greatly benefited, and pleased, to receive the unusual information it provides regarding some highly controversial topics.

You may of course be among those disturbed by an increasing awareness that an unprecedented drama is in the process of shaking the very foundations of our lives in terms of having time-honored and long-cherished beliefs overthrown in circles of serious Bible students from whom you would never have expected it.

In the present work both Sabbath-keepers and non-Sabbath-keepers will be confronted with that drama, seen from an angle they had hardly imagined.

For so many years it has been a source of sadness to me that strong theologians in the Protestant world, even such as Robert Brinsmead, exerting a tremendous influence among us, did not have opportunity to become acquainted with the results of my research in this particular field. But now, whoever you are, please read my book with an open mind, and see for yourself if it has any worth-while answer to give to questions of the most crucial nature among us at a time of unprecedented crisis for both Sabbath-keepers and non-Sabbath-keepers.

### CHAPTER 1- DOES THE SABBATH MAKE REAL SENSE?

Does the commandment regarding the 7th Day make sense in terms of a moral obligation? Or is it morally nonsensical? As far as I can see, this question has hardly ever been asked in a serious way by one particular group of experts who ought to have every reason to ask it. I am referring to the leading scholars of the present day in the field of Christian Ethics. Why has this topic been so utterly neglected? Ought it not to be a basic one? At least we should think the Sabbath presents aspects important enough not to be skipped so thoroughly as has been the case. Research today otherwise seems to proclaim the need of being both thorough and comprehensive, paying due attention to all fields of knowledge. In a particular way that ought to apply to our intensive scrutiny of the Bible's concepts of right and wrong, good and evil, ethics and anti-ethics.

Nevertheless, the fact remains, indisputably: The Sabbath, as an ethical problem, seems to have been treated as a veritable taboo. This applies to the most respectable circles in Christian theology.

To the best of my ability, I have tried to find out something in this field that I can rely on, as the result of accurate and tireless investigation. It seems fair that the Sabbath commandment should bear the same scrutiny, the same crucial test that was always kept in store for things that are to be accepted as meaningful or rejected as meaningless.

From times immemorial one rule has appeared reasonable in all research on spiritual matters: Men must ask for meaning. This is a main concern of longing human hearts and truth-seeking human minds everywhere and at all times: Do things in our world make demonstrable sense?

We are fully responsible creatures, endowed with intelligent minds and feeling hearts. So we cannot lean on hear-say, on mere human traditions, or some casual guess-work philosophy. We must know, with all the certainty available to human creatures.

The question about the meaningfulness or the meaninglessness of the Sabbath is one that has appealed to me as a human person and as a conscientious ethicist. My study has demanded an unflinching confrontation with even the apparently most abhorrent facts. I have felt in duty bound to give serious and faithful attention to every relevant facet of the issue at hand, in perfect harmony with the place it rightly deserves in contemporary theology and philosophy. To me it would seem a downright shame to go on pushing under the rug some obvious problems here facing the Christian world: Is it possible that some part of the Decalogue may prove to be entirely non-moral (a-moral) in its essence? And is the Sabbath that part?

Personally, I must admit, I had hardly any idea to what startling findings my research venture in this field was to lead me. The road I had here launched out upon was a problem-studded one. But it also presented new perspectives, promising possible solutions.

Considered from the view-point of Christian ethics my question would naturally take this form: Is there anything inherent in the very essence of the Sabbath Commandment making it morally binding upon a Christian to keep that day holy? Going contrary to a clearly moral obligation, must of course be a matter of serious concern to any person involved. But being under the oppressive yoke of a sham duty may be an equally crushing and tragic destiny to a human soul, born for freedom rather than for slavery. Is "sabbatarianism" freedom then, or is it slavery? It seems bound to be one or the other. Which of them, that is the great question. Now, do there exist, in basic ethics, any criteria apt to decide this question in a decisive way? Does Christian ethics dispose of any such criteria?

Moral obligations always present themselves as something penetrating deeply into the sphere of personal relationships. Consequently, an investigation of this order is bound to be a matter we need to treat conscientiously in the highest degree. Thoroughness is a must. So I made up my mind to do thorough work, and to take my point of departure in a field of research where my qualifications seemed to be the best. I am referring to the history of ideas, and particularly the study of fundamental motifs in the Western World. At least I did, myself, feel that I had a fair knowledge of this research area.

As a historian of ideas I had already marveled considerably at the mysterious inroads of platonic spiritualism into Christendom. But never before had I viewed this historical fact in any direct connection with the question of the Sabbath commandment, compared to the rest of the Decalogue, in terms of ethical relevancy.

I started this book referring to the question for meaning. That is the personal individual's existential cry de profundis: Does my life have an intelligent purpose? That may be differentiated in terms of the triple question of the WHENCE and the WHY and the WHITHER: 1. Where do I come from? 2. Why am I here? 3. Where do I go from here?

The last of those three is not the least important. Too many among my fellow travelers tell me that I am bound for a land of virtual nothingness. The only fate awaiting me at the other end of the road is the final wiping out of my very identity as a person.

Now notice: This is not only the vague idea troubling the minds of the great majority of every-day materialists among us; that is, such who hardly possess any heart-felt religion or any deeper philosophy in their lives at all. No, it is also the firm conviction (or systematic ideology) of those having the only "religion"--or the only philosophy rather--which ever managed to penetrate the serious thinking of our Western culture, by and large, since the day of Plato; just as we may speak of the only "religion," the only philosophy, ever to exert a real impact on the Eastern World since the day of Boudd'ha. I am speaking about the pure-spirit-ism of pagan idealism, a formidable phenomenon whose nature most people among us are sadly ignorant about. Although this spiritualism is the one great Rival of Christianity in our world, even most genuine and otherwise most enlightened Christians seem to know next to nothing about that philosophical spiritualism.

Here I ought to be among the first myself to plead guilty. The very profession I represent is to blame for that ignorance, maybe more than anybody else. In fact, you are hardly ever told, in plain and unambiguous terms, by your teachers of the history of ancient philosophy what Plato's famous doctrine of the Idea bluntly implies, regarding the "survival" of the human "Soul".

And now, what about another branch of practically the same "guild"? Hardly ever are you plainly informed by the prophets of Eastern meditation philosophies, now spreading their "wisdom" like a prairie fire over Western lands, what meager hope they can actually give you for a survival that is here assumed to be the self-evident ideal. Maybe you are so practical and realistic in your human thinking that you would never think this worthy of the term "survival" in any case. It looks as if we have inflation enough in our world today. We are not so eager to have it invade even the most sacred concepts of our spiritual terminology.

I shall do my best to keep faithfully and soberly to the matter at hand. I invite you to follow my argument with a critical mind and an open heart. Possible mistakes of mine should not be blamed on any institution or any collective group. I assume full personal responsibility for this unusual approach to the

questions treated and for the results I arrive at. I am staking unreservedly on an attitude of full sincerity. The Sabbath question will have to bear the full weight of a fair trial.

I am fully aware, of course, that the obligations I have thus assumed demand a most delicate sensitiveness to diverging views, and a most vivid responsiveness, on my part, to all possible objections. I must be prepared to meet--with courage and humility--any counter-argument which happens to come my way, either from professed Sabbath-keepers or from non-Sabbath-keepers. I expect some sharp resistance from either camp. That is no great misfortune. I must weigh the arguments of others, wherever they come from, be it learned theologians or simple laymen. I must weigh them with logic and a fair consideration of the basic historical facts. This is where the standard of fairness in debate must be inexorable. If the Sabbath doctrine is not sufficiently strong in itself to stand up to a fair application of the sound and simple principles valid for all truth-seeking, as the Lord of Righteousness has laid them firmly down, then it should simply be abandoned as unworthy of further defense.

A focal point of our discussion is bound to be: is the 4th commandment of the Decalogue, according to its inmost essence, a matter of ethical meaningfulness?

In close connection with that fundamental theme, we also have to raise a question on the historical level. It is a highly relevant one, which might perhaps provide important information about the first question as well: How has that commandment been evaluated, and factually treated, by Christendom. Was the Sabbath generally looked upon as a meaningful commandment, a norm of ethical behavior, commanding full respect?

Modern research in the field of fundamental motifs, governing a given culture, has duly demonstrated that a spiritual battle has been raging between a Christian motif of spiritual values and a non-Christian one. The Christian motif has been given the name of Agape. The pagan fundamental motif has received the name of Eros. Where does the Sabbath find its proper place in this life-and-death struggle of the ages?

In research dealing with such serious matters, no less than in any other worthy research, the truth, and nothing but the truth, must be decisive. For it is the truth which is going to win the final battle. It is not the personal pride of such or such a group of men. And God is the One who must Himself take care of His truth. He, the unconquerable One, is able to do that.

To researchers, as well as to other men, the Bible's God has this word: "Without Me ye can do nothing (John 15:5)". That statement of utter God-dependence comes from the mouth of the Son of God. It ought to direct our thoughts at every step we take. Its theo-centricity is a foundation on which any man can build safely. In matters of ethics, and in any research project based on spiritual argumentation, it is the only foundation you can rely on. The whole Christian Agape motif is found summed up in that categorical statement from Jesus Christ: "Without Me ye can do nothing".

## CHAPTER II

### METANOIA VERSUS AUTARKEIA

The focus then will be narrowed down to this specific question: "Is the Sabbath commandment spiritually meaningful?" Along with that fundamental inquiry, we shall also ask a curious question on the historical plane: "How has this commandment been looked upon and treated by Christendom?" Was the Sabbath commandment generally regarded as meaningful? Throughout my discussion, the relationship that clearly exists between the Sabbath commandment and the inroads of spiritualism will be highlighted. Let me repeat:

In that scrutiny nothing but the truth should prevail. For it is truth that is to win the battle. It is not this or that other group's personal pride. And it is God who takes care of His truth. To researchers, as well as to other men, God says, "Without me, ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). Those words of Christ should be unshakably riveted in our minds as we proceed. Their message is, in fact, the very foundation on which I feel safe in building up the whole argument of my investigation. The fundamental motif of Christianity is epitomized by that categorical statement of Jesus. Man's total dependence on Christ is alpha and omega.

As the Bible looks at human history, it constitutes one great life-and-death battle. A battle between whom? The two giants at relentless war with each other are Christian LOWLINESS and pagan HAUGHTINESS. The Bible has different terms for that fundamental Christian motif of a humble submission to God, man's total self-surrender or Christ-dependence. The main concept I have felt urged to settle upon is that of METANOIA. Nothing could, in a more exhaustive way, assume the function of expressing the fundamental motif on the Christian side. The King James Version renders it "Repentance" in most cases. Other Bible translations have preferred the word "Conversion". That too is understandable. For, literally, METANOIA has to do with a radical "Change of Mind". Generally speaking, what all these terms actually stand for is an entirely new attitude in man, namely an attitude of total submission to God. That prayerful act of self-surrender is the fundamental attitude of what is also called the contrite heart. But contrition is nothing but a total brokenness of man's self. This is all the gospel demands of a human being

who wants to be a child of God. But it should also be pointed out: it demands nothing less than that. And it is not an insignificant change in a person's life. The famous Vulgate rendering of the concept of Metanoia is Poenitentia. This gives three English words of the same root. It is rendered not only as Repentance, but also as Penitence and Penance. The fundamental spirit of Metanoia bears all these aspects of a thoroughly transformed human life in its profound essence.

Why do I choose the Greek word "Metanoia"? It should not be an occasion for any scandal if I here select a term of classical Western origin to englobe the basic spirit of Christianity. There is no getting away from the fact that our present world culture finds some of its roots in ancient Greece. Greek happened to be the world language becoming the main linguistic medium for expressing and consolidating that culture. The entire Hellenist world depended, for hundreds of years, on that language for the propagation and survival of its intrinsic values, both cultural and spiritual. And the incomparable value, here, included, is Christianity. So nobody should be offended if I have given, to the positive one of my two "giants" on the fighting arena of history, a name that is Greek. It is in fact Biblical Greek.

And now, what about a fitting name for the second fundamental motif, the opposing giant fighter on the stage of spiritual battle in our Western world? I think it is not unreasonable if I go to the same linguistic medium to find a fitting name for him as well. But this time I would not hesitate to call it a medium of classical Greek. For it used to be a concept restlessly alive in the philosophical world of antiquity. A word we here come across again and again, and with a significant pagan flavor, is AUTARKEIA. That Means Self-Sufficiency. So it stands for a quality still enjoying the highest prestige in our world. You could hardly find a characteristic more representative of platonic idealism in antiquity than that. In fact, self-sufficiency is a main characteristic of humanism through all ages. I here mean humanism as a philosophy and as a veritable religion, the most worthy rival, and the most formidable one, that Christianity has ever known.

This bold humanism should be well known to most of us. Still I ought to satisfy my reader's desire to know, in further detail and more exactly, what particular qualities I myself include in the term I have here particularly chosen to represent a fundamental motif in an anti-Christian direction (the term Autarkeia, or Self-sufficiency). Theologians will tend to be fairly familiar with the Christian concept of Metanoia. But I cannot expect, in the same circles, a general knowledge of the concept of Autarkeia. At least both the philosopher and the theologian may need a brief outline of what I here understand by the term. It is not complicated. It can easily be understood by people without any special philosophical or theological background.

Who, then, distinguishes himself as being "autarkes" (the corresponding adjective: self-sufficient)?

Pagan man does. That is, any man who has not been transformed by Christianity. Western men as a whole, that is you and I, as we naturally come out in this present world culture, are particularly self-sufficient. Our cultural heritage could not fail to mark us. The result is inevitable: We tend to feel an irresistible urge to depend on ourselves, to stand "on our own feet" in life's most taxing situations. Of course, it may come home to us, sometimes, that we are in a desperate need of salvation. We do need a decisive escape from chaos and utter destruction. But where do we look for that escape? To ourselves! This is the haunting notion of our life, the prevailing idea deadlocking our mind: "If I am to find salvation there is only one I can fully rely on. That is myself. So if I do not manage to save myself, there certainly is not anyone else who will provide it for me." This is the increasingly prevalent cry from the depths of internal anguish in modern Western man. So self-dependence becomes the great obsession of his life.

Now one may frankly ask, Does that man really want to be saved from the monsters threatening to devour him? Does he desire to accept a salvation offered to him by the other ones? There is considerable reason to assume that he does not. Not really, at the bottom of his heart. He abhors being saved by anyone outside, who insists on reaching him a helping hand. He will take no help of that ultimate kind from a fellow being, be it relative or friend, church or government, be it even God Himself. In fact, God is the last one he would stoop down to take help and salvation from.

Now, is there anything in man that makes it easy to persist in that attitude of total self-dependence? Was man ever naturally geared to a life of that kind? You need not go to religion to have the answer. Turn to biology as a secular science. What information does it have about the natural needs of man? It tells you that there hardly exists a single species in this earth that is born more dependent on the other ones. The human baby, from the moment he is born, is the most helpless creature on the earth. No other child in the whole animal kingdom depends so entirely, and for such a long time, as the human child does, on the active intervention, the merciful assistance, of the "other ones," in order to survive in the first place, and then in order to grow up to adulthood and maturity.

So what a tragedy that it should be precisely man who develops this unfortunate attitude of insisting upon self-dependence.

Well, you say, but he finally does manage, then, to become that adult and mature being. He does assert himself as a truly independent one.

No. The remarkable thing is that the trouble does not stop here. In a way it only begins, in earnest, at this stage of the story. It is exactly at the time when man reaches that blessed hill-top of "adulthood" and "maturity" that his problem becomes acute in the highest degree. Other-dependence is the natural element of men's lives, the supreme peak of their blessedness. There is the danger then, that we, with our peculiar set of pagan biases, might imagine that other-dependence, as such, is an inferior and rather abnormal state of things. But the simple testimony of a well-known secular science ought to be sufficient evidence to the contrary. We mentioned biology. Did you ever think it such a tragic thing for that natural human child to depend so utterly on his mother, his closest other one? Of course not. That child is perfectly happy in his utter dependence.

In fact, it is an exquisite blessing, in the world of God's planning, to be in need of Him. The very need the creature senses of a harbor of rest, an environment to which he can abandon himself wholeheartedly, this is, in itself, a most blessed experience. So to the mature creature as well, his very dependence on resting at the bosom that can provide true rest, is an occasion for fulfillment and joy.

At the same time, however, there is of course a certain risk involved in a person's need of rest. It may turn out to be a curse instead of a blessing, even if the Rest giver is there right at hand. The first need of the rest-deprived man is to know that the rest is needed. How, otherwise, could he avail himself of it?

This is where a noticeable difference between the child and the adult may aver itself. Whereas the child is generally quite aware of his need of "resting", that is, his total dependence on the other ones, the adult distinguishes himself as strangely dull (callous, insensitive) in this essential respect. He is just not aware of his desperate need of "rest", and still less of any Restgiver being there, right at hand. So he is just not disposed for rest. And you cannot really rest, if you are not willing to rest.

The man of this world has grown extremely adult, and extremely callous. So we should not be surprised if he has become rather insensitive to the greatest need of his life, and incapable of satisfying that need. It is man's wholehearted return to God's rest (Shabbat) that the gospel calls Repentance (Metanoia).

The diametrically opposite of this is sheer Impenitence. That is the most dangerous attitude any man can persist in. It means a conscious resistance against the grace of God, a bold declaration of total independence of the gracious rest in God's arms. This protracted refusal on the part of the intelligent creature causes a gradually waning awareness of the most desperate need. It is the tragedy of Autarkeia, the proud self-sufficiency in man's nature.

### CHAPTER III

#### IS THE SABBATH COMMANDMENT MORAL?

The decalogue is a moral law. There is hardly any doubt about that. And the Sabbath commandment is right in the middle of that moral law.

So at least somebody, at some time, must have deemed it "sufficiently moral" to be incorporated in the decalogue. On the other hand, certain representative circles of theologians, both keenly intelligent and--I would like to assume--irreproachably honest men, have rated it as definitely non-moral,--a-moral.

To be sure, those men do not bluntly deny that the Sabbath has received that venerable position right in the midst of the universal code of moral conduct just mentioned. But this fact they tend to describe as a curious case of human misunderstanding, or as a deplorable vestige of Jewish legalism. Let us look more closely and quite frankly at this singular item within the framework of the Biblical decalogue:

Considered from the viewpoint of human rationalism the Sabbath may seem to have a certain degree of "arbitrariness" about it. Take the very idea of dividing time into units containing just seven days each. Does that make any sense, humanly speaking?

If we go back to the smaller temporal unit, the day, that is an altogether different matter. For this is at least a dividing up of time based on a definite astronomical fact: a day is just the time this globe of ours takes to make one turn around its own axis. To any observer this "makes sense"; similarly for certain larger units of time, for instance the month and the year. They are self-evident divisions based on rationally acceptable mathematical and astrophysical relations.

But who ever hit upon the idea of dividing time into weeks? We must be reasonably justified--as far as human knowledge and human reason are concerned--in qualifying that idea as somewhat "arbitrary". So this question present itself: Who has had the incomparable "arbitrariness" to command, with an unmistakably authoritative voice:

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord, thy God: In it thou shalt not do any work, thou nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates." Exodus 20:8-10.

On many occasions, zealous Jews--and some Sabbath-keeping Christians over the centuries--have tried to make fellow-truthseekers "realize" that there is "nothing essentially different" about this commandment, as compared to the other nine among which it has been placed. They have not been particularly successful. Why not? Was their endeavor worthy of success?

Let us first look at the peculiar nature of the Moral Law, as it is commonly known. Is there anything in this code of behavior that inspires us with immediate awe?

We remember Kant's saying that two things never failed to fill him with admiration: the starry heavens he saw above him, and the moral law he felt within him. The apostle Paul, also, alludes to the wonderful thing God has implanted in every normal human breast: a sort of deeper conscience, informing men in all environment what is fundamentally right and what is fundamentally wrong:

"For when the gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law; these having not the law, are a law unto themselves; which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts and meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another." (Romans 2:14,15).

In fact, this seems to be a widely accepted axiom, as it were. Any man, whether in an "enlightened" culture, or in the "darkest" jungle, naturally possesses some fundamental notion that he commits some morally objectionable action whether he commits murder, theft, or falsehood in his respective community, or hurts the interest of his fellow men in some other serious manner. (We here assume, of course, that a natural sensitiveness toward standards of good and evil, in the mind of a given individual, or in the group to which he belongs, has not been completely dulled, due to some extreme indulgence or habitual practice of violating that inner code of moral behavior. For even that "natural law", speaking in man's breast, can be reduced to silence, or to an extremely faint whispering.)

As C.S. Lewis pointed out in his fascinating little book *Mere Christianity* (Collins Fontana Books Series, 1964, p. 17), this inner voice in man was traditionally called the law of Nature because people realized that everyone knew it by nature. One did not need to be taught it. It is not "natural" and "universal" in the sense that you might not find an occasional individual who exists without it. Exceptions to the normal do exist, just as you will always find those, here and there, who are "colorblind", or "have no ear for a tune". Such cases do exist. But they do not disprove the main rule. I would like to add, though, that the comparison here may be somewhat weak in one sense: you may be colorblind, and still figure as perfectly human. But if you lack the essence of the natural law at the bottom of your mind, I would definitely hesitate to declare you truly human. This is rather a case of the in-human. True men do possess that law as a sort of standard equipment, a criterion of their very manliness.

Here the objection is brought up: "Different ages and different civilization have had quite different moralities. How could that happen, if the Natural Law is an inherent reality in all normal men?"

But that objection is easily resolved. True, differences in moralities do exist. But do they amount to a total difference from one people to the other, or from one age to the other? By no means. What is strikingly apparent, when we compare Americans with Chinese or ancient people with modern, is rather the similarity in their respective reactions.

"Think of a country where people were admired for running away in battle, or where a man felt proud of double-crossing all the people who had been kindest to him. You might just as well try to imagine a country where two and two made five. Men have differed, as regards, to what people you ought to be unselfish--whether it was only your family, or your countrymen, or everyone--but they have always agreed that you ought not to put yourself first. Selfishness has never been admired. Men have differed as to whether you should have one wife or four, but they have always agreed that you must not simply have any woman you liked.

But the most remarkable thing is this. Whenever you find a man who says he does not believe in a real Right and Wrong, you will find the same man going back on this a moment later. He may break his promise to you, but if you try breaking one to him, he will be complaining, 'It's not fair!', before you can say Jack Robinson. A nation may say treaties do not matter; but then, next minute, they spoil their case by saying that the particular treaty they want to break was an unfair one. But if treaties do not matter, and if there is no such thing as Right and Wrong--in other words, if there is no Law of Nature--what is the difference between a fair treaty and an unfair one? Have they not let the cat out of the bag and shown that, whatever they say, they really know the Law of Nature, just like anyone else?

It seems, then, we are forced to believe in a real Right and Wrong. People may be sometimes mistaken about them, just as people sometimes get their sums wrong; but they are not a matter of mere taste and opinion, anymore than the multiplication table." (Ibid. pp. 17-18).

Even in the most trivial everyday quarrels between people in all countries, young ones and old ones, educated ones and uneducated ones, the sharp observer discovers that certain inner norms are present. For what, indeed, is the meaning of such current phrases as the following:

"How would you like it if someone did the same to you?"

"That is my seat; I was there first."

"Leave him alone. He is not doing you any harm."

"Why should you shove in first?"

"Give me a bite of your orange. I gave you a bite of mine."

"Come on; you promised."

The ethics-conscious anthropologist's conclusion here is not unreasonable: The people who make those trivial everyday remarks are not merely saying to their fellow creatures, "Your behavior there does not particularly please me". No, they imply something infinitely more: they appeal to some definite standard of behavior. And they take it for granted, as though it were a scientific axiom, that the other person, whoever he may happen to be, has full knowledge of the same standard. In fact, they are proved right in their assumption by the very reaction of the person addressed--he simply does not make the least effort to call into question the validity of the assumed standard. He does not say: "Your standard is basically wrong. I do not give one cent for it." On the contrary, what he starts doing is rather to demonstrate that he has not gone contrary to that standard at all. He says for instance: "When I was given the bite of orange, certain circumstances were entirely different." This helps him to get around the standard in a legitimate way. The standard itself is not disputed. The standard is indisputable. It simply is there, with its roots inextricably and eternally woven into the very depths of the human heart.

We have, so far, limited our examples to commandments dealing with a person's offences against his neighbor. So those on which table of stone? On the second. But let us now pass on to the injunctions essentially concerned with man's special relationship to his Creator. Obviously Paul is of the opinion that natural man has some general feeling of his moral obligations there as well. Others have been tempted not to include, here, any of the four commandments as found in the first table of stone. According to their judgment, it is only a certain sense of our obligation toward our fellow-men that constitutes a sort of congenital moral equipment in the human heart. So when Paul says about the gentiles that they are "a law unto themselves", this should, allegedly, apply essentially to the last six commandments of the Decalogue, contained in the second table. These are, according to that special interpretation, the only part of the Law which men naturally keep written in their hearts. Is this true? Not according to Scripture. For how, in that case, could Paul claim that God, through the simple fact of the marvels of a created world, surrounding every person, has sufficiently revealed to that person "His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse" (Romans 1:20)? Even men without any knowledge of the Bible have admitted their total responsibility to recognize a "vertical", as well as a "horizontal" relationship in their lives; so not only a man-to-man relation, but also a man-to-God relation of the highest ethical indebtedness. Man is not a dumb beast without any sense of divinity.

That pessimistic view, excluding practically all natural knowledge of God in the human heart, is manifestly disproved then, both by history and by common present-day experience. Take, first, the testimony of the Socrates whom Plato shows us in the Apology (which I believe to be the authentic Socrates; see *Man the Indivisible*, pp. 106-108). Here is an eloquent case for the vivid consciousness of moral responsibility toward a Supreme Being, which even such a man may have who has never made any concrete acquaintance with the first table of stone. Socrates certainly was a "gentile" in Paul's sense of the term.

This, then, is the testimony borne by human history: even in their relation to the divine, some men, with little or no trace of any biblical culture in their lives, present the clearest evidence that they do have, in the depths of their hearts, some basic sense of a definitely moral obligation toward a Higher Being, a Supreme Force, or Transcendental Authority--or whatever we understand by the name of God. Whenever they know that they have violated that solemn sense of moral dependence they feel toward the Originator of all life, then there is a troublesome voice crying out from their innermost being: "This was an act of my sinful self, committed against the Great Other One. It should never have been done. For His sake it should not have been done." They have a super-sensitive resonance chamber for the voice of God within them.

"For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." (Romans 1:20).

To whom does the apostle refer as those who "are without excuse"? Obviously just those who did not become obedient to "the voice". God has seen to it that they should not appear before the judgment throne saying, We knew nothing better.

"Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shown it unto them." (Romans 1:19).

Any man has freedom to go contrary to the "voice", and the result of this will always be disastrous. Here Paul does not allow us to be ignorant about the exact consequences:

"Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things." (Romans 1:21-23).

We who have been "born into Christendom" are rather quick in dividing the world population into "pagans" and "Christians", thinking that we ourselves belong to the latter group. But according to the Bible, there is much evidence that the border line goes in another place than we imagine. It is the men of good will who will place themselves where God can save them. But the "good will" manifests itself in this

that one is willing to go from light to light, in the same measure as God reveals Himself and His will to the individual man.

What I have here essentially spoken about, is the light that constitutes our common property as men, from the beginning. There is a glimmer of light deep down in the heart of any normal being, some sort of congenital knowledge of God's moral demands to his intelligent creature.

And here we are coming back to the question to which we are particularly bent on getting a dependable and fully satisfactory answer: Of what kind is that "original light" in natural man? How must we qualify that "basic knowledge about God" in the human heart,-that "fundamental moral sense", according to which natural man has an innate knowledge of a certain obligation toward the Supreme Being? Is that "inner light" of such a kind that it imparts accurate instructions about what man is obligated to do in every detail? In short: is it of a specific character?

No, it is of a highly general character. As we shall soon see, we here have to do with a manifestly general awareness, in man, of God and of man's moral obligations toward Him. That seems to be the plausible reason why such an awareness may so often present contours so extremely hazy and vague. God has to reveal Himself specifically in order to be known.

And this brings us right down to the bottom of that first table of stones, to the fourth and last commandment of the law regarding man's special obligations toward his Maker. Of course, it must be pointed out that, according to the Bible, all ten commandments are the result of divine revelation of the highest order. Man would not grasp one bit of their true implication, unless the Spirit of God enlightened his mind and heart. Still the 4th commandment stands out in a spectacular way.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE STARTLING DIFFERENCE OF THE SABBATH COMMANDMENT

What makes the Sabbath commandment different? This is a capital question. It has to be searchingly asked and accurately answered. We have stated something essential about the "natural law". That is the law every normal man carries in his human breast: It distinguishes itself as a highly general law. A person of good common sense and general logic may, according to that law, draw general conclusions about what is evidently good or evidently evil. You have an unmistakable "hunch" that there is something definitely wrong about murdering people or stealing your neighbor's money. But now, what about the fourth commandment? Would it seem likely to you that just that same kind of "inborn knowledge", in man, of his moral obligation toward a Higher Authority, God, would be sufficient to lead him to an observance of the Sabbath commandment?

Our answer must be an unqualified no. The Sabbath is definitely not something man can arrive at "naturally" as an immediate conclusion or a logical grasp of anything that is "decent human behavior". By no means. We need not, for that matter, deny the reality of a "general moral sense" in man, or the existence of a "natural law" But the Sabbath just isn't to be found in that category of law; this is the simple truth. The general moral sense is, no doubt, something good and invaluable to have, but in the present case it just does not work. Something infinitely more is demanded in order for man to possess even the faintest inkling about the Sabbath. And what is that "something infinitely more"?

What does this unique fourth commandment include that is missing in the natural law? It simply commands man to set apart one definite day of every week, as "holy time". And what, now, is the "week"? When does that queer thing find its beginning and its end? The Sabbath is the last and seventh day of the week. But how much does that piece of information help you? You may be ever so able to count, even as far as to seven. Someone may even have given you the inside information that this is exactly how far you should count in order to locate holiness: Still you may not have the shadow of a chance to arrive at the location of the holy time. It all depends where you start your counting. Where is the first day located? That is your initial problem.

How do you expect that man should be cognizant of all these things, just basing himself on himself--that is, on his own intellect, his inherent human knowledge? That would be tantamount to demanding of that poor creature that he should possess, somewhere in the depths of his natural conscience, some kind of infallible ticking clockwork,. automatically warning him every time when the Sabbath happens to be in the offing: "This is holy time now making its solemn appearance in your life. Beware of treating its hours the same profane way you treat any other day. If you attend to your own secular business during this time, that is a serious violation of God's holy law."

How could an uninformed "gentile" be supposed to know this by virtue of his "basic sense of right and wrong"? Understandably the missionary, the one who does have "all the facts" already, could confront the man from the bush with other transgressions, for instance: "Why do you steal, man, depriving your neighbor of the enjoyment of his possessions? Your own heart ought to tell you plainly enough that this is not right."



One might, I think, even say to that man with good reason: "Why do you blaspheme your God"? Your deepest sense of reverence for a Supreme Authority, the Omnipotent One, who must have created you and all things around you,--this ought to be a sufficient intimation to you that blasphemy is a mortal sin!

But it would definitely be unreasonable to say suddenly to the same heathen, "Why do you work on this particular day? Your innate moral sense ought to have taught you long ago that desecrating the day of rest is a terrible sin against God."

Can it be bluntly denied, then, that something in the Sabbath commandment is essentially different?

Let us see what we can learn about this from some interesting statements in the Catechism of the Council of Trent for Parish Priests. It speaks precisely about the nature of that difference. And now, please do not with particular eagerness pick out of that statement, publicly made by the Roman Catholic Church, just those points which may seem rather doubtful to you. A simple principle of intellectual honesty demands that you also pay due attention to what you find perfectly irreproachable. In fact, here we should rather concentrate on the points on which we can all logically and heartily agree:

"The point of difference (between the Sabbath commandment and the other nine) is evident. The other commandments of the Decalogue are precepts of the natural law, obligatory at all times and unalterable. Hence, after the abrogation of the Law of Moses, all the ten commandments contained in the two tables are observed by Christians, not indeed because their observance is commanded by Moses, but because they are in conformity with nature, which dictates obedience to them.

"This commandment about the observance of the Sabbath, on the other hand, considered as the time appointed for its fulfillment, is not fixed and unalterable, but susceptible of change, and belongs not to the moral, but to the ceremonial law. Neither is it a principle of the natural law; we are not instructed by nature to give external worship to God on that day, rather than any other." (Translated by J.A. McHugh and C.J. Callan, 1958, pp. 397-398. Emphasis supplied. Notice the interesting use of the term "natural law" here!)

There is one conclusion in the text which seems to be fully warranted by the results we ourselves have already arrived at: The Sabbath commandment is different. It does not belong to the "natural law." Nothing in our own nature, as logically reasoning creatures with an inherent moral sense, gives us the least information about the seventh day as particularly holy and inviolable.

The main thing we establish as a certainty then, so far, is that the Sabbath commandment is different. A further question is this one: What does it mean to be different? Does this imply, automatically, being of an inferior order? Does it mean being non-moral? Does it mean being of a "lesser validity"? Of course not. "Differentness" could mean any of these things. But it could also mean something else. In a given case it could apply to a quality that does not refer to its moral or spiritual rank at all. In another case "being different" could even mean "being of a definitely higher moral or spiritual rank." In the case at hand we have not yet decided in what direction the Sabbath commandment is different. Theoretically, however, there is nothing, so far, preventing us from imagining that it might be in a positive direction.

We prefer, however, to proceed very cautiously. For the time being, we are satisfied with consolidating the knowledge we already do have. We do not only know that the fourth commandment is different from the other nine. We also know in what respect it differs. And we know that this is an essential respect. In fact, we have here been faced with a remarkable distinction between two categories of law. A given commandment may be "natural" or "non-natural".

The Council of Trent Catechism, it is true, has a very definite evaluation of the two, compared to each other, as far as spiritual rank is concerned. But of course we need not immediately accept the standard on which that evaluation bases itself. We should first have a close and careful look at it. But let us now first only state, without any definite value judgment, in what those two categories of law distinguish themselves from each other. You will soon enough get to know which of the two enjoys the greater prestige in the Western world, if you do not know it already:

1. The first category is that of the "natural" or "universal" law, as it is commonly called. Commandments of that category distinguish themselves thus: They can automatically be grasped by man himself; that is, by something in his logical nature that enables him to recognize them as generally valid. As for the source of that general validity, it depends on some self-evident principle of a universal kind.

2. In the opposite category, then, we find injunctions such as the one that we should keep the Sabbath. Here things do not follow self-evidently, automatically, that is, by virtue of a general principle only. Small wonder that typical theorists do not so easily manage to find much to rejoice over in a commandment of that type. Evidently the Sabbath has a moderate appeal to people of a purely theoretical bent.

Now the Hellenist world culture has not differed from other outstanding pagan cultures in one thing: it was almost invariably the men of theoretical genius, rather than those of practical skill, who were granted top honor and exerted the greatest influence in molding the ideals of their respective environments. This is a significant historical fact. So you may draw the necessary conclusions yourself, as to which of the

two categories of law was destined to enjoy the greater prestige in this world. That gives us a further historical fact, as far as the Sabbath is concerned: The differentness of the fourth commandment is equated with "inferiority", short and sweet. The Sabbath has received its label for the rest of time. That label reads "not so good", "not so valid", and "not so ideal".

And notice: this is not a minority verdict. It is a clear majority in Western Christendom who appear to be of this opinion. You may personally think it is a subjective opinion, an unwarranted opinion, but the opinion itself is a historical reality. Grasp it as such for the time being.

We need not precipitate our logical course here. Certainly, to decide for ourselves whether the above evaluation is true or false is important enough. But it is not a decision we have to rush into. It ought rather to grow naturally out of our observations as a whole. One thing I have considered it most relevant to find out about, with a fair degree of certainty, is for instance this: What close connection can one establish between the mentioned depreciation of the Sabbath and an analogous depreciation of bodies and all material realities in the same cultures? The latter phenomenon is an unfailing corollary to the spiritualizations taking place in pagan idealism. And about this spiritualism I know with certainty that it is illusionism itself, elevated to a religious system.

But those are questions that demand thoroughness and sincerity in thought and action. Too much depends on the answer for such questions to be treated with superficiality and insincerity. Stereotypes in human thinking cannot be depended upon. They are too dangerous. We here have had to do precisely with a stereotype pattern of thought: Because the Sabbath was different (did not conform to the usual trend), people instinctively jumped to the conclusion that it was of an inferior quality.

And then perhaps the strangest thing of all in the history of these special ideas happens one day: Even Sabbath-keepers themselves accept the spurious premises of this thought pattern. To them, as well, it eventually appears that being different is tantamount to being inferior--in this case, of "lesser validity" or of "zero validity": So the guideline followed is a pretty stereotype one. Whatever you do, please don't deviate from the ideal once set--in this case, the supremacy of automatic validity! In other words, some actual Sabbath-keepers, too, finish by thinking that the Sabbath is bankrupt from the moment it has been proved, by the learned ones, that it is nothing but a "deviator". So in order to save the reputation of the fourth commandment, Sabbath-keepers have felt duty-bound to demonstrate, at all costs, that it does not deviate from the others in any respect. Is this an intelligent attitude? There has been a noticeable tendency on the part of Western Sabbath-keepers to reject any suggestion that the Sabbath commandment should be different from the other nine. That is a disservice to the dignity of the Sabbath commandment--if such dignity exists!

From a human point of view this reaction is quite understandable. Imagine a Sabbath-observer who has perhaps for a long time made a special point of stressing that the fourth commandment is "just one of the ten", having absolutely everything "in common with the other nine" (since that "commonness" is the great point of prestige): That person will be naturally tempted to build up barricades in his mind against the very idea that there might be any "difference" between the commandments.

Let us now have the honesty, however, of facing squarely just what that "differentness" of the Sabbath commandment would realistically amount to in practice. This can be briefly stated as follows: In order that human being should possess any notion whatsoever of the duty his Creator has placed upon him of setting apart such and such a day as holy time, one thing is absolutely indispensable, that is, a most concrete and most literal communication to him from the only One who did have that notion, namely God.

In that connection it would appear reasonable to ask two essential questions: First, what should be so infinitely unworthy about such a specific communication on the part of God directed to man? Second, is there any special evidence that such a communication directly to man, from God, has not been made, that it could not, possibly, have been made at all?

I just cannot understand what is bound to be such a terrible problem here, in view of the God-man relationship the Bible teaches. As if such direct and express communications from the Creator to his creature were not a current matter, according to the Biblical record from Genesis to Revelation! Must it not be taken for granted that God personally made known to man what man himself had no means of knowing all by himself? The author of the historical record makes it very plain that God did come down, quite personally, with a specific act and a specific message:

"And on the seventh day God ended the work which he made, and he rested on the seventh day from all His work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made." (Genesis 2:2,3).

Moses manifestly entertains no doubts that the direct source of this historical knowledge is the Lord Himself. He is the One who literally comes down and delivers His personal message. Thus also a little later:

"And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day." (Genesis 3:8).

The first Sabbath text of the Bible is very much to the point. After having created during six days, God rested on the seventh. "Therefore" (Exodus 20:11, R.S.V.) He blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

Here we have the solemn proclamation of a specific creation on one hand, and the erection of a majestic monument, a memorial festival, on the other. The fact of creation was not to be forgotten. The Creator and the Lawgiver are one and the same Person. The proclamation of God's great rest, made graciously available to man is a command having full authority behind it. It is not a "mere theory", but a most personal intervention. God has come into man's world, and He has come to stay. This is an event of the highest contingency.

What do I here mean by a "contingent" event? At first views that many not impress all readers as a very positive or a very proper term. For in traditional thinking "contingent" is understood as the opposite of "necessary". And in what sense--one may certainly ask--should God's intervention in instituting the Sabbath not be a necessary one?

That is here a momentous question. Let me answer it summarily at first: The intervention was not necessary in the "hard" and negative sense of automatic. "Contingent" here acquires a definitely favorable connotation. It actually stands for a conception of God which pervades the entire Old Testament, as well as the New Testament. It constitutes a striking contrast to all pagan cosmology and theology. It implies nothing less than a deliberate personal planning on the part of a God who consciously and spontaneously--and most lovingly--intervenes.

The concept is a tremendously important one. So I do wish I had a more popular term for it. I have none. So I ought rather to try and do my best to explain the one I do have.

## CHAPTER V

### WHAT IS CONTINGENCY?

An author is sometimes tempted to say to his readers, "The majority among you should just skip this present chapter. It is not particularly meant for you. It is meant for a narrow circle of 'chosen ones'. It addresses itself to the rare ones who are sufficiently interested in the topic to make a real effort toward understanding a new trend of thought. We do not expect most people to bother their brains that much."

In other words, it is not the intelligence that is here suggested as lacking. It is the motivation. We are all more or less used to being spoon-fed. The usual mass media to which we are exposed, such as TV and most magazines, are not so shamelessly taxing as some book authors. They do not press a poor fellow to the energy output demanded for a real new orientation. It is considered particularly impudent to suddenly place quite ordinary minds in front of concepts entirely unfamiliar to them, concepts whose meaning they are simply obliged to learn, from the beginning. This "impudence" is particularly resented if the new concepts one is shockingly confronted with, are suspected of having something to do with philosophy. There is a noticeable aversion in our milieu against extending one's horizon that much. A few people, it is true, do have the relatively benevolent disposition of trying to grasp whatever parts of the material they are able to grasp, and then skipping the rest.

Now this is actually all I demand in the present case. You will be glad that you made this little effort to begin with. As soon as we have reached the top of our little hill, you might be rewarded with a panorama that you will find really worthwhile. I simply make the assumption that you are sincerely interested in the topic of the Sabbath. Whether your interest is in a positive or negative direction, this is a question I am not asking you for the time being. The one hopeless thing in this world is the attitude of the person who "couldn't care less". If you are sincerely engaged in the matter, you shall have problems enough to cope with. The destiny-loaded aspects of the Sabbath question we are here to face unflinchingly, are indeed captivating, and this actually without taxing the intellectual faculties in any undue way. I am entirely confident that you will understand the matter well enough, maybe too well. I mean "too well" in this sense: you may understand it so well that you will be unable to conserve the comparatively pleasant attitude of disengagement.

Generally speaking, I reject the thesis that intelligence is what fails most people when they complain of the difficulties they have in grasping essential things in the history of human ideas. I do not at all flatter myself that I have any greater innate faculty of understanding these things than they have. The main point is often just to what extent one has found it worthwhile to develop an understanding of this or that. When I visit some of my friends in the evening to have a good chat, only to find the whole family prostrated in front of the TV screen, then I know for sure that I have entered a group of people who have found something they really think worthwhile knowing more about. And it is seen that they have all the intellect necessary in order to become experts in that certain kind of knowledge. If after some precarious stumblings, I manage to orient myself in the semidarkness of that living-room, at least sufficiently to drop down and keep quiet, I shall soon get to know where the intelligence and the sharp comprehension is to be found. Even the youngest children prove themselves able to follow the plot of the thrilling story ten times faster than I. Whether I laugh or shudder, or in whatever way I dare to give expression to my

comprehension in this assembly of connoisseurs, I invariably demonstrate what a retarded fellow I am. I feel like a total illiterate. All the time I catch myself both laughing and shuddering at the wrong places. But who knows, even for illiterates there is hope. The one who wholeheartedly goes in for understanding TV feuilletons, will finally understand TV feuilletons. The one who goes in for understanding history of ideas, will finally understand history of ideas.

What I have been trying to say with this, is that no one actually needs to skip anything whatsoever of what I here intend to outline. I insert it as a useful tool for a better understanding of a peculiar drama in the history of our world. I start by quoting a passage from the theologian and historian of ideas, Troeltsch, in his article on "Contingency" in the Encyclopedia of Ethics and Religion (vol. 4, pp. 87-88). This may belong to the things you do not understand 100 percent the first time you read it. So you may use it as a suitable pretext to throw the whole matter away. You must act resolutely and quickly if that is your plan. For by and by you might run the risk of understanding more and more of this, and in the final analysis perhaps just "too much", indeed. But of course you may also make a different option: you may consider any difficulty you encounter as that "hill top" behind which the "panorama" might unfold itself. So pluck up your courage anyway:

"The term contingencia, applied to that which is actual and accidental, in contrast to that which is logically necessary and in accordance with law, originated with the Schoolmen. The idea involved, goes back, however, to the problem of Greek philosophy. The thinkers of Greece, once they had discovered the significance of general conceptions and of the order of things typified thereby, came to distinguish between the world which moves in accordance with these conceptions and that which is not wholly determined by them. The former, at this stage of thought, was identified with the sphere of the heavenly bodies, the latter with the sublunary world, where the rigid sway of law--the authority of form and conception--was circumscribed by accident and anomaly."

Let us have a closer look at this. What is it those Greek supra-idea philosophers of Plato's caliber have arrived at? To them two opposite and entirely separated worlds are in existence. One of those worlds they look down upon, in more than one sense. That world is down here far, far down. Its utter "downness" has been expressed clearly enough, I think, in the word "sublunary". That means a world "under the moon": sub luna. There is a considerable amount of depreciation, or even downright contempt beaming forth from that expression. For in our world the moon, as we all know, is something rather obscure and hopelessly insufficient. Its great opposite in that respect is, of course, the sun, that brilliant king among celestial bodies, the earth-born creature's great joy and hope of salvation. Behold what life-spending power! What admirable deity in the highest of the heavens: the sun!

So we have arrived in the "other world" then, the world of the Idea, the divine world of soaring glories. But what is it, after all, that is found to be so outstandingly glorious and divine about that world? It is one thing above all: In that world, the "lowbrow" phenomenon of Contingencia, with all her "capricious pranks and incalculable impulses," is luckily overcome. Trivial matters like those of every-day life will never disturb the philosophers' peace and felicity. No sudden attacks need to be feared any longer on the part of some interfering personality, encumbered with something as humanly base as emotions in his breast. No-no, nothing as unworthy as that "sublunary" semidarkness of contingent happening can survive in the celestial realms of the pure abstractions. For there everything happens with perfect predictability, determined from eternity by "the rigid sway of the law".

But what kind of law, if you please? This is the salient point: it is infallibly a question of the automatically acting laws of pure cold theory. Here the tender feelings of warmly beating hearts have no chance whatsoever of breaking in, even for one single second. Like the brilliant distant stars in their unbreakable orbits, all things have to pass on and on, along their predetermined tracks, mercilessly and forever. Such things as a personal will or a cordial affection would immediately be condemned as anomalies in this empire of barren ideas. Being "original," in an earthly human sense, or in any way differing from what the general formula prescribes, would be hallmarked as a crime.

You certainly notice that this is a world in which there is not much chance for the child. Just think of that helplessly wavering, perhaps wildly straying human creature. For him there is certainly not much chance, within this philosophy, to find comfort for his bitterly weeping and irregularly beating heart. How endlessly must not such a child long to flee away from the stern necessity and the icy chill in that sublime world of the "pure spirit". What a relief it must be for him to finally "come down", just landing ungracefully in the mediocrity of a most human world, sub luna. Even though things may here not be so perfect, there is always the chance of something unknown and entirely unique suddenly breaking in, and some day leading to perfection. And that would certainly have to be something definitely personal, something radically different from what previously was. Do you perceive the blessed hope still hovering over the world of contingency? Jesus!

And now back to our special topic in this book. What about the Sabbath? In which of the "two worlds" do you imagine that a phenomenon of that uniqueness would happen to be relegated or rubricized by those erudite philosophers and schoolmen? I mean: provided that such a thing as the Sabbath would be deemed worthy of any consideration at all, in view of the prevailing trend of Western ideas. That, of

course, is a bold assumption. For the most likely wager is that the topic of the Sabbath would leave entirely callous, and unconcerned, the minds of men so totally engulfed by their super-star idea. How could you expect that anything less than super-suns should have the slightest chance of arousing attention in such a milieu with such views on spiritual value.

To be sure, the Sabbath would at best be doomed to fall within the bracket of the definitely sublunary things! To men with such value scales built into their outlook on the world, the Sabbath commandment, at the moment that it managed at all to get an audience with them, would inevitably be stigmatized as hopelessly contaminated by such unworthy things as the accidental and the abnormal. The fourth commandment was destined to remain, in the estimation of the thinking elite of Western men, an unacceptable aberration from the "ideal". Exclusively in the "inferior" world of temporality and matter could disturbing elements like those encumbering the Sabbath commandment be imagined at all. No man relying fully on his own intelligence and inherent logic, would seriously fear, for one moment, that the fourth commandment could even have the rare boldness of breaking in, to overthrow the glorious sway of the eternal Ideas. By every spiritualist thinker the world of the spirit (that is, "pure spirit") is regarded as perfectly immune against any such surprise onslaught from the "abnormal" world of time and accident. To the scholarly elite the human child with all his temporal doing, and ceasing to do, as well as his unpredictable religious emotions, remained something definitely "unspiritual", that's all.

So I am not in the least astonished to establish a conspicuous new fact entering upon the scene of human history at a given moment. That was the time when an entirely different race of philosophers (a rather "sublunary" race) came to the fore, right in the field of pagan philosophy. For some time they tried to shake the hegemony of the super-idealists (super-star spiritualists). I am thinking for instance of such a down-to-earth fellow as Democritus, "the godless one". When he made his heroic attempt to "trace a rational order throughout the entire universe", it was on the basis of the purest materialism. The "ditches", then, still constitute the only alternative in paganism to the middle-of-the-road totality and realism of Christian thought.

Non-materialist philosophers just did not ever venture to break out courageously from the spell of a rigidly spiritualistic type of idealism. This is clearly the case with both the Eleatics and the Stoics. Presumably there must have been some thinkers extant who disposed of a sufficient amount of common sense and elementary realism to recognize matter, in this poor "moonlit" world of ours, as an indisputable reality. In fact, there must have been some among them who entertained the illuminating notion that this was a reality even willed and produced by God Himself. (To the Bible, we know, it is an entirely worthy spiritual idea, that matter, too, was created by God.) But at the same time they evidently made desperate efforts in order to keep, theoretically at least, inside the traditional framework of a narrowly platonic-idealistic pattern of thought. An idealistic thought pattern, you see, in the ancient Occident, was, and ever remained, a pattern in which Plato's barren Idea was the only existing reality, the god above all gods.

It is a tragic phenomenon of convulsive disruption in the history of the Western world we are here touching upon. What could the solution be of that heart-rending tension between the irreconcilable extremes ("the two ditches"), that is, on one hand, the black, despised matter (matter as such), on the other hand, the super-star ideal, the "pure spirit"?

Misfortune of misfortunes: the miserably disrupted human heart seeks its eventual "peace" and "rest" in a truly fantastic compromise. That was a brain child more fantastic, indeed, than either of its parents. Of course you are justified in asking with incredulity: How could there be any compromise at all between extreme spiritualism and extreme materialism? Still the bastard offspring of that shamelessly unnatural union is a historical fact, and the name of the bastard is pantheism. It must have been a hard-pressed spiritualism and a hard-pressed materialism that could amalgamate to form pantheism. Here the peak is reached of all absurdity: Matter itself is consecrated as being "from eternity", and "incorruptible", and "absolutely divine".

How could a monster of such dimensions be born at all from thinking human brains and feeling human hearts? This is a milestone, indeed, in the history of pagan thought. For here nothing less than the total inertia of the physical world and the total inertia of the "spiritual" world have had their historic encounter. The respective absurdities of the meaningless extremes in automatism have merged together into one great super-automatism, one great super-meaninglessness.

We shall see later how a similar historic unicum, pan-sabbatism, rises into prominence, and finished by floating like an incredible banner from the top of the pan-sanctuary's flagpole. Now, what all those "pan-isms" actually say, is very much the same thing. It could be epitomized in one sentence: "It all makes no difference whether there is sin in your life or not." Why does that make no difference? "Because with God and with the world nothing makes any difference. For God is the world, and the world is God. The holy is common (profane) and the common is holy. It is all one huge mass. There is no distinction worth mentioning. For personalism is a bad dream and an anomaly. Just as the holiness of the Sabbath has 'spilled over' into all the other days, so God's holiness has 'spilled over' into the whole world. Personal responsibility is an evil which has luckily been overcome." This is what all pan-holy-ism says and means.

When the Eleatics and the Stoics opted for pantheism as their only "way out", because they could not realistically tear themselves loose from almighty spiritualism, then they were consistent enough within their own field. For the consistent end-product of spiritualist thinking is one thing only: pantheism.

It goes without saying that true Christian thought could never resign itself to adopt any such pantheistic conception of the world. And it is equally self-evident that it could not accept the traditional spiritualism in its original platonic form, a hopelessly onesided form, where the world is hardly mentioned at all, and actually not God either, since here the Idea is all in all. Not even in its strongly modified form, in the direction of some degree of realism, introduced by Aristotle, could true Christians accept the spiritualistic trends of thought. It still was not by any means realistic enough for them. By point of fact, you see, even Aristotle, the great model of medieval philosophy, actually had nothing that could measure up to the demands of Biblical realism.

And vice versa: that realism of a Biblical conception of the world stood no chance of being accepted by a true Aristotelian or any pagan philosopher. The Bible was simply found to arouse astonishment and downright disgust among world philosophers of a spiritualist tradition. Its realism offended them by the way it "childishly" accepted what they called the "sublunary world" as something in its origin entirely positive and laudable, namely as a part of God's creation, entirely perfect and good.

As a matter of fact, Aristotle never accepted contingency as something definitely positive. Not one Greek philosopher has ever descended ("gone down") to the level of accepting the radical idea of a personal intervention, on the part of the divine world, into the human one. On the contrary, even to the human realist Aristotle, the coldest stringency of natural law, without any intervention of the Person's mercifulness, remains the great ideal.

Indeed, something very different was demanded in order to put contingency back into a position of true honor and dignity; that is, the sensationally different view of life and of the world contained in primeval Christianity. To some degree this did happen even in Western Christendom. And notice what Troeltsch says about the revolutionizing new thing coming into the development of European philosophy, after all, thanks to Christianity's influence upon it:

"In the ecclesiastical philosophy, moreover, the term 'contingency' acquired a new meaning from its connection with Judaeo-Christian Theism. It was now used to express the volitional nature of the Creator, who is not limited by universal laws, but actually reveals the most profound elements of His being in the contingency of what eludes those laws." (Ibid)

So this was the great golden opportunity. True realism in the Christian sense, had its one big chance of breaking through in Western thinking. Notice the reserved and hypothetical way in which I formulate my statement: Realism had its chance. Was that chance of a real breakthrough ever exploited? Never. The history of the Sabbath commandment in Western Christendom bears an eloquent testimony of contingency realism's historic fiasco in our world (I).

Any staunch partisan of Judaeo-Christian realism is bound to feel a pang of nostalgic sadness, at the moment when he realizes what was here right within our reach, and then sadly slipped out of our hands. Even as far back as antiquity, sensible Christians understood--that is very evident--what a totally uncongenial thing platonic idealism is, as a "foundation" for Christian thought. And through all subsequent ages, thinkers, sounding the philosophical depths of the Old as well as the New Testament, realized that it must be sheer foolishness to put a sign of equation between the divine on one hand and a blind automatism's fatal necessity on the other.

Even the concept of volitional freedom gradually takes on a basically positive meaning. God's personal essence is seen to have its mark of distinction in that freedom. And what does it mean, after all, that God created man in His image, if not precisely the wonderful truth that He graciously imparted a share of the freedom of choice to His intelligent creatures? The very core of all personalism is contained in such freedom of the will. And along with it goes--inevitably--the responsibility to choose good rather than evil. In other words, ethics is entering upon the scene, ethics as a momentous reality, an existentially serious thing. On the creatures part, as well, there is the tremendous need of a personal initiative of thankfulness, inspired by the Creator's matchless generosity. The personal urge to gladden God's heart in return has found its glorious outlet: obedience, 100 percent, without constraint. This is freedom and unending bliss on the creaturely plane.

(I) That realism is the diametrical opposite of the "conceptual realism" our pagan idealists, from Plato on, had fondled. Among them a famous shibboleth arose: *Universalia ante res*. Expressed with some more words: The logic of the hardest intellectualism, with the whole barren endlessness of universal laws which its grey theory cabinet contains--this "goes before". Goes before what? Before each and every one of those factual things supposed to correspond to them in the actual reality of everyday practice.

But if such interior freedom has its source in no one but God, then contingency is bound to be a fundamentally good thing. It means the decisive triumph over the blind necessity of impersonalism. What emerges majestically is the perfectly autonomous God of the fourth commandment. That is the Rock of Ages, Jesus Christ, the eternal Word, the unshakable Foundation, the infallible criterion for all that is true and absolutely dependable in life and doctrine, the One who created and re-created.

This is the God of anti-automatism, a God who is not "in bondage" to the laws he dictates to the universe and its intelligent hosts, a God who certainly does identify His will with those laws, but yet, at the same time, stands entirely free and unobstructed thanks to His boundless love, rejoicing to take new initiatives at any given time. Still I must admit my serious hesitations about Troeltsch's expression, inferring that God "eludes" His own laws. Is this what Contingency helps Him to do? (See p. 51.)

There is something very interesting--and again rather sad--to note about the Renaissance and its philosophy of nature. The Renaissance presents a particular interest to us because it is the gate-way to modern times, the last epoch of this world's history. Now, you may believe it or not, but the Renaissance philosopher's view of nature was nothing but a revival of ancient Stoic pantheism. And what is the immediate consequence of this incredible relapse into irrealism at the very dawn of a new age? Numerous humanists are suddenly seen standing there, paralyzed as it were, by a magic spell. What collapses beneath them, and within them, is their basic faith in freedom as a gift from God, an intervening force from outside leading both history and nature majestically toward their end. What they tragically lack is the Biblical belief in the literal Person who has walked right into man's literal life,-- first in terms of literal creation and then in terms of literal re-creation (redemption). The wonderful truth about contingency seems to have been blotted out from the horizon of the Renaissance thinker. Humanist philosophy once more forces the human mind and the human heart to be bound by the shackles of Stoic fatalism, a hopeless pessimism.

Of course you might hope that the gradual development of the empirical science of our ultra-modern civilization would foster a spirit of realism again, of some kind. But what happens? Science develops its own type of fatalism. True, it does unveil the idealists of old, such as Pythagoras and Plato, as unrealistic fancy-mongers. So there is at least some definite gain on the side of realism. Those "mysterious" laws of the sidereal world, which had kept superstitious men spell-bound for thousands of years, were now shown by sober-minded scientists to be exactly the same laws that govern the physical world down here "under the moon". Thank God that the mystification of that "eternal world" up there was finally checked! For frankly, the kind of "eternity" and "spirituality" those mystics of old used to contemplate, was certainly not the kind that helps human beings to become realistic.

But alas! no sooner have those wild fancies of a superstitious past been conquered, than scientists themselves introduce a fatalism ten times more blind than that of the Stoics. "Determinism" is now the great word. A pessimistic rationalism stands up proclaiming: "It is just as we suspected all the time: There is no freedom for either gods or men to break the iron ring of universal law-boundness".

So again contingency is branded as a vain dream. "Contingent" again becomes a synonym for "irrational" and "meaningless". How heroically men fight to remain in the dungeon of their self-chosen slavery!

Why this instinctive shying away from the evident possibility of a divine intervention? (That is what the Sabbath commandment manifestly stands for.) Does the free choice, presenting itself to human beings from week to week, from second to second, appear to them like a burden? One thing is certain: personal choice meant personal responsibility. And to assume such responsibility is distasteful to the playboy called Western man. This then is not so difficult to understand, is it?

So do not be quick to say that you do not understand one whit of Western philosophy and the history of Western ideas. The history of philosophy is your tragedy and mine, written with letters of fire across the firmament of our lives. We shall once have to read that writing, whether we like it or not.

To help my students grasp the glorious facts of Contingency, I often make a linguistic approach to the topic. The Latin verb *contingere* is composed of two elements: the simplex *tangere* (*tango, tetigi, tactus*) That means to touch. In geometry you know very well what a tangent is. It is the line that just touches the circle (in one single point). The prefix *con* is equally easy to recognize. It means together with. Sometimes it also has the adverbial meaning of altogether. The past participle of *contingere* is *contactus*. That ought to suggest to you the idea of a total contact. Now God is not satisfied with touching you and me in just one single point. He insists on touching us altogether, in all points of our lives, and for our happiness and well-being that is the only solution. From the very beginning we have been made that way. So what happens to us is exactly the same thing happening to the eye whose view has to be corrected. It needs glasses, or still better, a contact lense. That is a lense having the curved form of the eye-ball, so not touching the eye as a mere tangent would touch it, but touching it altogether, completely. That is the "Contingency way" of having contact. God's Contingency, in the case of man, is that kind, nothing less.

Is the philosophy of Contingency such an impossible concept to grasp?

## CHAPTER VI

### THE SOVEREIGN INTERVENTION OF GOD

The Bible has informed us clearly enough about the supreme Word's majestic breaking in, according to His eternal plan of intimate fellowship with "the other ones". The very first chapters of that Holy Book describe that "Break-in" in terms of creation and the sanctification of the Sabbath. We have also seen that men qualify as "arbitrary" that intervention by God. But even "arbitrariness", if accepted as

descriptive of the divine character, becomes a definitely favorable epithet. God interferes in man's world, neither in a haphazard way, nor by a principle of cold automatism. That would have been precisely an impersonalistic conception of divinity, and a manifestly pagan one. But when God intervenes, it is rather by virtue of His own good pleasure, His intensely personal goodwill toward man. He intervenes as His infinite wisdom and goodness prompt Him at any given moment. This is divine contingency.

Of course this does happen with necessity--but with a divine, Christlike necessity, not with the cold, impassive necessity of a barren, God-forsaken fatalism and absolute impersonalism. The latter necessity is the one Plato's Timaios speaks about (I).

God's intervention is the hearty intervention of the Friend in times of need or distress. This is the wonderfully heartening aspect of Sabbath contingency. In it the human child is finding his divine Father. That provides for him the incomparable personal comfort which the Bible calls rest.

I mentioned Socrates and that man's pathetic endeavor (as far as we can judge of it by Plato's Apology) to develop a genuine concept of man's moral responsibility toward a Supreme Being. But there is one thing about that first table of God's special handwriting to man, as given in Exodus 20, that leads us miles beyond both Socrates and Plato, or any pagan idealism. I am referring to a crescendo in the revelation of God's character that hardly dawned on the minds of those champions of a still pagan idealism. It is a crescendo in terms of a tremendously accelerated revelation of God as the personal One. The decalogue of the Bible does stand out as a document strikingly free from the icy chill of pure generalities; for not a single one of the ten commandments bears any trace of a pagan idealist's convulsive predilection for mere abstractions, the desolate "world spirit's" nothingness. But this negative statement of the issue at hand is not enough; it would mean comparing the God of the Bible to sheer vanity; the God of Exodus 20, however, is the absolutely incomparable One; and in what does this incomparability consist? It consists in His personalism. The crescendo-like intensification of that personalism culminates in the fourth commandment.

(I) See *Man the Indivisible*, pp. 128 ff.

From the very outset, of course, the decalogue presents itself as a law given by a personal God. But just where in that solemn series of ten authoritative commands do we find the personal portrait, the special self and signature that lends decisive authority to each one of His words? I am not speaking about a one-sided portrait that makes you tremble and die. That would not suffice as full evidence of personalism, according to the standard of Biblical philosophy. It would remind too much of Adolf Hitler's seal and signature. No, let me state the fact in all its impressive simplicity. The main evidence of true personalism and true authority, in the case of the creative and recreative personality, Jesus Christ, is His character as the Merciful One.

But where in the Sabbath commandment does the Majesty of creation stand out as the Merciful One?

It is downright incredible with how little attention we biased men of a pagan culture read that special commandment, since we fail to notice essential details in its formulation. In chapter XI ("The Sabbath Commandment--the Great Call to Mercy") I shall come to those details. Only when it dawns upon our minds and our hearts in what an overwhelmingly impressive sense the God of the fourth commandment is the Creator and Sustainer of all things in heaven and on earth, only then do we fully realize, His title to man's perfect loyalty and thankful obedience.

In view of these facts, the leaders of the church will have to face the searching question asked of them by the very presence of Sabbath-keeping as an abiding reality of history. How could they venture upon so bold an enterprise as to chisel away, from the very granite of the decalogue, the one commandment containing the very seal and personal subscription of the Lord Himself? What a presumptuous deed, on the part of mere creatures, to tamper thus with the very signet of identification pressed onto the work of creation by the Creator's own hand.

## CHAPTER VII

### A PASSION FOR GENERALIZATIONS

The crime of crimes in the history of ideas in our world has been perpetrated gradually; we may call that criminal work the paralysis of personalism. What were the conditions particularly propitious to an evolution of that kind?

I have already pointed out the fact that Western thought has a notable predilection for the general and the stringently theoretical as a sort of "top values" in our present intellectual and spiritual life. By many these are even proclaimed to be the "only values"? This craze of onesidedness is nothing more than what could be anticipated in any culture in which the child is in the process of losing his childlikeness. Only where the child remains a genuine child, can we expect to find a sound equilibrium. To be well-balanced here would include the ability to preserve a high evaluation of the particular and the practical: that is the concrete realities of everyday life. The way of the child, in fact, is the way of a definitely prevailing particularization and concretization.



But, in his cultural progression, Western man has been anxiously pushing himself toward an "advanced stage" he imagines as "superior", "more noble", "more blessed with fulfillment", namely the state of Adulthood.

We have already seen some sad outgrowths of that "cultural adulthood". It is invariably characterized by a trend toward more abstracting thought-forms. The adult, as I have come to know him, seems to have fallen in love with what strikes me as rather impersonal; that is, what keeps at a certain sophisticated distance from the "simpleminded". Therefore, he has a marked preference for whatever can be abstracted, reduced to a general formula, or a theoretical symbol.

And here, then, comes my inevitable question: Can the Sabbath commandment thus be "reduced to a general formula"? Can it be sublimated into some sort of a theoretical principle? Every child can get to know the immediate contents of the literal text of the fourth commandment, as it is formulated in Exodus 20:8-10. But what now about a sublimation of that literalness? And by "sublimation" here I do not mean superficiality or any kind of levity, either in an intellectual or a spiritual sense. I insist on exactness and thoroughness and serious totality. Can the Sabbath commandment be reduced to a theoretical principle sufficiently "well-packed" sufficiently comprehensive in its condensation, to really clasp, in its mighty embrace, every bit of reality contained in the literal text?

Let me show by an illustration what I really mean. To that end I take another commandment, for instance, once more, the 8th: "Thou shalt not steal". It is a definitely immoral action to deprive a fellow man of anything that rightly belongs to him, is it not?

"Of course it is," some humanist logician may eagerly explain: "The commandment against stealing is just one particular case contained in a wider unit; that is, a far more general and comprehensive moral principle; the Bible expresses it thus, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself'. This is the great commandment. Once you have grasped that great common rule about neighborly love, the eight commandment follows as something entirely self-evident."

In other words, the sharply reasoning expert in logical ethics has found the formula, the general idea of the whole code or moral behavior. To him this is the only point of departure. From that great common "ocean" of intelligent truth he sees his way clear to arrive at any concrete commandment.

Western man, more than any specimen of the species, is exceedingly proud of this shrewd device of logical deduction, by which he feels able, all by himself, to arrive at any possible specific commandment, even of the moral law, planned in detail by the almighty God.

As long as we keep to that royal highway of our own infallibly logical conclusions, even God Himself could not hit upon a reasonable (rational) commandment that man is not able to arrive at! This is man's pride. This is man's philosophical trend all through the history of human thought.

Or let us take another example, and this time from the first table of stones. "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain."

"Of course not," says our good old friend, the expert logician, again, "for that particular precept in the law is--in its entirety--naturally implied in one great moral principle: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God above all things'".

"And", he may add triumphantly, "it was Christ Himself who taught us this wonderful art of generalization--that is, of pressing back, just like the immortal Plato, to the blissful harbor of our Origin, namely the general principle, the universal truth, the eternal Idea". Is this true?

I willingly admit it would not be particularly "Christian" to try and cover up a truth which the gospels let shine out with perfect brightness: Time and again Jesus calls His followers' attention to the fact of one great uniting principle with God: love. And of what use should it be to conceal what the logician is particularly eager to bring out here, namely the fact that this love is a universal principle, in every sense an eternal principle. But then it must be permitted, also, to make another fact as clear as crystal: in all this, Christ is infinitely different from Plato. He differs from that formidable prophet of Occidental spiritualism in a number of important respects. We shall have opportunity to point them out one by one. But now we should first concentrate our attention on the Sabbath commandment, as compared to the other nine.

We have just made the theoretical experiment with two of those nine, one from each table. They were seen to lend themselves perfectly well to the generalization maneuver. The logical basis for this was that they both had some natural quality inherent in them: They happened to be, self-evidently, and in their entirety, implied in a great common principle. Christianity perfectly recognizes that general principle and calls it love.

Now, would that same theoretical process, basing itself so fully on man's inborn logical sense, be equally successful when applied to the Sabbath commandment?

No, it would fail miserably. Not even the most ingenious theorist would ever manage to recognize the necessity of this specific commandment as "entirely implied" in the general formula naturally known by all, thus permitting an automatic process of either deduction or induction, as the logician's good pleasure might be. What does "necessary" versus "non-necessary" mean here?

Now we must of course assume that the Sabbath--from God's point of view--was "necessary" enough. Why else did He so demonstratively make place for it? But from the limited viewpoint of your

logical reason and mine, it just could not be recognized that it was "necessary" at all in the same way that we are able to recognize for instance that the commandment "Thou shalt not kill!" is absolutely necessary.

In other words: I do see it as perfectly evident, even with the poor degree of a creaturely understanding I dispose of at the present moment, that each and every one of the other nine commandments would be bound to have their validity, simply in order to meet the obvious claims from the great commandment of love. Accordingly I do realize that there must be room, here, for some kind of automatic logic, allowing conclusions back and forth.

Inductive as well as deductive processes have a natural field here for their unhampered functioning. So a logical human being is perfectly free to practice his theorizing maneuver, in either direction he may choose.

But please let him have the befitting modesty of staying within the sphere of his natural limitations. Let no man come and brag about his ability to perform his tricks in our particularly interesting case: the Sabbath commandment. There it would not help him one bit if he spent his whole life stretching his schemes of theoretical deduction to their utmost capacity. Never would he, along that road, reach the mysterious land of some surprising details that stare him in the face at the moment when he has his encounter with the Sabbath commandment. But those details are there, indisputably. Why are they there?

I for my part would not for the life of me take the foolhardy step of postulating that they just happen to be there--for no intelligent reason whatsoever. On the contrary, we should know our God well enough by now to realize that He has a plan with what He does. And it is rather presumptuous, is it not, to think that He ought to inform you and me about all the details He has in His plans.

In short, it is simply unfeasible for human beings to find any practicable route, of the logical kind, that will lead them, automatically, all the way from the postulated general idea of "universal love" to the astonishingly empirical reality of a specific Seventh Day.

What would you think about a man who came to you saying, "Do you know what I have come up with as a result of my profound dips of meditation recently? Because I love God (that is, in direct consequence of the general affection I have for some principle of Goodness which I call God), I have now come to the ingenious conclusion that I am logically bound to select one particular day, which I call the Sabbath, and set it apart as holy time".

That would not sound very intelligent, would it? About a man like that you would say, he is not worth listening to, for either he is cutting a very poor joke, or he is out of his senses. Is this the way we imagine Moses, or any other messenger of old, delivering the heavenly message to us?

One thing is certain: it is no insignificant problem logical man finds himself facing from the moment the Sabbath enters upon the arena. First it is with visible pleasure our mini-Kant of the 1980's lets his mini-brain go on juggling with those admirable commandments of the decalogue, one after the other, until, all of a sudden, he stumbles over a huge rock somebody has left right in his passage. That is the Sabbath commandment, to him a most awkward "foreign body" defying all common rules of rational philosophy.

Here there seems to be ample opportunity for quite a bit of psychological study, alongside with the theological one. Let us have a brief look at the theorizing system-builder at the moment when he experiences his first serious confrontation with the Sabbath commandment. His first natural reaction is bound to be a feeling of some discomfort. This may easily develop into definite resentment, and in the last round to downright contempt. It all depends to what extent the emotions that disturb sober thought, are involved in the matter.

How much more reassuring it would be, to the most independent spirits among us, if we could just have a slightly modified formulation of the fourth commandment to grapple with. For instance: "Remember the day of rest." Full stop. Or still better: "Remember a day of rest". Or why not simply? "Remember to rest". That would seem quite a roomy way of putting it, would it not, and comparatively inoffensive to all sensitive souls. You would not even have to be a good humanist in order to find that reminder meaningful and harmless. Any logician with some mysterious preference for the indefinite, the vague and reducible, would feel that this was a commandment he could manage to handle. And men with a passion for Western self-sufficiency would be quite happy, too. For a commandment of that kind would be nothing more than what any sensible man could manufacture all by himself.

Frankly, what could be more natural than the immense prestige happening to precepts--even religious ones--of such a general nature that the people for whom they claimed to be destined, could arrive at them all by themselves, by means of nothing but sheer human reason? Human pride has triumphed supremely.

From the same point of view it becomes fairly understandable also, doesn't it, that the Sabbath commandment could hardly expect to be among the "prestigious" things in this world.

But is it not, you might say, going a bit too far when some people look upon the Sabbath with downright contempt?

Perhaps even this is quite humanly understandable. We probably all tend to develop, gradually, a certain contempt for the things we are not able to incorporate into our personal systems of rational self-

evidence. Our emotional balance is so readily upset. Our reaction becomes one of likes and dislikes. This is presumably a way we protect ourselves from new and disturbing ideas. In other words, we are finally directed by sentiments rather than by realistic thoughts.

To a researcher however--and to any honest truth-seekers--an attitude of that kind must indeed be objectionable in the highest degree. If we happen to be in that category, it would seem more reasonable for us to concentrate our attention, with the purposiveness of the truth-loving man, just around that strange element in the fourth commandment that so "obstinately" refuses to be generalized. The fact that there exists something in that part of our text of such rock-like unshakableness that it defies every human attempt at reducing it to any kind of ethereal "spirit", this might indicate that certain things in God's world are just irreducible. Trying to fit them into a general mold, thus reducing them to pure abstractions, in strict conformity with the logician's scheme, would do violence to their deepest nature. God sometimes rises up quite unexpectedly against the acts of violence perpetrated by a spiritual vandal. He takes initiatives that leave their traces in world history. He does anything He deems necessary to demonstrate that He has cast His lot with the cause of rock-bottom realism. For that is the philosophy of His eternal kingdom.

By way of conclusion, just a word about the cult of abstractions in ultra-modern times. Some people imagine that our appreciation of personal human things and of concrete everyday things is so much higher today than it used to be in antiquity. I am afraid the very opposite is the case. For today we do not only have Western philosophy in full bloom, giving top prestige to the impersonal abstractions. Today we also have science and scientism. Quite recently we have even reached an epoch we call the sputnik age. We all know what started happening a couple of decades ago. The sputniks gave the start signal for the wildest climb toward the stars that Western self-sufficiency has ever experienced. And you may know the rush-like renaissance happening to the abstract sciences in those days. Even in lands where they had been relatively neglected, they suddenly rose to prominence. In America, the original land of time-honored pragmatism, a spirit of pure intellect and frigid practicality combined, is more in vogue than ever. This means that true realism is less fashionable than ever.

Here you may have some good reason for being puzzled. For how could it really come to happen that two so different movements, namely the "idealist" philosophy of ancient times and the "realistic" science of our modern age, could lead up to one and the same evil: impersonalism? But we must not forget one thing: the philosophy of antiquity and the science of modern times have a common origin. They both spring out from man. And man is vain. His vanity causes him to be unrealistic and desirous of "vapor" all his days. He is famishing for emptiness and doting upon impersonality. So it is not surprising after all that science, our modern West's formidable hero, has faithfully taken over the whole bunch of vanities that the intellectualism of old had bequeathed to it. The scientist, in his turn, has become enamored with the old mistress: pure abstraction.

In fact, hardly in any other cultural environment, throughout the history of this world, has the grip of vain intellectualism been more merciless or more ravaging in its effects than in the present civilization of Western lands. Never has man been more fatuously in love with barren abstractions. There is a downright cult of abstractions taking place with us today.

Just have a critical look at our much lauded Western education. Take the IQ tests as an eloquent example. You know those "infallible" inquiries which are supposed to measure a modern child's potential for "success" in a harsh world. The question for each one of us has become: Where do we find our place in that fateful scale between imbecility and genius? But notice particularly now: What particular kind of intelligence is it that those test questions consider really worthwhile? The answer is evident, incontrovertible: a purely abstract type of intelligence is the great boon. Who condescends to ask you any question about your practical or religious intelligence, or any other intelligent qualification for everyday human life? Nobody. For those who want to reach the top, one thing is in demand: the ability to tackle abstractions, the ability to generalize and theorize, to overcome the childlike in all things and be a sophisticated adult, a callous modern Westerner.

But please remember now, this fantastic prestige of the impersonal and the feelingless spirit is not something we owe exclusively to our pagan heritage from ancient Greece. No, we have our own peculiar brand of paganism. Western man has made an original contribution to the production of heathendom in this world. He is splendidly self-contained in that sense too.

## CHAPTER VIII

### MAN'S GREAT TEST OF OBEDIENCE

To bring out some points of essential importance to our discussion, let us follow a dialogue that took place in the pioneer days of Seventh-day Adventism in Northern Europe. One of the interlocutors was a Norwegian-American minister, Elder O.J. Olsen (who died just a few years ago), instrumental in a revival of an old-fashioned, Sabbath-keeping form of Christianity in the Vestmann Islands, as well as in other parts of Iceland. The other speaker we introduce was the captain of an Icelandic steamer on which Mr. Olsen was traveling. This captain had just informed the minister that he did not see what difference there could

be, to a modern Christian, between keeping the seventh-day Sabbath of the "Jewish" tradition and keeping any other day of the week. This observation caused the minister to make a little excursion, with a view to clarifying the issue. He asked the captain a simple question.

"Do you have any fire emergency system on board this ship?"

"Certainly."

"Then you probably also have regular exercises to test the equipment and to train the crew for such an emergency?"

"Of course."

"Now, suppose that one week you, as a captain, announce the following: 'On Tuesday night at 8 o'clock all members of our fire brigade are requested to attend a meeting, on the lower deck, for an important drill.' Well, Tuesday night arrives. The ship clock strikes eight. You are there. But, sad to say, not one single crew member turns up. A slip of paper has been left on your desk by one of the men, stating that this happens to be his bridge game night. For fire emergency drills he definitely prefers Fridays. Another man is reported to have expressed some days ago, in the company of some companions, that he has always adhered to the principle that drill meetings should take place on the first evening of the week. A third has hinted that Wednesday nights would be a good time.

"Now, Captain, what is your feeling about this? Don't you think they may all be right, each one in his own way, considering the matter from his individual point of view? In fact, is not a Wednesday just as good for that meeting as a Tuesday?"

"No, Pastor Olsen, not if I have announced Tuesday. For then I mean Tuesday, not Wednesday or Friday."

"Well, but frankly speaking, was not your choice of Tuesday somewhat capricious perhaps, after all? You could equally well have chosen another day, couldn't you?"

"Maybe, but one day had to be chosen, and someone had to choose it. Now I do happen to be the captain of this ship. I have been appointed as its responsible leader. So the crew member who simply chooses Friday after I have decided Tuesday, must have assumed a dreadful responsibility of his own. And I should think his choice of Friday is bound to be capricious in a far more serious sense than my choice of Tuesday. To me this is simply an audacious overthrow of my whole authority. It is stubborn rebellion against an established order. It is mutiny. . ."

The captain was manifestly working himself up into a mood of righteous indignation that was becoming louder and louder in its spontaneous expression. You might almost imagine that that "mutiny" had already taken place in factual reality on board this very ship, so peacefully sailing on its way between Iceland and Norway one beautiful summer day sometime in the twenties.

Then he suddenly became silent. They were both silent for some seconds. The captain finally looked up with a smile. It was the smile of one who has had the experience of some weird recognition. He was just coming back to the reality of this present moment, this present world.

"Aha, I see the matter we were just arguing about in a strangely different light now. So this is what you were driving at, Pastor Olsen? Of course, you are right. The Sabbath is simply a question of obedience. It is a matter of submitting unreservedly, unquestioningly to God. It is a matter of humbly accepting His right to command. It is a matter of believing implicitly that He is a Person who says something, and means what He says.

"He is the literal Captain of my literal life, He is a literal Person, ordering things in a literal way, in this literal world of mine. He must also be a loving Person. Theoretical rules do not love anybody. But he loves me, right here in my everyday bustle and busy-ness, he personally cares about what I do, and He pleadingly invites me to come to a literal appointment, an urgent appointment, with Him, the Lord of the universe. But I simply ignore that appointment. I turn up on another day, a day of my own choosing. I am either an obstinate crank or a man who has failed to believe -- to believe that my Lord and Maker is literally there."

All that man needed in order to have his attitude toward the fourth commandment radically changed was the bright light of Christian realism, dispersing the ghost-haunted semidarkness of his truth-blurring spiritualism. He needed to see Jesus Christ as the Creator and the great Captain, the God who is a real Person. What we all need is this transfiguration from wavering doubt to firm belief. We simply have not learned to take God at His word yet. Obviously, to our blurred minds, our Creator and Recreator is still a distant, myth-mixed figure. Therefore even the clearest words and the simplest commands from His lips, turn into vague meaningless metaphors in our ears.

So the searching question we should ask ourselves as resolutely as possible is this: Is it logically sensible and ethically right for creatures to treat their Creator the way we do? Where did you ever see an intelligent and decent subordinate take the clear orders he receives from his commander, and "generalize" them, just tear "the essence" out of them through a process of "spiritual abstraction", make them "free" from every realistic connection with space and time?

What does that kind of a "liberation" mean, if not a bold attempt to pulverize, or reduce to absolutely naught, both the commands and the commander? Our Commander is Jesus Christ. Are we about to simply deny His whole authority and dignity as a real Person?

This matter of authority and personalism manifestly constitutes an urgent aspect of the fourth commandment. For please keep in mind this important fact: for no other commandment of the law is proper obedience so dependent on how the Lawgiver is envisioned: Is He a real Person (for instance Jesus Christ)? Or is He "just a general rule"? Whether that commandment is to be conceived as demanding a literal obedience or just a "spiritual" one, will depend decisively on this one fateful point.

So it is not strange that a specific description of the Lawgiver Himself, as a Person, is carefully included in the very text of that commandment. It is a veritable theophany. The one who, after such a visible manifestation of the character of the Lawgiver, still does not know what kind of Person he has to do with, must be both deaf and blind.

The point should be well taken, if we refer back to our previous illustrations. It is a question serious enough: Was there guilt or innocence in the attitude of the crew members on board that ship? This all depends on the way their captain could be envisioned. Was he a man of flesh and blood or was he "just an abstract principle"?

Now you may object: Is there more than one way a captain on a ship can be envisioned?

Obviously there is. You should not forget that we live in a world where pagan idealism or spiritualism is rank and rampant. There you must always take into account the possibility of a "double vision". At least we should not exclude this as a theoretical alternative. Let us assume that the crew in question -- thanks to the strangely "advanced" spirituality of their cultural environment, their super-idealist view of life, had all reached the fabulous level where men manage the master-stroke of viewing their literal commander as nothing but a pure abstraction, a "spirit" of the highest potency. And here then you and I should now join them "in theory", play with them, for a brief moment, that fabulous game of pure imagination. In other words, we should theoretically assume that they were correct in the way they considered their captain as "just an abstract principle", "a spiritual idea", nothing more. What, then, about the unshakable validity of his demand that they make their appearance punctually and literally at eight o'clock on that Tuesday night?

The answer, in this theoretical setting, is obvious: A stringent obedience to the letter of that command simply could no longer be insisted upon. The command of a commander who merely exists in the world of myths, is itself nothing but a myth. Who would feel obligated to yield strict obedience to a myth? Myths are rather subject to spiritual interpretations: that is, the interpretation given to them in each given case by the expert in mythology. This is an art, or a series of arts. The adept in mythological theology, for instance, will inform you how mythical commandments, in his field, are to be interpreted: They must be interpreted mythically, of course, so if our captain is duly considered as "pure spirit", the commands, also, that he has left behind him, must be subject to a "purely spiritual" interpretation. And the "spirit" of his message to the crew would have to be given a new reading (reinterpretation), for instance something like this in our special case: "Come together, my dear spiritual friends, for a fire emergency drill at any time, and in any place you may find this convenient and profitable, in view of your own plans and occupations, and in any form your spiritual insight and individual conscience may deem humanly proper."

In other words, the meeting could take place on a Thursday just as well as on a Tuesday. It could take place regardless of time, beyond all narrow pedantic limits of time.

Notice one thing here: the finest spiritualization and the grossest demythologization often serve the same shrewd purpose; they both aim at "curing" the childlikeness of the Christian child. To take orders literally, just as they have been given, is currently regarded as the most hopelessly childish quality with which children anywhere can be contaminated. (See my book: *God, the Situation Ethicist*, same publishers)

My question then will be one I can hardly formulate too sharply: Is obedience nothing but "narrowness" and "pendantry"? Is it just some pitiable outgrowth of "hopelessly childish" minds? And what about the God who demands such obedience? Is He Himself just "hopelessly childish"? Or is He "arbitrary" in the sense of "anti-logical" and "despotic"?

My simple conclusion can only be that the Lord of the Sabbath is the absolutely Unique and Sovereign One; that is: the source of all personalism, which is the most glorious and the most inscrutable of all things. Of course, you and I may have our reasons for not wishing to have Him so personal and so unique. That is another matter. But if we let our sound logical sense get the better of us, that is how we are bound to see Him. If we let what is right prevail -- in the ethical sense, as well as in the epistemological and rational sense - then that is still how we are bound to see Him. We just cannot desire Him to be otherwise. For us, a less personal or less unique God would never do. The perfect fulfillment of our peculiar need is Jesus Christ, Creator and Redeemer, the divinely "arbitrary" One, the One who takes the initiatives no creature could ever take, in whose presence we have one single initiative left: rest.

Of course the law as a whole, from beginning to end, reveals just the kind of God we can depend upon and must depend upon, a personally Intervening One, who does every deed he promises and who

means every word He says, and, therefore, must be obeyed unquestioningly. But let us now still focus our attention upon the fourth commandment in particular. How far is it right to say that the ultimate of this divine uniqueness is embodied in that fourth commandment? We have just begun to explore its "arbitrary" character, its character of unquestionable obligation. And now comes the radical question this whole chapter seems to lead up to: Does that "unquestionability" of the Sabbath commandment, make it man's test of obedience toward God par excellence?

Notice, I do not say its "non-moral" character. For frankly, a test of obedience that turned out to be "non-moral" would be a contradiction in terms. I must definitely reject such a non-sensical suggestion. The evidence as to whether a command is morally binding, is absolutely not to be sought by asking if its terms are immanent in natural man's "moral substratum". Let us preserve a decent amount of spiritual reasonability. A Christian must cut short any trend of thought that causes him to look upon the concept of natural law with such infatuation. He must keep in mind the tremendous worthiness of contingency: The Creator and Redeemer whom we have learned to know, is a God who is not limited by His own universal laws.

Does God's Contingent Intervention in Man's Personal Life Mean that His Laws of Universal Validity are "Eluded"?

You may remember what Troeltsch says about the concept of "Contingency" in the history of ideas of the Western World. A remarkable thing happens, as the influence of Judeo-Christian theism begins to exert its impact on the thought forms of Occidental philosophy: The term "Contingency" comes to be looked upon in a different way, an astonishingly positive way. It is now used by ecclesiastical philosophy to express the volitional nature of the Creator. Personal will is not considered a disgrace any longer. Even God possesses it. The God the Bible teaches us is a God who is not limited by universal laws. According to Troeltsch, that God actually "reveals the most profound elements of His being in the contingency of what eludes those laws." (See my quotations pp. 31 and 38).

What Troeltsch here evidently intends to express, is a "new" and admirably positive quality of contingency. Of course I heartily agree as far as this statement points out the nature of the Bible's God as the personally intervening One, who is never negatively affected by His own laws. As theologians put it: God is the autonomous One who is above the laws He has Himself established (auto= self; nomos=law; God is a law to Himself). On the other hand, I do not feel quite comfortable with Troeltsch's expression: "the contingency of what eludes those laws." That might be interpreted in the sense that God, whenever He may happen to be in that kind of a mood, suddenly abolishes the laws He has set up for His kingdom.

Do we have any evidence, scriptural or otherwise, that this viewpoint is correct? None that I know of. No, not even within the realm of His natural laws do I know any case in which this is bound to be the inevitable conclusion. Or do you perhaps imagine that, in order to prevent some body from falling, in some specific case of emergency, God would simply suspend, temporarily, the whole general law of gravitation?

I have to dwell upon this subject for a while, because I feel there is a certain "anti-nomian" trend in human reasoning that is rather unreasonable (We seem to be naturally "against laws" in our traditional thinking). This inherent lack of respect for laws may be the reason why we insist so much on having miracles happen, where God seems to favor a natural process (for instance of healing). Evidently God has established His laws in order that they should be honored and observed, not in order that they should be despised and broken. Why do we think that God is so eager to break (abolish) His own laws? We ought to know that the physical laws are of divine origin, just as much as any spiritual law governing our lives. Each one of the two categories is a lesson in discipline. Would it be intelligent pedagogy to take away that lesson as often as possible, by introducing what we sensation-seekers call the supernatural?

Of course we know very little about the way God deals with the problems we cause in His life. But let us look for a while at the way we human creatures naturally seek solutions to our own problems:

When the first astronauts were circling in orbit around the moon, and needed to get out of that automatic circling again, in order to return to earth, how did they manage it? Was it by annulling the laws of centrifugal force and the law of gravitation (the moon's pull, exerted on a smaller body)? No, it was by applying the natural force of their own motor. That intervening power was sufficiently strong to conquer the other powers, although these remained there all the time and had to be overruled through a conscious battle. But even if they had been able to, would those astronauts have tried to suspend the very laws according to which the forces functioned that kept the space ship circling around the moon? Of course not. Why? It stands to reason that an actual abrogation of the law of gravitation would have had the saddest consequences for the astronauts themselves. That general suspension of the law of gravitation would also have affected you and me most disastrously. We enjoy the blessings of that law every moment, don't we?

We all know one rule of intelligent research: If several alternatives of explaining a phenomenon present themselves, one should usually choose the simplest one. And now, what about God and the attitude He is likely to adopt toward what we, from our limited viewpoint, would tend to call the "automatic working out" of inexorably stringent laws, for instance the laws of physical nature? When He performs what we call the "miracle", what is it that really happens on such an occasion? Is it to be equated with a downright elusion of the laws in question? Would that view-point be the simpler one? And one further

question: If God so easily solves His problem by just eluding in the case of physical laws, then what about His attitude toward the spiritual laws of our being? Do you see the seriousness of my question?

After we have seen the way Jesus Christ had to face the stubborn facts of a broken law in the case of man's fall into sin and natural perdition, is it too much if we shy away from speaking lightmindedly about an "elusion" of divine laws? Maybe in my case it is the linguist's knowledge of the literal meaning of the words that scares me. If one takes away the prefixes of the Latin verbs "e-ludere", "il-ludere" and "de-ludere", what is the simplex remaining? It is "ludere". That means "to play". Now, everybody knows there is not the same seriousness, or the same stringency, about play as about realistic deeds. We play games, and sometimes even tricks. The God of the Bible, however, is not famous for playing either games or tricks. Evidently neither e-lusion, nor il-lusion, nor de-lusion is in His particular line. God's specialty is not in playing games, but rather working realities. When Christ came down to earth and died in man's place-- even the second death with all its horror and hopelessness-- He proved for all times that elusion of the laws is entirely out of the question. There just is not one bit of evasion or make-believe to be registered in the case of man's redemption through Jesus Christ. (If the divine laws are just a transcript of God's very character, specific facets of his eternal and inalienable nature, finding an adequate expression through them, then of course the laws themselves must be eternal and inalienable. So how could they be abolished,--or even broken in a literal sense. It is the law that breaks you.)

Our attitude toward the Sabbath, I am afraid, gives a measure of the narrowness of our vision regarding what Christ has done for us. Just imagine: the Creator Himself, the Majesty of Heaven, has found it sufficiently urgent and worthwhile, nay absolutely indispensable, to make an emergency descent to one particular creature of His, on a tiny planet called Earth, to save him from misery and death. In fact, already before there was any problem emerging on Earth, he had come down. His urgent desire was to have a relationship of sanctification with us; that is the most intimate union known between the Creator and the created ones, the only safe protection from the fall into sin. So He communicates to man the exact time of the holy rendez-vous He wants to have with him. Now, would it be reasonable to think that this whole complex of contingent planning, and fulfillment of plans, would tend to make the Sabbath commandment less binding than the other nine to the creaturely person for whom it was expressly devised?

#### A Bizarre Manner of Speech on the Part of a Bride-Elect

Could you imagine a bride saying about her bridegroom: "He told me to meet him at such and such a time, in such and such a place, and I promised to come. But now I do not know what to think about all this. If only I could know for sure whether that appointment is really morally binding upon me! What troubles me about it is the fact that it has been made so terribly specific. True, that boy has done everything in his power to make me happy. And I know how happy he will be to see me at the appointed time. But, honestly, why should he indicate that specific time and that specific place? I just cannot bear such specificity. Why cannot things be kept in a more general setting? Of course I do want to be married. But why must it necessarily be at a definite time and in a definite place? Such fixedness is not quite fair to the scope of freedom which a young girl should have. There is something so peremptory and narrow minded about it. I just am not going to be tied by these shackles. It intrudes upon my personal freedom. Do not misunderstand me. I am not against appointments as such. It is the "time element" and the "place element" I cannot take. I am obviously not made for such hairsplitting accuracy, such standing upon trifles. What I am longing for is something more ideal, more spiritual, something enshrouded in the mysteries of a freely floating dream. To tell the truth, I am afraid I shall have to find another bridegroom. This one is evidently not my type. He is too practical and intrusively personal. He is too much bound up in this-worldly specificities!"

I should confess at once, I have never heard a girl in love express herself in such terms. Nor do I expect to experience anything as perverse as that in the future. But what now about our "Christian" world and its relationship to a personal God, the God who created man and placed a day of holy communion immediately in front of Him: the Sabbath was man's first new day; let us not forget that.

This Christendom must have had its sound human sense considerably perverted by certain pseudo-philosophical and pseudo-spiritual ideas about God and the world He made. It is incredible that any one could succumb to patterns of reasoning as hollow and as piteously unpromising as that.

Here I feel the urge to close my ears for a while to the weird voice of the "bride", and listen exclusively to the voice of the Bridegroom, the great Lover, the Man of matchless charms.

This does not mean that I intend to "leave in the lurch" every sober knowledge I possess about the Sabbath as a morally binding commandment.

No, I shall all the time keep in my ears that authoritatively ringing voice, rolling like thunder from the sanctuary of God's throne. That sanctuary and that divine throne are realities I do not, either, dare to reduce, disrespectfully, to mere abstractions. That center of God's judgment throne is a shaking reality whose concrete reverberations cannot be escaped by any human being.

Deepest down, however, the Sabbath is a touch-stone, testing the very foundation of man's loyalty to God; that is, his love for God. Still this is not the utmost end of its capacity. The Sabbath is designed to be more than a test for man, namely a test for God Himself. For in one way, God is the main One, in this

drama of the ages, who is being tested. He permits an entire world to put to the test His justice, His faithfulness and His love. And the Sabbath is again the supreme testing ground. From the beginning, the Sabbath was the capital body of evidence testifying to God's attitude of extreme benevolence toward His creatures. So it is not a fit of sentimental nonsense when I choose, as my next headline, the following.

## CHAPTER IX

### GOD'S LOVE LETTER TO MAN

Can the Sabbath be qualified in terms apparently as romantic as that without leaving the sober coasts of rock-bottom realism? To express it leniently: Is this title line evocative of some childish overstatement? Well, what do we mean when we say that God decided to meet man on the Sabbath day? Are we justified in qualifying the Sabbath commandment as a unique "rendezvous"? The term "a sanctuary in time" is certainly a most exacting one. Is there any realistic indication that the fourth commandment may be the only one in the decalogue where such an extraordinary encounter between God and man could be perfectly proper, perfectly practicable?

In this connection, let us consider what M.L. Andreasen states in his book: *The Sabbath, Which Day and Why* (1942).

"Breaking the fourth commandment is not like breaking some of the other commandments."

Andreasen's idea corroborates what we have arrived at in a previous chapter. The Sabbath is essentially different, somehow, Breaking it, is not, for that reason, a less serious matter or a less remarkable sign. Rather the opposite: a man may commit manslaughter in a fit of anger; he may, as a result of sheer rashness, take God's name in vain; or he may succumb to the temptation, suddenly presenting itself, to yield to some overwhelming sensual passion. But a failure to keep the Sabbath, according to Andreasen, rarely comes into that category. Sabbath-breaking does not have the excuse of sudden passion or of inordinate desire. It is not like most other great sins or destructive habits:

"It is rather a symptom of spiritual decline, of departure from God, of estrangement from the promise, of a sickly Christian experience." (Ibid pp. 26-27).

The long and the short of it is: Sabbath-breaking is apostasy. In other words, it is a deep-rooted, long-term thing, a disorder of the chronic type, not the acute, transitory type. I sometimes try to express the seriousness of it by simply calling the Sabbath a "heart affair". It is all a matter of the most tender vows of faithfulness ever known to any marriage covenant.

But, you may eagerly object, what about the individual who today knows nothing--or next to nothing--about any such thing as a Sabbath in this world? Can he, with any degree of fairness, be branded as an "apostate"?

No, you are right there, in one sense. On the other hand, even in this case the statement about deepseated apostasy is perfectly valid. In the history of this world there is the indisputable fact of a collective apostasy. As a race we are guilty, heartbreaking guilty, of having "let God down". And Sabbath-unfaithfulness is one of the conspicuous symptoms of our wicked dereliction.

I have contended that the Sabbath embodies, as it were, God's determination to cast His lot with man, wholly and fully. Now, is there any specific evidence that, in the Sabbath commandment, God joins man in a unique way? That is exactly what Andreasen suggests in the following passage.

"The Sabbath command is the only commandment in the observance of which God could join man. It would be highly improper to speak of God as keeping the first commandment: 'Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.' So it is with the second and the third. Again it would be highly irreverent to speak of God as keeping the last six commandments. A moment's reflection will make this clear. Stealing, lying, adultery, all these have no place with reference to God. But there is one commandment in the observance of which God could join man: the Sabbath commandment. Man can keep it; God can keep it. Thus the Sabbath is the meeting place of God and man." (Ibid. p. 32).

So the uniqueness of the fourth commandment is a mystery indisputably asserting itself. And it is a uniqueness asserting itself precisely in what I have called God's "coming down". If He had not come all the way down, man's predicament would have had no solution. In the New Testament that total condescension on God's part is further revealed in his "coming in the flesh". The incarnation doctrine is the essence of New Testament theology. A denial of that doctrine is equated with "non-Christianity". This is the "spirit of the `anti-Christ'". I referred to it already in my introduction. So you know exactly how distant that spiritualism (or spiritualizing away of all concrete reality) is from the Spirit of realism, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of the truth.

"Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God. And this is that spirit of anti-Christ, whereof ye have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world." I John 4:2,3.



Spiritualizing away the concrete reality of God's coming all the way down, this is the sham spirituality the great adversary has chosen to reduce God's plan of salvation to naught. Prophetic revelation also describes it as the mystery of iniquity, or the mystery of lawlessness.

"For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders. And with all deceivableness and unrighteousness in them that perish, because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved." 2 Thess. 2:7-10.

It is the denial of the bodily "coming down" of a personal God, that encourages man in his natural inclination toward lawlessness. At the same time this is a denial of God's love for man in the radical sense of His "coming down" as the extremely Humble One. It is interesting to see that this divine humility is qualified as the "mystery of godliness": God was "manifest in the flesh" (I Tim 3:16). This is, of course, in all respects the diametrical opposite of the spirit of the "man of sin", "the son of perdition:, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God" (2 Thess. 2:3,4). Titanism and super-man pride is the essence of the "mystery of iniquity" (lawlessness), the "lying wonders" of vain spiritualism, cited above.

This brings us still closer to the mystery of Pan-sabbatism, the phenomenon we can fully expose only at a later stage. So far we may anticipate the following: The Sabbath commandment, taken in its entirety (and that is, of course, the way all real things should be taken), constitutes a striking "coming together" of two things one seldom thinks of as fitting together, namely the common and the holy. These are both embraced by the very text of the commandment. For notice that it does not only say: Keep the Sabbath holy. No, it continues by pointing out what should fill the first six days: "Six days shalt thou work." So it commands man to do and refrain from doing. Neither part is looked upon as unworthy of being mentioned in the holy text of the fourth commandment. Again the Christian agape reveals itself as fundamentally different from the pagan eros. God's philosophy considers as fully respectable the common thing that the philosophy of spiritualism tends to shrink back from as something despicable (bodies, concrete matter, practical everyday affairs).

Pagan thought here reveals one of its logical fallacies. And when I say "logical fallacy", you should not think that it is a negligible thing in the world of the spirit. The evil one prepares his most fateful deceptions by tricks of fallacious logic. Example: by totally abolishing in man's world the realm of the "common" or the "profane", the idea of the "holy" is simply made impossible. Its whole frame of reference, as it were, is suddenly torn to pieces. For here the "common", of course, is the very setting in which the "holy" finds itself engrained. If you torpedo the natural setting of the pearl, the pearl itself will of course suddenly be left without foundation. It will become "homeless", nay, downright meaningless.

We have pointed this out as a logical self-evidence already: to "hallow" is to "set apart as holy". But how can you set something apart if there is not another thing from which it is set apart? How can you distinguish holy time, if you have no common time from which you distinguish it? Pan-sabbatism is the shrewd idea of making all days holy. In its historic appearance and its diabolical effects, we shall show it to be parallel to the machination of pan-theism, the desperate absurdity of making "all things God". Every bit of matter in the universe is proclaimed divine. End result: nothing is God. Nothing matters anymore! This is Satan's supreme device of hocus pocus designed to do away with the Holy One, the holy ones.

Again the tremendous reality of creation, woven inextricably into the very text of the Sabbath commandment, is the basic notion making the whole difference. Paganism has no idea that God created. The Bible only, knows the astonishing God who went down. Went down to what? To the most lowly things. He is the incomparable God of the lowly ones. And this plan of lowliness is the extreme working out of His love. The eternally Wise One, who has molded true philosophy in every detail, has actually given an infinite prestige to "downness" in this sense. There is nothing improper or anti-ideal in an intelligent creature's inherent unsightliness, even his total helplessness, without God. He should only know the fact that he is unsightly and helpless. That is an integral part of his realism. The gospel calls that realism the "love of the truth". It is the realization that dependence on God is the creature's normal position. It is a great position. God-dependence is the basic creaturely virtue. It is decisive for the Creator's own attitude toward the creature, the attitude of benevolence and grace: "God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble" (I Peter 5:5). The opportunity to see someone else above oneself, to seek "another's wealth" (I Cor. 10:24), the better honor of the other one, this is looked upon as a joy, the thing one loves to do. No wonder that Biblical realism is called the love of the truth. The emotions, as well as the intellect, is here fully involved.

Conclusion: The Sabbath commandment puts the things in their right places. It gives wisdom to distinguish between the great and the greater, between the common and the holy. Such wisdom is without bias, without pride and vanity. It is realistic.

## CHAPTER X

### THE INTIMATE CONTENT OF THE "LOVE LETTER"

We have stressed the Sabbath commandment's character as an absolutely free and spontaneous initiative on the part of a living God to step all the way down to man's world, making personal interference in his everyday life. But how could we account for this initiative if not precisely in terms of a positive interest of God in man, and let us add: His interest in man as an individual, a creature considered in the full context of his destiny. This is the Genesis record's graphical portrayal of man coming to life in an environment minutely prepared for him. It is precisely in that same context that the Sabbath, as well, makes its majestic entry, isn't it?

Now mention must be made of a remarkable trend implicitly contained, and sometimes even explicitly stated, in traditional Western theology, regarding the fourth commandment, as compared with the other nine: it is assumed to be more "legalistic" in its formulation; that is, "less expressive of Christ's peculiar love for humanity." This is sometimes a main argument advanced for considering it "of an inferior order".

What an adulteration of the plainest facts! I could hardly think of a more eloquent example than this strangely biased statement, to illustrate a peculiarly sentimental conception of Christian love. That is a sentimentalism I have found to be the inevitable companion of spiritualistic trends of thinking in whatever culture such spiritualism jeopardizes the sound equilibrium of human hearts. Those who imagine that this romantic sentimentality is a "Christian" feature, are heirs of a tragic misconception.

Let us have a closer look at the sentimental objections brought up against the Sabbath commandment: "It is a stern command. It shows us a majestic Potentate, who has unfolded a tremendously impressive bulk of realistic power. He is the origin of all things. Granted, then, that He has the right to command--to be "arbitrary", to be obeyed, and admired even. But what kind of obedience and admiration is this? It seems to be a legally binding kind. But where do we there find the properly loveable One, the God whom we are bound to love, simply because we are irresistibly attracted by His loveableness?"

This may seem a most reasonable and legitimate question: Is the picture the Sabbath commandment suggests of God, just an "admirable" one, but not necessarily a "loveable" one? If this, however, is immediately meant as a certain charge against God and against His commandment, then it is a premature charge. The error we commit is that we do not read the Sabbath commandment with caution and care. We might as well charge the portrait Christ Himself draws of the divine character, right in the New Testament, with being devoid of loveableness; for, in point of fact, the Christian love concept (agape), distinguishes itself by a veritable Old Testament realism. There is something extremely sober-minded and serious about that portrait, which will never be palatable to the humanistic romanticist. The New Testament agape is as free from sentimental romanticism as anything you might come across in any text of "the Law and the Prophets".

But for this very reason the Christian love motif is so blessedly unbiased and many-sided, so absolutely sound and invigorating in its totality, so definitely sufficient for men's salvation.

As God intervened in man's life and destiny by introducing His first Sabbath, there was no trace of anything arbitrary in this, in our modern Machiavellian sense: That is, the sense of "despotic" or frigidly "automatic", or fatefully "irrevocable". It was not in this inhuman sense God suddenly "took a fancy" to man, and made him His particularly selected one. No, it was with an undertone of trembling tenderness--and a remarkable delicacy of respect for the created person's own autonomy and moral freedom. This is, in fact, the most delicate appeal imaginable, on the part of a Creator, to His beloved creature, not to leave out of the account of his life the Sabbath day. I have dared to try and make a paraphrase of what I personally feel God is here saying to Man:

"Dear Man: Let me confide a secret to you, a tender urge from the depth of my fatherly heart. Your life is an essential part of my happiness. You will never realize to the full how dearly I love you. That was the reason why, from the beginning, I longed to appoint a most special rendezvous with you. Every seventh day my soul was filled with joyful expectancy at the thought of meeting with you in quite a special way. This was in order to show you, my special friend, that I, the great Yahweh, am also the loving Emmanuel, the Father who cannot bear being separated from His child. That is also why I am the God who interferes, interferes quite specifically and personally in the deepest life of my human creature.

So do understand this, my dear child: anything less than that special rendezvous would leave me an unhappy Father. For, behold, I am not at all that vague and misty shadow of a God portrayed by the wily pseudo-spiritualities of this world, more merciless and cruel than any Moloch worship. The meanest calumny ever launched against me by the arch-deceiver is this "advanced" idea that I am just an impersonal "power" in nature.

I assure you, dear child, of mine, I am not at all the type of 'Creator' evolved pagans will qualify as a mere 'principle of evolution', the barren abstraction to which proud and self-sufficient scientist and philosophers have reduced me. I am not that divine Super-Automaton, a God in the abstract, just aimlessly turning his heavy wheel of routine laws--laws exactly like their 'divine author'; that is, 'as blind as a mole and as unfeeling as a mill stone', entirely deaf to the individual cries of individual men with their individual heartaches.

On the contrary, no sooner was there an inarticulate cry from your lips, or the most secret sorrow in your heart, than my compassion went out to you from the aching depths of my own heart. Why was it that so few came to hear that undertone of tenderness in my voice, as it echoes forth between the ravines of the wilderness of antiquity, declaring that I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; that is, the God who never tires of seeking to find and save the individuals, the rare ones that still care to be found and saved. My compassionate cry through my disciple John is a call for you, quite individually, to come to my Sabbath rest: "Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me!"

Well, you say, I know that still, small voice of the loving kindness that saves. But what conclusive evidence is there that this is identical with the voice of the Lord of the Sabbath? We do know, from every book of the Bible, a God who is ever anxious to establish, between Himself and man, a covenant relationship of mutual love. On the other hand, we also know a God who makes His identity known with the sound of the trumpet--and even the sound of rolling thunder--in the fourth commandment. Is this the same God, or two somewhat different Gods?

A point that would furnish conclusive evidence would be if we could, right in the midst of the trumpet and the thunder, discern the still small voice of love and tender mercy. Would it make sense to call the Sabbath, a stern command to implicit obedience, and a tender revelation of mercy,--both at the same time? A parallel example is found in the disputed case of Christ's vicarious death.

Did Jesus "Have to Die" to "Pacify God's Wrath"?

Increasingly insistent voices among us today keep crying out: "There was just one essential reason why Christ died that ignominious death on the cross. He was to reveal once-for-all the true nature of the maligned God in front of the universe at large. God could easily have pardoned human sinners without dying."

The source of that one-sided view is not the Bible. It is proud pagan humanism. It is an open rebellion against some fundamentals of divine justice. Let us here first admit one curious fact: The whole world seems to be singing the praises of fundamental justice. But have you noticed one special pattern of justice which the natural human heart is incapable of assimilating? That is God's own ineffable plan to let the Innocent die in the guilty one's place. To you and me in our unregenerated state that is felt as an absurdity and an abomination. What Paul actually says in I Cor. 2:9, (Ref. Is. 64:4) is that this appears like an unheard-of scandal to natural men. Please read the whole context, including verse 10, where Paul admits that God's children are different. They can acquire that new pattern of justice (I call it the "Lamb" pattern). But tell me now, does that demand a new and rather paradoxical type of logic? By no means. No more so than the inherent logic of the Sabbath commandment. But what then could tempt you and me to cover the idea of Christ's substitutionary death with ridicule? Simply our foolish pride. And when did simple pride help any man to be more logical? (See page 53).

Is it realism that teaches me to drown my own feeling of responsibility for Christ's death in the general knowledge that all the angels as well needed to have God's true character revealed to them through that same death? This important topic demands a thorough treatment in another place.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE SABBATH COMMANDMENT--A CALL TO MERCY

We may first be satisfied with some kind of circumstantial evidence. By this I mean, in the present case, indicative passages in other parts of the Holy Scriptures, referring to the Sabbath. A key text in this respect is Ezekiel 20:12, stating (expressly) the great goal of God's special appointment with men in terms of Sabbath holiness:

"Moreover also I gave them my Sabbath--to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them."

Where, indeed, does the peculiar love of this intensely personal God for His elect ones reach its point of culmination? Precisely in His fatherly determination to sanctify them. That sanctification (setting apart, or sacred particularization) of a chosen people (a "handpicked" people) is clearly the glorious aim and the whole significance of the Sabbath in both Testaments.

Here we have arrived at an extremely important point. Attentive observers, laymen as well as theologians, have stood back in awe and wonder at the attributes of God, as He reveals Himself in the Old and New Testament. He is the God who insists on making His intelligent creatures holy. Some have called it God's passion for holiness, His passion for making those around Him like unto Himself; that is holy--nothing short of this!

What does sanctification here mean? What is it God so "passionately" insists upon in this case? His plan for the intelligent creature is unmistakable and inescapable: Man should, day by day, reflect God's own image, more and more. And now, if you ask what "God's image" stands for in this context, then I can give only one answer I find entirely meaningful: It is God's supreme gift to men: We have been esteemed worthy of being real persons like Him--endowed with freedom of will, that is, the freedom to serve, without

restraint, of our own accord, the other ones--the Other One; that is a service of love. That divine gift of personalism, means that the recipient can enjoy, in the depths of his mind and heart, something otherwise unheard-of in the world of earthly creation: an ever increasing consciousness (some languages use "conscience" to describe the same great reality). And to be intensively conscious here means to be increasingly conscious of the other ones, the Other One. It means to be lovingly aware of them as the core reality of your environment, the wonderful world of solidarity and totality in which the Creator has been pleased to place you. In many cases this consciousness is bound to become identical with compassion. To be like God is to be compassionate, full of pity, filled to the point of overflowing with the desire to help the helpless ones. The ever increasing intensity of that fellowship feeling is what testifies to our being on the road toward likeness with God. If we fail to possess this tender awareness of the other ones, the Other One, we should not flatter ourselves that we are on the road of sanctification. Only the God who commands us to have that awareness, that tender attitude of the deepest agape, is also able to help us to appropriate it in our inmost lives. And He will not be satisfied with us till He has had His way. Let us make no mistake on that point. Without sanctification intelligent creatures, endowed with freedom of will, just cannot be considered safe in the Kingdom of God.

I think we have now already said clearly enough what that irrepressible divine urge for sanctification is. It is nothing less than God's agape, the Christian love. It is nothing but the Lord's boundless well of loving kindness, of tender mercy, something the world apart from Christ never knew.

And then comes the crucial question of critical verification in our present case: Does tender mercy characterize the Sabbath commandment? Does this mark its essence more than any other quality? And notice: here we are not satisfied with "mercy" in terms of some mystic hidden interiority which does not come out. Oh no, mercy in God's sense is characterized exactly by this peculiar practical quality: it does come out. It is alterocentric. It is out-going, even down-going (condescending). So our questioning regarding the nature, the essence, of the Sabbath goes on: Does that assumed mark of penetrating love and mercy constitute something that visibly and tangibly manifests itself, even in the concrete wording of the commandment under debate?

Yes, yes, yes! Definitely so. Agape is the fundamental motif of the fourth commandment. And that love which the Bible, and the Bible only, tells us about, is no invisible abstraction. It is no intangible specter of theoretical interpretation. No - no, it is love incarnate. We should all know the significance of incarnation in the simple philosophy of the Bible. Mercy, in the Biblical sense of God's incomparable agape, is a living reality, a thing of flesh and blood. Mercy is a wonderfully visible and tangible thing. It is simple and sober-minded like a sound child. It is practical and efficient like the unique God of the Bible, whose love burst out into creation and re-creation. Mercy is alterocentricity itself. It is the divine urge that gives itself-unreserved to the other ones, even the downmost other ones. But the new thing I here want to stress and demonstrate is this: That mercy is the theme par excellence of the 4th Commandment. You may fear that I am here indulging in something like an overstatement. And you are somewhat surprised maybe at the peremptoriness of my statement. For, off hand, you may not perhaps particularly recall that the fourth commandment has any direct reference to any detail of that order.

Well, that is just what I feared. In this respect, your experience is not so far from mine. So what we need, both of us, is a new experience. Let us go hunting for it together. We may need visions of reality we have not had heretofore. Hence also the title suggested by a sympathetic reader of the first edition of my manuscript for this book: A New Look at the Sabbath.

So let us go straight to the matter. In this case that would mean confronting the most basic text presenting the Sabbath as a commandment to men. We cannot escape Exodus 20:8-11, then, can we? So be vigilantly attentive now. We shall take it word by word. And whenever we come to any point in this commandment where the talk is clearly and unmistakably about mercy, as a command to man, then you call out: "Stop, here it is!" Of course, if during our experiment you do not have any genuine encounter with "mercy" in that text, at all, then you just keep quiet. Here we go then:

"Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. In it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor the stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days, the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: whether the Lord blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it."

So where does the direct command, to you and me, to exert an attitude of tender mercy toward "the other ones", actually start here, in a conscience-stirring way and right to the point? Well, the command breaks forth of course already with the first word: "Remember!" That is a shaking imperative, isn't it? But where does it come down to the nitty-gritty of an ethical obligation toward your fellow-creatures, a command to be merciful toward them in your treatment of their lives? That obviously starts right in the midst of a sentence in verse 10:

"...nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates." Those are "the other ones", the fellow creature toward whom a certain attitude is commanded.

At this point I should make a full confession of my own narrow mindedness or willful obstination, or whatever you would like to call it. I had been calling myself a Seventh-day Adventist for several decades before I become really aware that here, right in the midst of the Sabbath commandment, there suddenly turns up a tremendous call to mercy. I may as well make my confession complete: I actually happened to be called a Professor of Theology and Christian Philosophy in the Theological Seminary of a Seventh-day Adventist university, before the light of this simple fact dawned upon my mind. In fact, I had even been entrusted with teaching a special subject in that university called "Doctrine of the Sabbath".

By the way, I may tell you at once that this is one of the most difficult of all subject to teach in that Seminary. Why? Maybe partly for this reason: Seventh-day Adventist students of theology may tend to have made up their minds in advance that this is one of the easiest subjects. They are tempted to take it for granted, as it were, that they know that one, inside and out. And their credulity here may not be so astonishing. Year after year they have heard it repeated usque ad nauseam: at home during worships, in Sabbath school, in church grade school, in academy, then in college: Sabbath, Sabbath, Sabbath, the same thing over and over again. Finally some of them arrive in the Theological Seminary to go through their Master of Divinity program. And again they face, as a core curriculum item of their study something called: "Doctrine of the Sabbath". Here then it may be tempting for them to ask "Are we to pass through the same old theme again? We should soon know these things by now, even down to the minutest details." And we teachers,--are we always so much wiser? We seem to be saying to ourselves: "I ought to be somewhat of an expert in this field now. And so are my students. We ought to be able to skip the elementary grounds. At least I shall avoid reading the fundamental texts about the Sabbath this time!"

So we just run the risk of skipping Exodus 20:8-11, as a "commonplace", something we should all "know by now". Is this an attitude we are justified in taking? Do we know the 4th commandment so extremely well? The fact is, perhaps, that we do not know it at all, not even the basic elements of it. At least I did not.

But then, what did I know, or think I knew? How did my confused mind conceive of those crucial words: "nor thy son, nor thy daughter," etc.?

Once more I should be 100 percent honest and confess. Maybe from childhood on the idea at the back of my mind was something like this (I shall not embellish it in any way):

"Oh, there He is popping up again, that stern God of the Hebrews with His threatening voice of rolling thunder. In His fourth commandment He is aiming at keeping me down more efficiently than ever. Not only does He see to it that I am kept away from my own dear occupations one-seventh part of my time, and from any bit of material profit I might be assumed to derive from such occupations on the Sabbath day; but He has even expressly cut me off from any gain that might be imagined flowing in upon me from the work performed by other people, working for me while I am `resting'. No, not even the scanty income an ox or a donkey might theoretically manage to produce in my behalf, is He willing to let me have. I wonder if perhaps He goes to the length of begrudging us the milk produced by our cows, through their "Sabbath-breaking" activities on that special day, at least to the extent that such milk production might make our wallets more voluminous?"

Did you ever tend to understand Exodus 20:10 in something similar to this trend of thought? At least, the God then conceived of is definitely the God of Marcion, the rebellious theologian of old, who hated the Creator-God of Genesis and the Lawgiver of Exodus? The way we sometimes tend to feel and think about the essence of the Sabbath commandment might suggest that we are not very far from emancipated humanist theology, ancient and modern. That the Lawgiver in this case should really have the well-being of the ox or the donkey at heart, that idea hardly occurs at all to many a spiritual "marcionist" among us. Oh no, to our narrow minds it looks as if the one our Lord has His eye upon--and rather threateningly so--is the herdsman, not the herd. About herds He is assumed to be entirely indifferent. And, as for the man who keeps the herds, God's main concern is assumed to be that of "keeping him down", of preventing him efficiently from acquiring any extra benefits whatsoever.

This does not sound too much like "mercy", does it? The image it gives of God is an image of utter mercilessness, rather. Strange that we Sabbath-keepers should be among those who malign God with concepts as cruel and blasphemous as that. But is this way of conceiving Him without any precedence in the history of Judaism and Christianity? We do have that history in our bookshelves, don't we? So we should not need to be ignorant about the historical facts. And now, what does it show about sabbath-observers from times immemorial? The thoroughly negative view-point seems to have been the popular and the prevailing one all the time. It is you and me the old Yahweh is keeping His eye upon all the time, one seems to be saying. It is our "good time" He wants to put to an end? So He erects His high fences of law around us. We must be wing-cut, "kept obedient", "kept down" in every possible way, lest we grow too prosperous, too successful, too happy in this world. Our natural buoyancy and energetic self-unfolding must be held in check. For God is jealous. And the jealousy He is supposed to entertain, is the pagan one.

That is the only one men are naturally familiar with. You remember in what sense the Greek gods were jealous. They were jealous just in the human way. Is that how we also tend to look upon the God of the Sabbath commandment? Are we marcionists? Obviously we do not know the true God of the Bible too well then.

But frankly, you say, how can we be so sure that it is, on the contrary, the attitude of tender mercy God proclaims as His sacred principle and His peremptory order to us in the fourth commandment?

In order to make sure about that, it may be useful to go to other Bible texts. We find a parallel one in the 23rd chapter of Exodus. I do not say that it is necessary to do that. Intelligent and unbiased readers may not need that at all. I myself needed it. Of course, I ought not to assume that you are as unintelligent and as prone to bias as I am. But here I shall quote that other text for you anyway. The first part of it will not impress any one as different at all from the text of the 20th chapter:

"Six days thou shalt work, and on the seventh day thou shalt rest." (Margin: "keep the Sabbath") Exodus 23:12.

And now further: For what purpose should man rest? Notice the reason here given to that cattle-raising people, those lowly herdsmen, elected by God to be His peculiar property:

"that thine ox and thine ass may have rest."

That is brilliantly clear, isn't it? Man is required to give practical expression to a spirit of considerateness and mercy toward his "other ones". To what level of other ones? The down-most level; that is, as men are known to evaluate "up" and "down".

So we have had the matter pointed out to us in terms we cannot misunderstand, however dumb we may be, however deaf in our spiritual hearing. Those "hard" words about "thy son" and "thy daughter", "thy manservant" and "thy maidservant", etc. in the Sabbath commandment, as God put it all down with His own finger, cannot be regarded as hard any longer--I mean "hard" to the minds of ordinary common sense people. I am not yet speaking about the minds of certain theologians. But true theology is the "science about God", isn't it? And now, what does the essence of this text really tell us about the essence of God?

What a remarkable God! The God of the lowly ones! And what an unexpected hard nut suddenly dropping down from the highest branch of the peaceful palm tree and right upon the skull of the modern theologian. Pagan idealists of all ages and all climes--and particularly the proud humanists of our modern Occidental world--would tend to turn away with amazement and disgust, from such divine lowliness. This is unique in the annals of the formation of religions in any part of the world. Think of it: a God who, right in His most solemn statements of sacred legislation, utters words of merciful concern for dumb creatures, like donkeys and cows!

In fact, worshipers of the traditional gods in antiquity would think it an unworthy and unforgivable sentimentality, on the part of gods, to worry about the everyday lot of even human beings. Particularly those men of ancient societies who happened to have the good fortune, themselves, to be free men, would think it infinitely far below their personal dignity to pay any serious attention to the fate of such people whom our present text (Ex 23:12) qualifies as "the son of thy handmaid", and "the sojourner". What have we to worry about the destiny of slaves and barbarians?

And do not think, now, that that motley troop of Hebrews, with whom the Lord had to deal in the desert, and later, were so much different from the "pagans" around them in this respect. Their social reaction was very much the same. In their natural hearts they had no compassion with the "lower orders". So most of them undoubtedly felt rather scandalized when suddenly placed face to face with a formulation like this one:

"Six days thou shalt do thy work, and on the seventh day thou shalt rest: that thine ox and thy ass may rest, and the son of thy handmaid, and the stranger may be refreshed." (Exodus 23:12).

What strange interests on the part of a God! Hardly a single one of the nations whom the Israelites met on their way, and were influenced by, was seriously disturbed in their ethical conscience by such thoughts about mercy toward bondmen and strangers.

Here Old Testament theology already was found to mean a revolution, a total transvaluation of values in the contemporary world. And we modern men think we have made a tremendous progress in social ethics. Yet our theologians, right in a so-called Christian environment, seem to be taken by surprise whenever they face the fact of God's merciful concern about creatures as far down in the valley of pain and suffering as the animals! The fact that God suddenly begins to talk about duties of mercifulness toward them--and this even in the solemn context of the moral law--that comes as something like a shock upon us.

What is wrong with the animals then, as our culture looks upon things? What makes them so unworthy? It is their lack of intelligence, we are told. Who cares about a "dumb beast"? Apparently, whatever is "not intelligent" is "no good". Intelligence is the measuring standard for all prestige.

How could a beast have any mercy shown to it, in such a pitiless environment? How could a creature that dares to walk around with an intelligence quotient as close to the bottom line as that, expect to have any attention paid to it at all in such a pitiless intellectualistic culture as ours?

We sometimes seem to think that the reason why God came down to us--and found it worthwhile to save us--was that we were so admirably intelligent. But why did he really come down to us? It was because we were the most miserable, the most pitiable and unhappy creatures in the universe. Without God we were absolutely helpless. Therefore-- and for no other reason--did the Merciful One come down. He simply took pity on us. This is one meaning of the Sabbath, and not the least important.

So this is the tender gospel message (and the ringing command) of the fourth commandment: compassion. This is the Spirit of Jesus Christ beaming forth from the Sabbath rest. He is compassionate, so we should also be. What could be more Christ-centered and Christ-like than that? It informs us about the love the Creator had for us, and the love we should have for our fellow-creatures.

In fact, the only thing that changes from Genesis 2 to Deuteronomy 5 is this: Man's need of love, in the form of tender compassion, has become a desperate one. For the fall is now a fact. Something in man is radically changed. With God and with the Sabbath commandment no change whatsoever has taken place. In other words: The formulation of the law, as given in Deuteronomy 5, simply takes into consideration the cruel fact that this world presents itself, henceforth, as a world of suffering. This suffering calls for compassion. It is a question of God's compassion for men and men's compassion for one another. Hence the following reminder:

"And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord, thy God, brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched-out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day." (verse 15).

## CHAPTER XII

### REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY

"Remember"! One of the most natural things in this world for those who have been far down, and have been mercifully lifted up, is to forget. They forget that they have been down at all. The desperate need of mercy is what has to be brought home to man's mind again and again. Here a constant round of encounters with God is indispensable.

And what is the process taking place, when, day after day, and particularly Sabbath after Sabbath, man contemplates God's loving mercy and reflects it? It is sanctification.

Sometimes in giving term tests to my students I have included a question asking how the fourth commandment of the decalogue relates to mercy. Surprisingly, the vast majority of my students limit their answer to a rather one-sided note on the mercy that God has manifested toward men: The King of heaven knew how urgently His subjects on earth needed His merciful rest; so He provided for them this merciful gift. Full stop.

Of course I was glad that my students had at least been impressed by the fundamental lesson taught by the law as a whole, namely that mercy originates with God, that He is the one who has taken the lead, pouring His mercy upon our lives in streams whose profusion we simply cannot imagine. This He has done by giving us REST--rest for our weary bodies and rest for our disrupted souls.

But the commandment is always a commandment to the human creature, isn't it? How is he supposed to conduct himself? He is commanded to be merciful! How? As His Creator is seen to be merciful. Toward what category of beings then? Toward the helpless ones, toward those in real need of merciful help. If some one is curious to know what the fourth commandment says about these things, would it not be an idea to open one's Bible and read once more attentively the text, word by word, as it is found in its original formulation in Ex. 20? That is the one great reference for those who are sincerely anxious to know exactly what the Bible presents as the law of the Sinai tables, written with God's own finger. This time it would be good to compare each part of it, in your mind, to its parallel in Exodus 23. Is there any virtual difference on any essential point?

"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it." Ex. 20:8-11. Emphasis supplied.

The virtual content here is not different from that of Ex. 23:12. I am still today sometimes tempted to go with my students to the easiest (the "most merciful") text first. For that one immediately makes every misunderstanding impossible. But this may be just a sign of undue suspicion. I sometimes suspect my readers of being just as dull of comprehension as I am. Personally, I seem to be dependent on having my understanding propped up by the use of texts that are immediately understood even by the duller minds. And in Ex. 23 I happened to find a paraphrasing which even a child, and a Westerner, can manage to grasp.

## CHAPTER XIII

## WHY WAS MAN GIVEN "DOMINION"?

"And God said: Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." Genesis 1:26

We must always remember that the history of the Sabbath is inseparable from the history of creation. And creation history does speak, in the clearest terms about a definite hierarchy of being, a certain order. We must remember that, just as man was directly under God's dominion, there also were beings placed directly under man's dominion. But "dominion", in God's terminology, means loving care, generous service, merciful help--a help spontaneously extended by the higher one to the lower one.

At Mount Sinai, as well as in the garden of Eden, the Sabbath commandment was communicated by the Creator to His selected ones, to those who were His sons and daughters in a special sense. The Israelites were God's chosen people. This blessed fact placed them on a particularly high level of worthiness and of capacity to serve. There was a descending scale of creatures under them, dependent upon their help and their merciful treatment.

In the Sabbath commandment, as we quoted it from its formulation in Exodus 23, you will remember three categories of beings toward whom God's covenant people are specially commanded to show mercy.

Who, are those less fortunate ones whose needs should be supplied, and whose sufferings should be relieved, by the commandment-obeying Israelite? They are: 1) "the stranger" (or "sojourner"), 2) "the son of thy handmaid", 3) "thy ox and thy ass".

Not one of these three was forgotten by God. His heart knew each one of them and their respective need of being "refreshed"; that is, enjoying the merciful balm of the rest of God, His peace-providing Sabbath. "Refreshed" is the concluding word of the Sabbath commandment, as formulated in Exodus 23:12. What a significant conclusion!

Let us look a little more closely at each one of these three categories of being.

1) "The stranger"; that is the foreigner, also called "sojourner". In order that the Jews might learn to be merciful to foreigners, Yahweh had permitted them to pass through the trying experience of being foreigners themselves, with all the misery generally involved in that lot in an Eastern community of ancient times. To be a foreigner was often hardly considered to be a worthwhile life for human beings.

Have you heard about Socrates' reaction when one of his disciples came to his prison-house one night before he was to accept his death sentence and drink the hemlock reached out to him by an ungrateful people? Criton had actually made all arrangements for his teacher to escape out of the dungeon and away from the country to a foreign land, where no punishing Greek magistrate could reach him any longer. What did Socrates have to say to this "wonderful liberation"? He had one word: No. And there was hardly one of his countrymen who did not fairly well understand his choice. He would rather die where he was than live in a land where he had to suffer the atrocities of a mere "sojourner". If a Greek of antiquity could not live in his polis, he had a feeling that life was hardly worth living.

In the ancient world the "sojourner" had a lot in life that merited deep compassion. He certainly needed someone to take pity on him. The merciful heart of Yahweh wanted to make sure that his peculiar people distinguished themselves from others in this respect. They were to foster an attitude of deep compassion for just such a destitute one. In His Sabbath commandment God had made provision for him. He too was to have part in God's marvelous rest, with all the comfort and hope of salvation that is contained in that rest. Thus the foreigner was to be assimilated into the environment of God's own fold. Drawn by the merciful arms of God, he was to become one with God's people.

And what of those blessed ones first selected? As, from day to day, they represented Yahweh, the God with the open arms and the boundlessly merciful heart, that mercy, now extended to others, would work a miracle in their own being. They would be transformed to the image of Him whom they represented. Nothing has a more ennobling effect upon the human heart than the acts of mercy man is called upon to exert toward others.

The Sabbath commandment teaches every person's fellowship with other persons. Hence its inclusion of the needs of the foreigner. The community of creaturely destiny is what is to be kept in mind:

"Also thou shalt not oppress a stranger, for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt" (vs. 9).

2) The "son of thy handmaid"; that is the man who is born into the socially inferior rank of a servant. In fact, however, "servant" would here tend to be a misleading term, for in the ancient Eastern social structure the reality here spoken about would rather correspond to what we call a slave. And we know the vicissitudes to which a born slave was likely to be subjected. In the Eastern world of old the slave was often not even considered as a human being with human rights. He was entirely at his master's "mercy", in the most negative sense of the term. His master could kill him or do anything to him, according to his own "good" pleasure. For this being was not a man. He was a piece of property.

What a dangerous and pitiable position for a human being to be born into. God's heart immediately went out in compassion to such disinherited ones. In His commandment He secured for them,



also, the blessed privilege of REST. And man hardly knows the vast comprehensiveness of that concept, except to the degree that he has been exposed to the various and abysmal forms which "UN-REST" can take in this merciless world.

3) And finally, the lowest ones among creatures on earth: the beasts. We are here generally concerned with those only who are endowed with actual feelings, so with the liability to suffer pain as well-tremendous pain at times: the higher category of animals. In Exodus 23:12, they are represented by the terms, "oxen" and "asses": beasts of burden, heavy labor, enslavement, and cruel exploitation.

God has not forgotten these creatures. He knows their suffering, their endless travail. How could He be forgetful of their meaningful woe? Was it not a generous urge of His tenderly loving heart that called even them into existence on the day of their literal creation? Every single trait of their peculiar essence was purposefully devised by His intelligent and mercy-filled mind. In every one of their sufferings, He is suffering infinitely more than any one of them. Not one sparrow falls to the ground without His carefully noticing it. Not one strangled cry of creaturely distress in this wilderness of woe fails to touch the strings of His heart. For it is not just the creation as a whole that "travaileth in pain" (Rom. 8:22); this is not a travail "in the abstract"; it is rather the accumulation of a concrete enormity of individuals pains. And each one of them constitutes a glaring violation against the Creator's fatherly urge to give rest and restoration to even the lowliest ones among His creatures. He "saves the animals". Psalm 36:6; the KJV, it is true, has this wording: "Thou preservest man and beast." The translators evidently have here shied away from the traditional concept in their translation, namely that of a downright salvation. In their rendering of the Hebrew original they have "tuned it down" to a concept of "preservation." Why? Of course it would be felt as proper enough to apply such a sublime idea as that of salvation to the first category of creatures here "lumped together"; that is, man. But what about the second category, that of beast? Would not the verb "to save" be too big a word for that lowly order of living beings? Evidently, the original Author of Holy Writ does not seem to have had quite the same hesitation about using "big words" about the lowliest ones. God speaks openly about the SALVATION of beasts.

Already the Old Testament abounds in gripping stories giving graphical expression to this peculiar tender pity felt by the Almighty One in the face of the pangs suffered by innocent creatures.

Ever so often do I ask my students if they can recall offhand the last word of the Book of Jonah. It is astonishing, however, how little the significance of the innocently suffering ones, as viewed by God, has caught the attention of us Bible students. The Book of Jonah is read as a curious story, a fantastic story, about perhaps the most weird character who has ever been honored by the title of a prophet of God. Over this curiosity we may tend to forget the main message the account endeavors to communicate to us: that is, God's tenderly outgoing mercy to the lowliest ones, the innocently suffering ones, together with the not quite so innocently suffering ones.

Only in the last two verses of the book do we hear those words of the Lord that must have shaken Jonah to the end of his days, if he was able to grasp their full implication. At least this is where the Book of Jonah rises into a hymn of meaningfulness in terms of Yahweh's revelation of His own most striking character. With a matchless solemnity and a matchless openness, He makes the proclamation of His true concern about the destinies of the creatures least heeded by men in this world. The specific mercifulness of God's heart here comes out in trends of a glorious condescension that can hardly be grasped and appreciated by anyone except those who have already, in their personal lives, made acquaintance with the God of the lowly ones:

"Then said the Lord, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not labored, neither madest it grow, which came up in a night: and should not I spare Nineveh, the great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern their right hand and their left hand! and also much cattle." Jonah 4:10,11.

So "cattle", then, is that last word, which has made so little impression on theologians and Bible students, by and large. Obviously, there is another group also, mentioned here, of the innocently suffering ones that do impress you and me a little bit more--although even they not so tremendously. I am referring to our human infants--those six score thousand--although even they are obviously not too impressive in the eyes of theologians and typical men of wisdom in this world. Evidently the very "dumbness" of those infants--for they too still have the unfortunate fate, just like the "cattle", of belonging to the "dumb ones"--prevents them from being impressive here. Our text states that they "cannot discern". And that is an almost unforgivable inability. In a milieu where "discernment" (acuteness of thought) is the great thing that makes for prestige, it must needs be an awful drawback to be among the grey crowd of those tiny ones who yet "cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand".

But let us now pass all the way down the ladder to those four words which, in so many men's ears, have sounded as the great anti-climax, the unintelligible anti-climax, of an unintelligible book, the Book of Jonah:--"and also much cattle":

The general theme, to be sure, is an elevated one. It is mercy. And few men would dare to come openly out and deny that that is an elevated quality. In those last verses of the book the word used for it is pity. On one hand, it speaks about a certain specimen of human pity, Jonah's pity. A more pitiable type of

pity can hardly have existed, we should think. "Thou hast pity on the gourd". A more egocentric type of pity can hardly ever have existed either. For this is self-pity; there can be no doubt about that. But to me the remarkable word-- the really astounding word--in this text is still the last one: "cattle". Now, the word I personally was most accustomed to, was the one used by Norwegian Bible translators. That is a word in the Norwegian language corresponding to the English word animal. And, as an admirer of the cause pleaded by certain local societies "for the protection of animals", I had got into the habit of associating that word animal with a certain generous vindication, a sacred duty of defending the cause of the utterly defenseless ones. So I was a little baffled when I wanted to quote the last word of the Book of Jonah to my English-speaking student, and suddenly found the word "cattle". Just imagine what you would feel if someone referred to you as a man belonging to a society "for the protection of cattle".

I even had the unfortunate idea of asking one of my students, to whom the King James Version of the Bible was the only familiar one, what his personal feeling or reaction was when he read the last strange little addition to the text in Jonah: "and also much cattle".

Well, he did connect this, quite naturally, with the idea of the great loss that would have happened if the great city of Nineveh had been destroyed in a catastrophe. But what kind of loss was it that was particularly associated, in his mind, with the word cattle? Whether you believe me or not, he openly stated that what God here seemed to be sorry about was those masses of valuable live-stock that would go down the drain. God was heartily concerned about the riches and material prosperity, which was part of His blessing, getting lost in a natural cataclysm, a disaster from which God could no longer protect men, because of the wickedness of their ways.

So the sense of the "loss"--as that student interpreted it--was a "rock bottom realistic" one. He hastened to remind me that God is just the practical realist who is by no means insensitive, even to our most prosaic temporal losses in an everyday modern world. Was it not in full accordance with the Bible's anti-spiritualistic trend, he reminded me, to ascribe due value even to material things, outward things, such as bodies, daily bread, houses for shelter, and cattle for food?

What should I say to this? Should I be grateful, after all, that my students had retained something of "substantial value" from my courses in Judaeo-Christian philosophy?

Still I was flabbergasted, just dumbfounded, by the way my concept of suffering animals had here developed into the concept of "live-stock".

Was this a meaningful trend? I know quite a number of sincere persons fighting almost desperately for views of meaningfulness they feel it indispensable to haul safely ashore from the foaming coast-lines of their ravaging doubts. One of their nightmare visions is that of some fleeing herds, running for their lives, in the days of Noah when God, allegedly, made this decision for living creatures of so many kinds: "to wash them all away", as a popular "spiritual" thoughtlessly puts it. The scene in front of your eyes is a dreadful one: Even the highest cliffs soon have foaming waves sweeping almost to the top. Only the strongest beasts still manage, for some time, to hold their own, but finally even they lose their foothold, sinking into the seething deep. But remember: the suffering among animals, and all the innocent ones today, is a thousand times more cruel than in the days of Noah. And it is still man's sin that has brought about the whole state of misery and endless pain throughout this world. Could God stop one inch short of full restitution?

Who would dare to associate this with the idea of a merciful God? It is a blasphemous travesty of the notion of mercy, as found in the sacred pages of God's book. The Bible speaks about perfect justice on every page and it is God Himself who provides that justice.

The Loud Cry in a Way You Hardly Thought of It

The prophetic literature of the Bible repeatedly mention a certain "Loud Cry" and a "voice" exceedingly "loud". When I look at the history of the Sabbath I have the nagging feeling that, as the people of God, we have been sadly insufficient in our collective pilgrimage down through the ages. How distressingly low-voiced we have all been. For is it not through a miserable treachery on our part--we who have posed as the servants and trumpet-blowers of God--that the vindication of God's cause, tended to turn into a scarcely audible whisper in our throats?

On God's part there was a dramatic and urgent proclamation of the Sabbath message from the beginning. Where creation is the very setting, drama and urgency are self-evident. And when the law was announced in its fulness on Sinai, we know that it was to the accompaniment of an orchestra so dramatic that the people could hardly bear it:

"And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking, and when the people saw it, they removed and stood afar off. And they said to Moses `Speak thou with us, and we will hear, but let not God speak with us, lest we die'". (Ex. 20:18,19).

Why did God speak so loud and so dramatically? It was because He simply could not stand the unrighteousness of mercilessness! For the Loud Cry, you see, is originally a cry for mercy. Were you quite aware of that simple fact?

Please read the "loud cry" as formulated by Isaiah in his 58th chapter. Read it thoughtfully and ruefully from beginning to end, and you will know why the prophet was requested to cry so loud. You will

know also exactly what transformation has to take place--in you and me--before the great day of the Lord. This chapter is one great commandment of mercy, and it is as loud, even thundering, as any human prophet could make it. From the first verse we know what it is about:

"Cry aloud, spare not, lift up the voice like a trumpet and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins." (verse 1).

And the name of that sin is mercilessness--mercilessness of the most hideous kind, under the cloak of "mercy" and "godliness". Hypocritically we bow our heads and "fast". But what is the loud cry that God desires?

"Is not this the fast that I have chosen? To loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke." (verse 6).

And then suddenly this exceedingly loud talk on mercy turns into an equally loud talk on the Sabbath. Did you ever wonder about that "change of topic"? It is no change of topic at all! For Sabbath means mercy.

It belongs to the story--and most ironically so--that the Sabbath had been made the most merciless burden of all. Almost an entire people had, by the time of Christ's first advent, come under the yoke, and the worst one imaginable: the yoke of legalist self-dependence, self-salvation.

In direct contrast to this, true Sabbath observance is shown. There is no reduction of its significance, no exemption from its real claims. There is just a touching appeal to accept its genuine spirit, and a beautiful description of its matchless charms:

"If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable and shalt honor Him, not doing thy own ways, nor speaking thy own words, then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord. And I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob, thy father, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken." (verses 13 & 14).

What a positive conclusion of the Loud Cry, so entirely compatible with the unbribable realism of strict law-abidingness, and still--or just therefore--filled to the brim with fatherly tenderness and mercy. What a touching portrait of the Sabbath, and the Lord of the Sabbath. Here we certainly get all due information about the meaning of sanctification within the glorious framework of the Sabbath's peculiar rainbow halo.

But what happened here among God's people, as, from generation to generation, prophet after prophet stood up and started raising, anew, with exactly the loudness that the Lord had ordered, that insistent cry for mercy, mercy for the lowliest ones and the most downtrodden ones?

Sad to say, almost invariably history tended to arrive at a point where the cry seemed to become so disturbingly loud, in the ears of the people, that they simply could not bear it--probably for the secret reason that their own guilty conscience joined in crying, as it were, thus amplifying the original cry with a raucous undertone that was particularly unbearable. And then the prophet, if possible at all, was hushed into silence, or as close to silence as you can hope to come without directly cutting the man's vocal chords. Then for some time it was the people themselves who decided the degree of "loudness" of the cries in that land. It was particularly those representatives among them who most intensely resented the "cacophonous" effect, in their own sensitive ears, of a certain "loudspokenness".

"Have some sense of decent moderation", they seem to be whispering. "Whatever you do, please don't speak that loud! Somebody outside might hear you, and label you 'a fanatic'. Whatever you do, you must avoid every suspicion of belonging to that group. You must not become a fanatic. It is fanatics who have the uncouth habit of speaking loud."

In other words, it definitely is not according to the code of good manners among us to be vociferous. When voices get too loud, it arouses disagreeable attention. In our "modesty" we prefer to be among the rather unnoticed ones. Even our Sabbaths we seem to want as unnoticed as feasible. We sometimes even seem to be saying: "See to it, dear brother, that you do not cause the very name of the institution to which you belong, to become, in itself, some kind of Loud Cry. Do not use, for instance, to an unnecessary degree, the designation Seventh-day Adventist Church in full spelling, but preferably Adventist Church. That is peculiar enough and unpopular enough already. Abbreviations are the order of the day."

And what about "mercy"? "Oh, my brother! That kind of thing can easily be carried to extremes. You should watch your proper confines when it comes to deeds of mercy toward the suffering ones. For instance, if those who suffer should happen to be just animals, moderation becomes particularly incumbent on you. Let the "Friends of Animals" have a monopoly on loud speaking in this field. For please watch your step, it may turn out to be directly harmful to speak too loud about innocently suffering animals. That applies both to those in the zoos and those in the research laboratories of great medical institutions. Please do not speak too loud about these things. Remember again: it is fanatics who are so unrefined in their manners that they find it necessary to speak loud!"

What a biased wholesale judgment passed on loud speaking and loud cries! Of course we do know that the reasons why people speak loud are not always necessarily the noblest. We know too well the

story about the orator who at a given point in his manuscript had the following note in the margin for his own guidance when he was to deliver his speech: "The argument somewhat weak here, speak loud." But of course it would not be too reverent to claim about God that when He raises His voice to give special emphasis to His message to men, then that is because He finds His argument somewhat deficient. God's children ever so often fail to discern, in His Loud Cry, the divine call to mercy and true humaneness.

In persistent cases of that kind, the character of the cry may change in a most alarming way. It turns into a cry of judgment. What destiny-laden thing has happened to the prophetic message in that case?

In the instance of the Sabbath commandment in Biblical prophecy this appears rather dramatically. Another phase, as it were, of the same commandment is entering into focus. That is a phase in which the point of gravity has been moved, so to speak. The message has turned into a revelation of God from the angle that is least appreciated by human beings: His quality as the sternly authoritative, the almighty Creator whose word is a shaking drama, the great eschaton.

In its solemn eschatological setting the Loud Cry comes to us in the terms of the seer of Patmos:

"And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation and kindred and tongue and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment is come: and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of water." Rev. 14:1,7.

We recognize here every theme of the Sabbath commandment: tender mercy as exemplified by the great Merciful One, the Lord of the Gospel; and all along with this, His majestic creative power, lending authority and force to His mercy command. In fact, the call at this juncture is in a setting of judgment. The church's own refusal to heed the original loud cry for mercy is the direct reason why it was destined to become a cry of judgment:

"And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." Rev. 14:8.

There is a tremendous crescendo, as the prophet comes right to the mark of distinction, pressed upon the foreheads and the hands of the unfaithful ones, so glaringly contrasted with the distinguishing mark imprinted in the minds and hearts of God's faithful ones.

"And the third angel followed them saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God." Rev. 14:9,10.

But the real climax of this crescendo is reached in Rev. 18. The cry of the three angels is here being amplified in an unexpected way by an angel little noticed so far, but suddenly coming upon the scene with an unparalleled loudness in his voice. The character of judgment and finality has become overwhelming:

"And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power, and the earth was lightened with his glory, and he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird." Rev. 18:1,2.

Here the prophet has obviously come to a point where it is not enough for him any longer to inform us that the angel was "saying" this ("legon"); no, this time he "cried it out" ("ekraxen").

This is definitely endtime judgment in terms of doom (krima). But at the same time there is still a tremendously efficient judgment in terms of crisis (krisis). By the very drama of surrounding events men are called upon to decide where they want to belong, to "come out", honestly and demonstratively, just accepting the seal of the living God, His merciful and gracious rest, an Eternal Sabbath.

In the fourth verse of the same chapter this tone of mercy in the midst of the tone of doom is particularly audible. There is a change of tones in another significant respect also here. What is now heard is not the voice of an angel any longer. This is the voice of God Himself. This is the Saviour specifically turning to those whom He is bent on considering as His personal property, those who He makes His own, wholly and fully, by just setting them apart, sanctifying them. Of course there is tender affection vibrating as the constant overtone of that voice. But there is also a stern and ultimate call to settle for exclusive fellowship with Him. Not the slightest mingling with the world is possible now. The issues are too clear, indeed. Half-heartedness is bound to be an unknown concept. Man has definitely come down into the valley of decision:

"And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins and share in her plagues." Rev. 18:4, New English Bible.

And now, what does this have to do with the Sabbath commandment? Of course we do know, if we are at all attentive and knowledgeable, that something strangely dramatic enters upon the scene with that fourth commandment. The very first texts in the Bible dealing with the Sabbath testify to that fact. And what happens as time passes? The Sabbath commandment assumes a character of something gradually sharpening or intensifying. There is something ever more pointed about it. New aspects of its nature are flashing out. To be or not to be, that is the question. And anything less than that could hardly be

expected in the case of a commandment which is so intimately wound up with the issue of sanctification. The God of the Sabbath is not only the God whose name is Jealous, but that "jealousy" makes Him stand out precisely as the God who insists on having His intelligent creatures sanctified. To sanctification there is only one known alternative: that is, the great fall--self-destruction. God graciously permits the creaturely person who does not accept life on the terms on which He is able to offer it, to just sink back into the state of non-existence. But to the one who has already been granted the glorious privilege of existing, on the highest level offered to any creature, non-life is bound to be tantamount to bottomless perdition. The will-freedom he has been endowed with pushes him irresistibly toward the great either-or. The concept of "rest" in this pointed case has nothing to do with passivity or flabbiness (laxness). "Rest" here means sanctification, and that is no timeless Nirvana. It rather has the endtime crescendo built into it. Everything here is inexorably pointed toward a final goal, the dramatic rescue of "the brand plucked out of the fire" (Zec. 3:2).

There is a tremendous solemnity settling down, as it were, over the passage at this point.

The history of the kingdoms of the earth is just reaching its final phase. The destruction is delayed only during that brief spell of time it takes to consummate the work of the sealing, described in detail in Revelation 7. There is breathless stillness in man's world, but it is the stillness before the storm:

"And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God; and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads." (Rev. 7:1-3).

We all know that the seal at the time of the ancient kingdom was synonymous with the signature, the name and the title of the commanding one. And we all know that the seal of Christ, our Creator, is to be found in the Sabbath commandment only. This, also, makes it unique in the law of God.

Notice how Ellen G. White links the third angel's message of Revelation 14 with the Loud Cry of Isaiah 58:

"The light we have received upon the Third Angel's Message is the true light. The Mark of the Beast is exactly what it has been proclaimed to be. Not all in regard to this matter is yet understood, nor will it be understood until the unrolling of the scroll; but a most solemn work is to be proclaimed in our world. The Lord's command to His servant is, 'Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression...(Isaiah 58:1)'. 6T 17.

The caution rightly observed about applying the phrase, "receiving the mark of the beast", should be well known: Something fateful is bound to happen to modern man, once he has been really confronted with the law of God in its entirety and with the challenge contained in its supreme test of obedience. If he has responded to that test with an open defiance against God's clear command, then-and only then-can he be described as having "received the mark of the beast". For only then has the definitive choice been made between the seal of God and the mark of the beast.

But in the above quotation something more comes out which must fill with solemn earnestness every person who professes to belong to the people of God. For it is to such a person, first and foremost, that the loud cry of warning in Isaiah 58 is addressed. The Sabbath commandment is specifically mentioned in that chapter; and in what capacity first of all? As a cry for mercy.

So the nature of the reform so urgently demanded is not a matter of doubt. It calls for a transformation in you and me from mercilessness to mercifulness. Without that transformation we are utterly nonsensical if we go to others warning them against taking the mark of the beast. We ourselves may be the ones in the greatest need of a message of warning. Some of those to whom we would like to go with our great message of the abiding Sabbath, might have, in their very lives, a tremendous lesson to teach you and me, a lesson about the very thing the Sabbath stands for: MERCY. That is the Loud Cry message of Isaiah 58. A person's life is the loudest cry he can ever make.

## CHAPTER XIV

### A SUPREME TEST OF FAITH

Obviously from the very beginning it was the Lord's plan to enhance the Sabbath day with a special blessing, a sanctifying virtue.

And who could prevent Him from carrying out His plan? One single being could: the human individual himself! In connection with our present theme, this is a signal fact running through the entire Bible like a warp in the waft: The only service the Lord can accept is the absolutely voluntary service. The only obedience that has any value whatsoever to a God of His unique type is the wholehearted obedience.

The history of the Sabbath shows the dramatic pointedness of this principle. Briefly stated: Here the Sovereign King assigns to His subjects exactly the same privilege of "arbitrariness" (or personal arbitration) as He designed for Himself. Man is granted the fullest scope of personal freedom.

God is, of course, most personally interested and most closely engaged in man's destiny. So He cannot help watching carefully His appeal to that entirely free agent He has created. He makes it as intellectually persuasive and as emotionally attractive as possible. He renders it as clear as noon-day just for what purpose He requires of man that he make a voluntary surrender (sanctification, or setting aside for holy use) of a definite portion of his allotted time: it is in order to make man holy, as He Himself is holy. In other words, it is to make man's companionship with His God and Maker an intimate reciprocity of perfect blessedness. This is the final goal and the deepest significance of all alterocentricity. It is also the only true goal of the Sabbath.

The Sabbath itself is an indisputable historical fact. Its file of documents is a substantial one. But what led up to that Sabbath is not historically documented, as one generally conceives of human history. Man's knowledge about what happened prior to his coming upon the scene is evidently based upon implicit faith. For even though we may accept the oral tradition from Adam to Moses as a historically reliable one, the question may rightly be asked: What scientific evidence, did even Adam have that the story God told him about just those six creation days was a minutely true story. God gives just one momentous reason for the fact that He did establish such a majestic institution (the Sabbath) just then and there. Modernly speaking, however, man had no scientific evidence whatsoever that God spoke the truth.

That goes without saying, since man was not yet there to register the fact as a personal experience. So when the Creator claims that He started creating our world on such and such a day, that He accomplished His work in the course of so and so many days, and made the immediately following day-night unit a perpetually returning memorial of that creation event, what can man do or say?

Man, so recently called from the chaos of nothingness into the marvels of personal, intelligent life, has only one thing to do: he is bound to take his Creator's word for it all. Whether that word is true or not, is a matter he may be able to prove, but only by and by. As for general evidence, he has enough of that any time, it is true. His gradual experience in other fields will teach him whether the source he has depended upon is a generally dependable one. An intelligent child has a fair chance to know with considerable certainty a great many things about his father. For instance he may reasonably evaluate the dependability of that father's information.

What man should immediately accept, however, as a simple axiom, is the fact that his place in this reciprocity is that of the child. And the evident virtue of the child is that of childlike dependence. That implies a childlike faith, and "axiomatic" acceptance of the father's assertions. This practically presents itself as an exertion of faith: The child tacitly assumes that the alleged foundation of the given command is true. So he simply proceeds to act upon it, as if he had already made the experience of its truthfulness. The actual "proof" is a posterior event, a reward the future keeps in store for him. This is the logic of induction.

(By the way, has not the evidence of the inductive method always been the only one available to creatures in their religious life? And is not that same induction a form of evidence highly respected in any empirical field, especially in scientific research?)

God has always left open the possibility of doubt. This is part and parcel of all freedom of choice. Man is called upon to betoken his whole-heartedness -- his 100 percent obedience -- as his supreme act of dependence, his unique virtue of childlikeness. However, man is also at perfect liberty to choose the road of casuistic bargaining. He can, at any moment, fill the "gap", as it were, with any set of speculative reasonings, a reasoning of his own device.

This curious "bifurcation" of the roads, presenting opposite alternatives of both inward belief and outward action, is exactly that disruptive vacillation troubling the mind of the "super-adult." The Sabbath commandment is a glaring case in which God has left open the trying choice of obedience vs. disobedience. That destiny-laden openness is weirdly reminiscent of the tree of knowledge in the garden of Eden. In view of the evident facts of human nature today (man's fearful adulthood), I should have been astonished, indeed, if the great majority of those confronted with the choice, had not chosen just that road of systematic doubt. Doubt is supposed to be a mark of independence. So man loves it. And he adopts the spirit of moral bargaining following in its wake.

Man has been downright greedy to seize this unique opportunity of saving his precious "independence". We shall follow the reactions of our ancestry during the first Christian centuries, as far as their attitude toward the Sabbath is concerned.

And what about modern man? This age too, it appears to me, has grasped every possible temptation in this respect. The Sabbath was our great crossroads of individual choice, a unique testing ground in the history of man. And what has been the historic outcome of the test? Most certainly our age has refused to avail itself of any sanctifying power placed at our disposal every time a new unit of holy time came around. Could that perhaps be the reason why we have been left poorer and poorer every week? Anyway, we do appear like a lot of castaways, helplessly adrift on the God-forsaken ocean of doubts assailing the worldly-wise. Or we are like a band of erring fugitives gradually sinking down into the quicksands of self-worship. We are rapidly losing the last honors once bequeathed to us.

In fact, not even the grandeur of pathetic tragedy has been ours. Of course, our failure to obey God implicitly and wholeheartedly has been tragic enough in many ways. But in this particular field our

rebellion has never risen to the proud heights of the great classical titans. Mediocrity of a rather mean and truly despicable type has been our distinctive trait even in evil.

Modern man's non-observance of the "offensive" commandment in the law has been in the form of a lukewarm compromise: Imagine a pagan-Christian crossbreed, stammering forth, not his "magna charta" but his "parva charta" of independence:

"Have mercy on us, great God in heaven. We shall comply with all thy orders. Just in this one little case we make a partial exception. Please forgive us our inability to take thee quite seriously in all things. The puny adjustment we have made in one of thy commandments will help us wonderfully to keep alive our nice little dream of self-reliance. This insignificant deviation of ours in the Sabbath question will boost up our faltering self-respect quite a lot" ...

This may seem, to some, a strange expression of self-irony, and an exaggeratedly pessimistic interpretation of modern Christendom's attitude toward the fourth commandment. But I shall endeavor to present evidence for the historical truth of my assertion.

Of course, it may be a delicate matter to do justice to all the possible reasons man may have had for his strange "partial" rejection of the Sabbath commandment. But one essential motive for this, among prominent and model-setting circles of Christendom, has clearly been to save just their petty daydream of human self-sufficiency. (I shall marshal a considerable body of historical evidence to substantiate that.) Accordingly we have no reason, as Westerners, to be proud of the incredible show a certain elite of our culture has here managed to put upon the stage of ecclesiastical history. Our humanists' attempt to amend texts in this case is a most pitiful one.

And whence did man derive the substitute he dared to present as an "amendment" of the original law? Some historians will stress the viewpoint that there was a gradually developing "Christian tradition" of first-day observance. Others will bluntly remind us that Sunday, or the day of the Sun, which from the third century of the Christian era has taken the place of the Sabbath in the Christian Church, has its manifest origin in the prevailing sun-cult of essential heathendom. As far back as the pertinent records go, this was the day dedicated to the worship of the sun-god -- by all odds the greatest pagan rival to the God of the Bible.

However, Sunday also had another interpretation. And perhaps the stranger thing is, not that one arrived at the Sunday, but rather that one left the Sabbath, although it may be an artificial process of thought to separate the fact of arrival from the fact of departure. The essence of it all is a transmutation, or a transvaluation of the most radical kind.

The very fact that this transaction did take place, and was generally accepted, raises quite particular problems, considered from our particular angle. The main question before us now is not, was this right? But rather, why did it happen?

Closely related to that question is, how did it happen? Our main desire right now is to understand the process, not to criticize it. In other words, our task will not be to engage in a common argument between Sabbath-keepers and Sunday-keepers. Such discussions are often rather superficial. In fact, they are too easy for the Sabbath-keeper.

It may seem as though the Sunday-keeper is immediately placed in the felon's dock. He is a priori, as it were, reduced to the role of defending himself. That is commonly the lot of the part who ventures into neologism, spiritually as well as politically speaking. The partisan of ancient orthodoxy, on the contrary, assumes the superior posture of a prosecuting attorney, the great accuser.

But if ours is a posture of accusation, the felon whom we accuse is not a person or even a group of persons. It is a culture, a fundamental motif, a monstrous giant, a superhuman force of evil insinuating itself into the basic structure of the societies of man.

Therefore it is with the cautious watchfulness of the truth-seeker, rather than with the cocksure personal aggressiveness of the polemical specialist in morals, that we shall here approach the problems of the Sabbath question in New Testament times.

I shall not eschew doubtful points. On the contrary, I shall seek them and face them. I shall bring up points rarely (if ever) touched, either by Sabbath-keepers or by their adversaries, points that have constituted crucial problems to my own thinking, and more so than anything the most zealous defenders of Sunday-observance may ever have thought of introducing openly.

Both Sabbath-keepers and non-Sabbath-keepers have traditionally felt duty-bound to ascribe capital importance to the attitude taken by Jesus of Nazareth to the Sabbath question. And where could any man expect to find a more decisive criterion? What Jesus believed and practiced is bound to settle the question in the minds and the hearts of His true disciples. There has been no failure on the part of the defenders of Sabbath-keeping to realize this fundamental point. But whether they have always chosen their ensuing arguments with blameless wisdom and fairness, this is of course another question. Over the centuries Christ's example has been pressed into the service of "proving" many dubious things.

For instance, some zealous and well-meaning Sabbath-observers have tried to prove that Jesus Himself kept the Sabbath, by simply referring to such texts as Luke 4:16. Here we are told that Jesus entered the synagogue on the Sabbath day, "as His custom was". Is this a fair type of argumentation?

That is an important question to ask, of course, for if a man expects fairness and reasonability of others, he must be minutely fair and reasonable himself. The mere fact however, that Christ had the custom of going to the synagogue on the Sabbath is no absolutely conclusive criterion, as regards His deepest attitude toward that day as a holy day. Jesus went where the people went. And on what day would you expect Him to go to the synagogue, anyway, if not precisely on the Sabbath, the only day He could reasonably expect to meet the people there? His task was to preach the gospel of salvation to the perishing ones. So He went to the places where they could crowd together. Any good fisher of men would do that.

Generally speaking, I am afraid there will be a hard job awaiting any one who feels in duty bound to prove that Jesus on the Sabbath day did something so conspicuously different from what he used to do on the other days of the week.

## CHAPTER XV

### COULD CHRIST HAVE BEEN MORE SPECIFIC ON THE QUESTION OF THE SABBATH'S HOLINESS?

In the 5th chapter of his gospel, Matthew does render some quite weighty words of Christ, regarding the law and its unchangeable authority.

"For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." Matt. 5:18, 19.

Some will immediately contend that this settles the matter conclusively. Christ has here been wonderfully "to the point", wonderfully specific, regarding the validity of the Sabbath commandment. But the matter may also be considered from a different point of view. That commandment has not here been specifically pointed out. The corroborating statements of the above text in favor of the continued observance of the Sabbath are not as much "to the point" as they might have been if the author had been bent on preventing a future deviation, at all costs, just here.

I do not say that Christ's reinforcement of the law as a whole is not clear and strong. It is clear enough and strong enough, if the main point is to leave without excuse those who would like to claim that He had "come to destroy the law and the prophets".

"I am not come to destroy (abolish) but to fulfill." Those are His explicit words. (Matt. 5:17). After such a statement it does take some boldness to come and state: "Jesus came to earth in order to abolish the fourth commandment."

On the other hand, one thing has to be frankly admitted: When Jesus mentions directly the Sabbath commandment, it is usually in connection with serious clashes He had with men who were only too eager to "keep the Sabbath" -- in their own narrow-minded way. We remember the wicked devices of the Pharisees, who hoped to catch Christ in some flagrant act of virtual Sabbath-breaking. So we are forced to ask a very pertinent question. And I am inclined to think it is a question both Sabbath-keeping and non-Sabbath-keeping Christians will listen to with genuine interest, although maybe for somewhat diverging reasons:

Why did Jesus Christ -- acknowledged supreme Author of both the gospels and the prophetic Revelation -- fail to make a direct statement regarding the literal and absolute validity of the fourth commandment? Or why did He at least not see to it that His penmen made special mention of the Sabbath in terms of such corroborating statement?

Could not our Lord, with one single line right to the point, in some conspicuous part of the New Testament, have managed to render the whole subsequent development toward Sunday observance (and so toward an official "abolition" of the Sabbath, a downright blasphemous profanation of the Sabbath) practically impossible?

Of course He could. In this respect He has history in the hollow of His hand. I do not by that mean that He ever annihilates man's perfect freedom of will, his literal personal choice between good and evil. Oh no, this simply would be incompatible with the Creator's determination, from everlasting, of granting to man that tremendous gift of a freedom to choose. Not for a moment does He take back that gift. Man, in the depths of his being, as long as he remains a real man, will evidently retain that precious freedom of volition, once granted to him. That is also the simple reason why God could never, never force any person to obey. He just has to wait patiently outside the door of your heart until you yourself make the decisive move to open. It is contrary to God's very nature to take away the evil from a man's heart before that man has given Him "the green light", his full consent. But what now about the specific form -- or outward expression -- which that inherent wickedness in a given human individual is likely to take in the annals of concrete history? Does the Lord have any autonomous power to decide that? Yes, this is a definitely contingent matter where He freely interferes, as He sees wise and convenient. God is the One who shapes historical circumstances in the outward sphere according to His good pleasure. So He also decides what outward form man's internal wickedness is to be permitted to take in a given instance. It is evident that the creature's practical options in this field are strictly limited. There must be definite limits to



the ways the internal evil of a free will creature may "historically come out". I do not say that this evil, in a given case, is arbitrarily prevented from coming out at all. For by what, according to the Word, is man to be judged on the last great day? By his works. That is, by his visible, tangible deeds in the open, what he has concretely done "in the flesh". Why all this "material literalness" in the judgment? Simply because the court session is a literal one, filled with a host of witnesses, creatures like you and me, who need material literalness, simply in order to observe and to judge, or in order to live at all. The day of "pure"-spirit-ism has now come to an abrupt end. Reality reigns supreme. It is no more denied that inward contents do have their outward forms, -- that they must have them. Evil thoughts are never without exactly corresponding evil acts. -- in some form or other.

But evidently there must be an option between different outward forms. This also applies to the form that any inward content of human meanness is allowed to adopt. God can, without infringing upon the basic freedom of volition, once graciously conceded to human beings, deliberately control, by His free intervention in the natural course of human history, the specific way this or that inward reality is bound to exteriorize itself. The exteriorization of creaturely wickedness is a miserable thing, subject at any given point to the laws of automatism, or to the spontaneous interference of divine providence, exactly the way God sees proper, either to leave the matter to its own inherent dynamics, or to lead it into very definite channels of His own device.

So what shall we conclude? Could the King of the universe have seen to it, if He so desired, that human unbelief and internal infidelity, right within the precincts of the Church during those first centuries, did not come out in the concrete form of a visible, an ostentatiously visible, Sabbath-breaking?

Of course He could -- if He so desired. And who would have any doubts about that, in simple practice? I am sure any one of us could suggest some simple sentence which might have been pronounced by Jesus, and duly quoted by all four of the gospel writers afterwards, in fact a sentence that would have made it historically impossible for the Sunday to oust the Sabbath in the Church at any time.

So why did he not utter that right-to-the-point sentence? And why did He not have it conspicuously recorded by His divinely appointed scribes? Did not Jesus have the fate of the Sabbath really at heart then?

And a similar pointed question relative to the testimony of the Church Fathers (I mean the earliest ones, those adhering quite unwaveringly to the cause of primeval Christian orthodoxy): why were not those sturdy pillars of ancient Christendom more explicit and outspoken on the subject of the Sabbath as an inseparable and inviolable part of God's law, thus effectively deterring any possible infiltrating trends toward considering the Sunday as a new day of rest, definitively superseding the Sabbath?

Why are authoritative Christian witnesses so silent on certain points, and how are we to interpret that silence? This can seem quite disappointing indeed to many researchers of the truth.

I have had similar disappointments in my own research on the history of the idea of immortal-soulism, to cite one instance. On that occasion, too, in looking for the "sources" and the mysterious dark paths of transition, I felt like crying out impatiently: Why did not bold orthodox leaders of the church in the beginning openly voice their standpoint against an invasion of pagan ideas about man? A few words straight to the point ought to have been enough to show that the Bible teaches the totality of man. Man does not have in him any such specter-like thing (a "pure" soul, as Plato would have termed it) that can survive and remain conscious without any body whatsoever. This is a dangerous idea that makes it possible for the arch-enemy to lead Christians into the baneful deceptions of spiritualism. So why did not those pillars of the church come out and "declare themselves"?

What I obviously wanted then, was to find, in the writings of the yet faithful ones, a clear word of vehement protest against the new and erroneous doctrine, a doctrine suggesting that man is born with an "immortal soul" and "cannot die". I even wanted that protest to come actually before the unbiblical idea itself had had time to arrive fully and wholly upon the scene. But what I met in the documents of the times, was not that protest. It was simple silence.

There was one thing I had to learn: The gloomy and distressing phenomenon of semidarkness during times of destiny-laden transition is something our realistic research must be prepared to bear with. There has not been invented any means, so far, of making silent witnesses in history speak, of forcing them to "finally declare themselves". Their dead silence is a thing we must endure. On the other hand, we must learn the language of the silent ones. We must learn how to grasp the intelligent and most eloquent message silence itself conveys to us.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SIMPLE SILENCE

For the sake of a deeper understanding of those most legitimate questions so urgently calling for an intelligent answer, I choose the following illustration, taken from everyday objects whose nature we all know well enough:

We assume that we find ourselves in front of a most ordinary teapot. Now, personally, I may be an ever so firm believer in the "reality of teapots". This realism of mine makes me thoroughly convinced,

for my own part, that the outside of a teapot is quite inseparable from its inside. However, at the same time I should have common sense enough to realize that this is not, after all, such a sensational idea about teapots, as most people will tend to look upon them. Almost any man in the street will have common sense enough to believe exactly the same thing: the teapot is an inviolable totality. You just can't separate its inside from its outside (just as you cannot separate a human soul from a human body, and still think you are in the realms of reality).

So I should have considerable reason not to assail every acquaintance of mine, or every visitor to my home, striving desperately to convince them, as quickly as possible, about the "totality of teapots". For what would be the final effect, if, in season and out of season, I insisted that the outside and the inside of teapots constitute one and the same piece of material? Well, even my best friends would soon start looking at me in wonder. Some would perhaps say: "That man must be a little bit off--the way he insists that the inside and the outside of the teapot are inseparable--as if any person endowed with common sense ever suspected them of being separable!"

Others (very, very few, I trust) might say to themselves: "Aha, this insistence must mean that there are also other ways of considering a teapot! It is possible that our way, the one we have always assumed as the only thinkable one, is just a piece of childish nonsense? Let us have a look at alternative theories. I did have an idea that they might exist."

For the first time, then, doubts are nourished in the mind of the observer about the "oneness of teapots", doubts which would perhaps never have come up in any man's head if it had not been for that passionate insistence on a commonplace fact. Maybe the seed has been sown for an entirely new theory about teapots to grow up, rank and rampant, by way of sheer reaction against the trivial fact I have been so awfully anxious to get across to my fellow men!

Have we here strayed from our original topic? Not at all. For look here now: the case of the realistic conception of teapots has something strikingly corresponding to the realism with which the Hebrew perceives the voice of Yahweh in the commandment: "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. . .".

Notice: Practically not one single soul in Christ's environment questioned the validity of that statute. It was as much beyond challenge as the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill".

Now even in our environment the latter commandment, the prohibition against murder, is commonly accepted as valid. So we do not insist on the point, do we? There is no occasion for any serious dispute as far as that goes; accordingly, no need of any elaborate argument to sustain its validity either.

In Christ's day exactly the same applied to the idea of the holiness of the Sabbath commandment. Let us keep that in mind. The moral obligation to keep the Sabbath holy was not only a generally accepted truth in Israel: It was even assumed as an absolutely self-evident thing. And so it remained, very much, during the first two centuries of the Christian era. That the fourth commandment should be of any lesser validity than the other nine, was an idea which never entered the head of one single disciple.

If we do not keep that simple circumstance in mind, we have no chance whatsoever to understand why Christ's teaching, with regard to the Sabbath, was bound to adopt the form it actually did. And the same applies to the apostles and the earliest Church fathers. Just imagine a preacher of the gospel in those days, insisting, like a mono-maniac, on the unchanged authority of the Sabbath commandment: His hearers would have ample reason to look askance at him, wondering: "What is the matter with this man? Against whom does he imagine that he is fighting? The idea he seems to be trying to bring home to our minds with such laborious argument, is nothing but what we have taken for granted all our lives. There must be some untold tale, some subtle mystery behind all this."

Or some might simply conclude that the fellow was not in his good senses. Just think of the way we modern men look at the Don Quixotes who seem prepared to put up a formidable fight against any windmill they happen to find on their way.

A particularly captivating case is that of the followers of Christ who had gradually got into the habit of arranging particular meetings on the first day of the week. To begin with, those meetings were not at all intended as a substitute for the worship on Sabbath. In fact, those who arranged such first-day meetings would probably have been astounded if anyone suggested that this was the real intention.

And what would have been their reaction, had a prophet risen in their midst, saying, "Abstain from those additional gatherings of yours on the first day of the week. Otherwise they will develop into a permanent institution which will soon actually oust the Sabbath."

At such a cry of warning -- or such a prophecy -- they probably, during the first innocent decades of the early Church, would have arisen in protest, or at least in wonder. And perhaps much of the sound ardor in the spirit of those worshipers would have been quenched right away. In fact, from the viewpoint of human logics they might seem to have every right to protest against any such attempts to discourage worship meetings on Sunday or Wednesday, or any day of the week this had appeared convenient to them.

Anyway, for a long time there was no such cry of warning. On the contrary, there was historical silence, a most significant silence. For notice: in the history of ideas, silence is often the most eloquent

testimony any watchful historian could ever wish. Here it testifies to the childlike innocence of the first Christian churches. It provides dependable evidence that they took for granted the Sabbath's unlimited holiness and unchangeable character.

However, silence may, at a certain point, also be due to the gradually changing character of a movement, a movement that is just about to cease being innocent any longer. I am referring to the hardly perceptible change taking place when Sunday was actually superseding the Sabbath. That is a period to which we shall give the closest attention that our present research can afford.

If ever a momentous innovation has owed its rise into power to gradualness -- gradualness as the subtle principle of evolution -- then this must certainly be such a case. Indeed, the strategic genius I have described as pagan automatism could hardly have achieved a triumph more congenial with its deepest essence: it was deadly silent. It also took advantage of an equally dead silence among its victims. In consideration of that fact, I feel I am eminently justified in characterizing Sunday observance in the following manner:

In spite of its pretentious name, *Dies Domenica* (the "Lord's Day"), the Sunday cannot be counted among the things that were created. It must definitely be counted among the things that evolved. So it is indeed representative of that principle of perfect automatism in which both spiritualists and evolutionists invariably put their confidence and find their glory. That is the spirit that claims, even in matters of the most sacred category: "It all makes no virtual difference! Everything is holy, and everything is profane! We are all gods, and even God is a thing (i.e., identical with the universe He creates)."

Pantheism is what follows in the wake of every willfully cultivated desecration of what God consecrated as holy.

In the history of the Christian Church Sunday observance was destined to become just this kind of phenomenon: it evolved out of nothing. So definitely not as the creationist theory conceives of nothingness -- *creatio ex nihilo* -- but just the way the evolutionist theory conceives of it: *evolutio ex nihilo*. (In reality of course nothing comes out of nothing.)

This may look wonderfully nice and peaceful. But the consciously pursued goal may not be quite so nice and peaceful. On the contrary, it is the frenetic, convulsive activity of an egocentric scramble for the highest pinnacles. And the means employed to reach that goal are without any scruples. When the anti-Christ reaches his coveted goals, substituting himself for the genuine High Priest, then that ecclesiastical transaction is bound to distinguish itself as one among the most cynical in Church history. It is a "Christianization" process of the ultimate burlesque. The Sunday has had the necessary "holy water" sprinkled over its pagan head. That's what makes it "worthy" of that pretentious new name "*Dies Domenica*" -- the Lord's Day.

In reality the whole institution may rather be regarded as truly representative of the ultimate discharge of the batteries, the final equalization of the holy and the profane, the supreme indifference of "world-soul" unconcern. The Sunday has from the beginning been a child of this world. But there were no throes of parturition when it was born. It was not a matter of great travail or of violent struggle. It was a matter of tacit assent on the part of a majority of "yes-men", a generation automatically turning Christians, or "born" into Christendom. That vast bulk of Christian Church members had long since arrived at a point where the strange ideal of absolute self-evidence had become the lodestar, as it were, for their major options and their major acts. So the fatal new situation was this: they remained silent -- not like sheep, but like dead men -- even when time was most propitious for a waking up to realize the wrong turn things were taking -- and to speak up about it!

Of course that dumb acquiescence on the part of a teeming crowd (the many-headed monster which has no opinion of its own, no personality, no conscience) may explain a good deal in human history, but cannot account for everything there. We must now pass on to the active role of definite persons. For no one can deny the essential role of the personal will -- or the personal wilfulness -- in molding the destinies of cultures and men.

I should not finish this chapter without trying to answer more directly the question it started with. Could God have prevented the great apostasy marked by the abolition of the Sabbath in favor of the Sunday?

It has never been God's habit to prevent His creatures from apostatizing, in the sense of applying either ruse or force in order to keep them on the right track, the track of loyalty.

Was He rather helpless then? And does that "helplessness" of God mean that He, the Creator of the world and the great Leader of human history, could not have managed to save the Sabbath, in an outward way at least? Could He not, by means of some simple text, inserted for instance at some conspicuous point of the gospel, have prevented that spectacular public defeat of the Sabbath in front of a triumphant Sunday? Of course He could. But why did He not do it then? Was the whole thing a matter of supreme indifference to Him? Is that the conclusion we must draw from the fact of God's notorious nonintervention in this question at this point of time?

You might as well ask: Why does not the almighty God conspicuously intervene to prevent cases of misdemeanor of the most obnoxious kind right here at the present moment, both inside and outside the

church? Does the non-intervention of His Providence prove Him to be totally unconcerned? What a strange conclusion.

All evidence points to the fact that God has definitely determined, in due course, to meet the challenge of the forces of wickedness in terms of a full scale battle. At such or such a time that battle is bound to concentrate its fury right in the concrete arena of historical reality. The wicked one makes his attacks against God's plan of sanctification here and there, wherever he finds the prospects of success most promising. It is not strange at all that the Sabbath was an institution he decided to wage war upon, from the first moment it entered upon the scene. But who decided that the Sabbath was to become a principal battlefield? Is it the devil who chooses the field for a given battle in the last analysis? No, it is God. He is the One in control, the great Initiative Holder at any moment. So why should not He be the One who also chose the Sabbath? We do not know so many details as to why He opted, with such predilection, for that battlefield. Nor do we need to know. All we need to know is that He has the whole battle in His hand, in any arena, at any time. Our task consists in fighting valiantly and loyally at His side, wherever He may be pleased to place us.

And in the ultra-modern phase of this battle we certainly do have many things to learn by looking back at the way the drama was played out in the days of yore.

One thing is quite evident: Our God is not a God of petty skirmishes or of guerrilla warfare. He is rather the God of all-out war. Michael is the Captain of the hosts who prefers to march down with His men into the "Valley of Decision". The Sabbath question is a battlefield of that order.

## CHAPTER XVII

### HISTORY--THE WITNESS WHO COULD NOT BE GAGGED

We shall not yet enter into the interesting details of Sunday observance, but only summarily mention things that every historian may know, regarding the Sabbath being abandoned in favor of the Sunday.

Who was the man of supreme authority who first put the stamp of official validity on the contract of this vile barter trade? Not a Christian bishop, but a heathen emperor. He was not a "bad man" perhaps, at least not as secular historians evaluate men. But he certainly was a shrewd politician, a professional casuist, we would say. He was a capable and fairly farsighted worldly leader, no doubt, but certainly not a man who could be reasonably supposed to have any share in the uncompromising spirit of true Christianity.

Constantine the Great simply found political advantage in "accepting" the Christian religion. To him this was a popular creed among other popular creeds. So it seemed just as eligible as any other to become the public creed of the Roman empire. (We shall later give special evidence regarding this matter-of-fact evaluation on the part of a worldly-wise emperor).

Constantine coolly considered the two important groups confronting each other in his empire: heathens and Christians. As he evaluated the situation, some clever practical move was urgently needed to reconcile the most dangerous divergences between these two heterogeneous masses. He decided to accelerate that process of compromise by just stirring their streams together--and this he would do so aptly that the result might be one single homogeneous mass, homogeneous in essential respects at least. Of course that process ought to start where the trends naturally tended toward a certain uniformity already.

The heathen population of Constantine's time happened to have an old tradition of its own toward a special reverence for the Day of the Sun. On the other hand, Christians, as we have already previously admitted, had for some time yielded to a gradually developing convention of honoring the first day of the week as an additional day of special worship. So, to the worldly strategist, the time seemed ripe for a very tempting amalgamation on this basis. The emperor could not see any easier or more efficient way of levelling out the existing religious differences than just by melting the two groups together in one huge melting-pot, may we say a "pagano-Christian" melting pot.

The first Sunday law in history was passed by Constantine in the year 321 A.D. It was issued in the form of an edict demanding that people in the cities should rest on the "venerable day of the sun". This was, both formally and virtually, a purely pagan enactment of Sunday observance. But it was soon afterwards to be considerably enlarged and more severely enforced in the name of a "Christian" empire.

If it is true that the hellenization of the Judeo-Christian culture was not only a most important, but a most fateful event of human history, it is certainly not less true that the romanization of Christendom, taking place from the time when Christianity began to gain secular honor and power, has been an equally important and equally fateful event. In reality, of course, the "hellenization" and the "romanization" we are here speaking about, constitute, in essential respects, one and the same movement of infiltration: They are anti-Christian, arch-pagan!

We already know what has been the result of this amalgamation between heathendom and Christianity. What invariably came out, as the hybrid product of the amalgamation process, was just heathendom, not at all Christianity. That result is in full accordance with the absolutely uncompromising

character of the Christian religion. Conquer or die, is its unbending law. That has, through all ages, been the law for the militant giant I have called Alterocentric Spirituality.

Of course we should not blame a heathen emperor too severely for failing to realize to what fateful extent he was here prejudicing Christianity against its age-old irreconcilable rival. In fact, he was not even the really responsible originator of that deadly amalgamation. He only systematized and legalized, by means of his official stamp, a development for which Christians themselves must assume the greatest responsibility, as they simply suffered it to penetrate their environment from decade to decade.

## CHAPTER XVIII AN INGENIOUS DICHOTOMY

I shall now endeavor to prepare a deeper analysis of some most interesting details in the history of the pseudo-Sabbath, particularly in post-Nicean Christendom. This I shall prepare by first giving more general study to the whole logical problem Christian theology has conjured up with its sensational shift from Sabbath to Sunday.

With this change of religious holidays, theologians were automatically forced to face a dilemma I called "logical"; my reader will soon see why. And the "solution" eventually devised for that dilemma will be seen to have very much the same disruptive character we have previously found typical in so many other awkward situations of the Western World.

In fact, just as subtle as any Platonic dualism in the past, was the peculiar dichotomy that had to be introduced in order to provide a tolerably acceptable justification of the new order of things. That is, a justification of Sunday observance, already permitted to supplant the Sabbath.

What we should try to do here is to understand what has historically taken place. We should realize that these men of the Church had a real Sabbath problem facing them from the moment they permitted Sunday to enter triumphantly as a *fait accompli* of Christian church history.

Leading ecclesiastical teachers and administrators had to apply some kind of philosophical scheme in order to justify their undeniable practice and their subsequent teaching concerning Sunday keeping. We can qualify that philosophy by a term from the history of idealist dualism; that is, the dualism that Plato, the father of Western spiritualism, introduced for the purpose of furthering his fundamentally pagan interpretation of the nature of man and the nature of the world. We call this method a "dichotomy", a cutting up into two allegedly separate parts. This is, of course, the basic scheme of all dualist thinking.

Now, how could it be of any help to our philosophical theologians (or theological philosophers) to "cut" the Sabbath commandment "into two separate parts"?

According to the French theologian, Alfred Vaucher, Christian theology has made three different approaches over the centuries, in its gigantic effort to give some kind of logical justification for the perpetuated fact -- the institution of Sunday in place of the Biblical Sabbath:

- 1) An endeavor to show that the whole Decalogue is incompatible with Christian concepts of morality, and has to be abandoned.
- 2) An endeavor to show that the fourth commandment is incompatible, and has to be abandoned.
- 3) An endeavor to show that a certain "part" of that commandment is compatible, and has to be abandoned.

It is mainly to this third approach that we shall try to give our most thorough examination, as it relates to our Christian culture, infiltrated by pagan thought-forms. Indeed, it is this third alternative in which the embarrassed theologian -- whether Catholic or Protestant -- places his greatest hopes of a logical rescue. We shall see with what philosophical genius the Church has put into function a device of the most subtle abstraction. In fact, no Platonic idealist could have performed this trick with greater expertise. But let us examine all three approaches:

- 1) The whole Decalogue has been considered by some theologians as belonging to the old Mosaic system, the "temporary religion" of the Old Covenant, which, allegedly, was to be "completely abolished" at the arrival of Christ's New Covenant.

But the great majority of theologians have always found this radical abolition untenable. Admittedly, the term law sometimes does include the whole set of juridical and ritual Jewish laws forming the national heritage of the Hebrew people, from the days of their great leader Moses onwards. In fact, it sometimes even serves as a synonym for the entire Pentateuch. But the Decalogue, including the fourth commandment, is a universal code of human behavior and is as old as this world itself. At Mount Sinai it was particularly enforced by being spoken with the Lord's own voice, and written with His own finger on two tables of stone.

These then are the ten commandments of God which Paul opposes to the ceremonialism of the Jewish nation. The Decalogue is the Law which Christ came to fulfill, not to destroy (Matthew 5:17). "The law is holy, and the commandment is holy, and just, and good" (Rom.7:12). This is also what James calls "the perfect law of liberty" (James 1:25, or the "royal law according to the Scripture" (James 2:8).

- 2) The one commandment among these ten which it seems really difficult for many Christians to accept as morally binding, however, is the fourth.

But here the intelligent theologian finds himself facing an impasse where he can neither proceed nor remain standing. The dilemma is this: the Lord of the Covenant astonishes him by making no visible exception whatsoever for the Sabbath commandment. He speaks it with His own mouth, like the others. He writes it with His own finger. He places it -- together with the other nine -- in the ark, not beside the ark (as happened to the laws of the Levites).

In view of these facts, the conscientious theologian does not dare to bluntly deny the validity of the commandment that enjoins a day of rest upon the followers of the Lord. Nor do his parishioners of course. So, the actual result is that a day of rest is observed by serious Christians in the great majority of Christian denominations.

3) So what shall we do with this perplexing commandment? What way out can we find from the dilemma we are facing with it? Frankly speaking, what are the real sentiments we feel at the moment when we sincerely face it? The impression of many people is that there is something vaguely mysterious, uncertain, inconsistent about the fourth commandment. It is respected, and yet it is not respected. Undoubtedly some smarting sense of this inconsistency has forced the vast majority of nominal Christians into the third category of standpoints. For that is where most Christians are, whether they know it or not. So this is, by far, the most important category -- perhaps because it is also by far the most captivating one. In the context of my suggested thesis, it is enormously captivating.

Vaucher briefly and plainly describes this peculiar manipulation somewhat as follows: Most Christians today profess to respect the fourth commandment as an integral part of the Decalogue, a law of permanent and universal nature. But at the same time they manage to distinguish, in this commandment, allegedly two heterogeneous elements, on one hand the moral element, the "Christian" element; on the other, the "legalistic" element, the "Jewish" element. Now, let me look at this as a historian of ideas:

This tendency to dichotomize comes naturally to Western man, because of his prevailing pagan culture, governed by the thought-patterns of Platonic idealism.

The dichotomy is further broken down and defined as follows:

A) On the one hand, the "good" element, the "spiritual" element: that is, the sanctification of "some day" every week; or, to express it in a dignified platonic style: an "ideal" day; a day existing in a general way, and a day sanctified in a general way -- that is, without any concrete specification of when or where or to what end.

B) On the other hand, there is the element that is "not so good": the "Jewish" element in the Sabbath commandment; an element "chained to the earth" and "hopelessly" specific (bound) in both space and time; that is, the literal Sabbath. And now, what happens to our advanced theologians?

In order to make it quite clear that they "elevate" themselves above that "narrow concept" of a certain "Sabbath-boundness", "New Testament men" most insistently make their vote in favor of the Sunday as their day of rest. Now, admittedly, that too is a particular day. So how could a Sunday ever avoid being just as specific, just as literal and tradition-bound as a Saturday? You have a perfect logical right to ask that question.

Of course, this does fill one with some degree of painful hesitation. Frankly, even Sunday can never fully satisfy the secret longings of the perfect idealist. Still he implores his restless heart to be quiet in his breast. For what better choice does he have than that Sunday? His soul has an impulse of secret rejoicing as he suddenly recalls at least one great thing pleasantly associated with Sunday: it is, after all, a day he has himself decided upon. So it suddenly takes the character of a symbol of freedom, as it were, a sign of self-determination. Self-sufficient man has finally found one little gleam of light he can be happy about. The mechanism of rationalization works satisfactorily.

In many cases, of course, the mechanism may be somewhat simpler: That demonstrative element of self-determination is often far less pronounced, or quite imperceptible. Sunday simply presents itself as an institution of the Christian Church that has come to stay, period! Its status is that of a *fait accompli*. There is nothing left for us, the Christian tells himself, but to find some fairly acceptable argument for it. And then that subtle dichotomy is the one great line of reasoning naturally presenting itself to minds familiar with dualist abstractions. How else could one manage to get around the simple Biblical testimony of obligatory Sabbath-keeping without having to abolish the Sabbath commandment, or, we should rather say, the Decalogue in its entirety?

But is there not in the Bible itself, you may still wonder, any explicit text or analogous example that would justify such a distinction between two different "levels" or "layers" of the fourth commandment; one of them universal and permanent, the other "national" ("Jewish") and "transient", and accordingly sadly lacking in general validity?

Not to my knowledge. If there were such definite evidence, then I would not longer feel so confident that the Bible is immune to human ideas, leading to internal disruption. But it is immune. I know it is. The entire history of ideas tells me.

Is there any philosophical argument then, that would give a lustre of logical consistency to this "idealist dualism"?

Again, not to my knowledge. In fact, I feel utterly incapable of rationalizing the case at issue in more than one way: that is, as an a posteriori attempt at giving theological sanction to a historical fait accompli of human, rather than divine origin -- namely, the institution of Sunday as a new day of worship supplanting the Seventh-day Sabbath of Biblical authorization.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE FRANK AND STRIKINGLY CONCURRENT TESTIMONY OF CATHOLIC SCHOLARS

Roman Catholic theologians of recognized scholarship and of the highest ecclesiastical dignity have made statements of remarkable candor concerning the Sabbath-Sunday question. In authoritative documents from many consecutive centuries we find most interesting conclusions drawn from the indisputable historical facts. They are Roman Catholic conclusions, which, in their frankness and straightforwardness, as well as in their admirable logical consistency on essential points, must often have been a bitter pill to swallow for Protestant theology.

Let us quote from Daniel Ferris' work, *Manual of Christian Doctrine, or Catholic Belief and Practice*. This book appeared in 1916, but it is largely based on the so-called Douay Catechism of 1649, also entitled: *An Abridgement of the Christian Doctrine*. On page 67 of the 1916 edition, the "Third (sic!) Commandment" is dealt with in the traditional style of "Question" and "Answer":

Q.: What does the word "Sabbath" mean?

A.: It means the day of rest.

Q.: When did the Sabbath begin to be kept?

A.: From the very creation of this world: for then God blessed the day, and rested on it from all His work. -- Gen. 1:2, 3.

Q.: When was this commandment renewed?

A.: In the Old Law, when God gave the commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai, written with His own finger on two tables of stone.

Q.: Why was the Jewish Sabbath changed into Sunday?

A.: Because Christ was born on a Sunday, arose from the dead on a Sunday, and sent down the Holy Ghost on a Sunday-- works not inferior to the creation of the world.

Q.: By whom was it changed?

A.: By the Governors of the Church, the Apostles, who also kept it; for St. John was in spirit on the Lord's day (which was Sunday)--Apoc. 1:10.

Q.: How do you prove that the Church has power to command Feasts and Holy Days?

A.: By the very act of changing the Sabbath into Sunday, which is admitted by Protestants, and therefore they contradict themselves by keeping Sunday so strictly, and breaking most other Feasts commanded by the Church.

Q.: How do you prove that?

A.: Because by keeping Sunday they acknowledge the power of the Church to ordain Feasts and to command them under sin, and by not keeping the remainder, equally commanded by her, they deny in fact the same power." Daniel Ferris: *Manual of Christian Doctrine, or Catholic Belief and Practice*. 1916 p. 67.

The famous Dr. Eck, also, says in his *Enchiridion Locorum Communium Adversus Lutheranos*, of 1553 (Venezia: Ioan, Antonius & Fratres de Sabio):

"The Sabbath is commanded many times by God: neither in the Gospels nor in Paul is it declared that the Sabbath has ceased; nevertheless the Church has instituted the Lord's day through the tradition of the Apostles without scripture." *Enchiridion Locorum Communium Adversus Lutheranos*, 1553, vol. 42v.

This is given, again and again, as the decisive evidence of the Church's sovereign power:

"Had she not such power, she would not have done that in which all modern religionists agree with her,--she would not have substituted the observance of the Sunday, the first day of the week, for the observance of Saturday, the seventh day, a change for which there is no Scriptural authority." Stephan Keenan: *A Doctrinal Catechism*, New York, 1876.

But why did the Church feel a particular urge to assert this "sovereign power of change in fundamental matters of Christian faith" just in the case with which we are here concerned?

There, too, the testimonies are strikingly concurrent through the centuries. Particularly notable is the reiterated theme of "heavenly light". What does that signify?

With what ardent conviction some prominent men of the Church centered their attention around points relative to the sun as an element of religious veneration--and at what an early date this trend established itself--will appear from a commentary to Psalm 92, written by Eusebius sometime between 327 and 340 A.D.:

"All things whatsoever that it was duty to do on the Sabbath, these we [The Church] have transferred to the Lord's day, as being more authoritative and more highly regarded, the first in rank, and

more honorable in rank than the Jewish Sabbath. For on that day the light was created." (1) Eusebius: Commentary on the Psalms, on Ps. 91 (92):2,3, in *Patrologia Graeca*, J.P. Migne. (Emphasis supplied).

To us, with the theme we are treating, it seems worthwhile to follow the remarkable phenomenon of the "christianization" of a manifestly pagan cult-symbol down through the centuries. We are referring to the Sunday as the day of "light", the day of the glorious sun god. We shall make only a brief halt at the Council of Trent:

"For, as on that day light first shone in the world, so the Resurrection of the Redeemer on the same day, by whom was thrown open to us the gate of eternal life, we were called out of darkness into light and hence the Apostles (sic) would have it called the Lord's day." (Catechism of the Council of Trent for Parish Priests--transl. by J.A. McHugh and C. J. Callan, 1958. Emphasis supplied. See also: Catechism of the Council of T. Denovan transl., 1829, written by order of the great council and published under the auspices of Pope Pius V: "But the Church of God has in her wisdom ordained that the celebration of the Sabbath day should be transferred to the Lord's day." (p. 358).

Why should the cult of the sun have such a capital role in the endeavor to smother the spirit of Sabbath-keeping? Of course the new day's quality of sun-day might be quite incidental in this connection. But is it incidental?

What special relation could there be between Western idealism (the remarkable pseudo-religious counterfeit to true Christian religion) on the one hand, and sun worship on the other? Of course they do have their essential origin in common: they are both fundamentally pagan. But is there any reason to assume 1) that their respective inherent dynamics is of such a nature as to force them into one and the same subversive endeavor; that is, to cast the Sabbath from its throne? 2) And, if so, is then that inevitable connivance between them, at a common usurpation, a phenomenon that can be reasonably accounted for in terms of their common trend toward a spiritualist ideal?

Let me first summarize some typical traits in platonic idealism: It is passionately preoccupied with an urge to distinguish between the temporary and the eternal. In general principle there is not necessarily anything wrong in that distinction. In fact the gospel, too, is most vividly concerned with distinguishing between temporal things, the things that are destined to pass away, and eternal things, the things that are destined to last forever. And it goes without saying that the former must be far inferior in value, as compared to the latter. No one has surpassed the apostle Paul in the way he insistently points out that difference in value between what was purely temporary and transient (the ceremonial ordinance of the Old Covenant for instance) and what has to be regarded as eternally valid.

Certainly Christian theologians down through all centuries have understood the necessity of such distinctions. May we take an example: The Dominican Father Albert-Marie Henri Lagrange (1855-1938), one of the most eminent Bible interpreters of recent times, states that it was the Roman Catholic Church that "detached the Decalogue from the other Jewish laws." He also alleges a clear reason why this had to be done: The Decalogue "has appeal to all humanity".

But then he goes on to describe a further management on the part of the Roman Church which he thinks equally necessary: "It [the Decalogue] has had to be modified on certain points." On what points? Well, on such points as the "image worship and the Sabbath. "For what purpose?--"in order to give it [the Decalogue] a character just as universal as that of the Gospel." (Emphasis supplied.)

In what respect is Sunday "more universal" in its essential character than the Sabbath? Let us study that with special care. This question of "universality", "eternal value", is one to which we shall have to give the closest attention.

## CHAPTER XX A GOD WHO INTERFERES

Let us now refer to Greek philosophy. Plato's spiritualist idealism has had a tremendous impact on the thinking of Western men in all environments--and certainly not less among Christian theologians than in any other group. Why? One reason is that the Christian way (or the gospel way) of expressing its distinctions in this field has an outward appearance fairly close to the way idealist philosophy expresses its peculiar distinctions. That is not so strange. In fact the language medium for communication was the same for both of them. Originally, to be sure, the meaning given by Christianity and the meaning given by Greek philosophy to one and the same word could be essentially different. But similarity in outward form often gradually leads to the erroneous idea of a similarity in content as well. So a terrible confusion is frequently the result.

What are, for instance, the respective concepts of the "temporal" versus the "eternal" in the two environments? This question is important because it would seem eminently legitimate for any man questioning the eternal validity of the Sabbath commandment to ask: Whatever the Sabbath is, how could it help being a temporal phenomenon?

In fact, it would be almost ridiculous to state: "The Sabbath has nothing to do with time!" The Sabbath is time. Let no one talk you out of that fact. So we do well in finding out what the "temporal" is, but let us start with the "eternal":



### What is the Biblical Conception of Eternity?

Spiritualizing theologians sometimes complain that common Bible readers have an understanding of the concept of eternity that is too temporal and material. They understand it as time without end, period. And that is an "unspiritual" interpretation, says the philosophizing theologian. His point is illustrated in the popular interpretation of Christ's statements about "eternal punishment." "Eternal" has a qualitative sense more than a temporal one. How far is he right in this? Let us listen for a while to the British theologian, Maurice:

The word "eternal" is a keyword of the New Testament. To draw our minds from the temporal, to fix them on the eternal, is the very aim of the divine economy. How much ought we then, to dread any confusion between thoughts which our Lord has taken such pains to keep distinct! How dangerous to introduce the notion of duration into a word from which He had deliberately excluded it! And yet this is precisely what we are in the habit of doing, and it is this which causes such infinite perplexity in our minds.(1)

One reason why Maurice stresses so much that qualitative sense of the term "eternal" (and I think that redounds greatly to his honor) may be that he meets a problem to Christian meaningfulness in the expression "eternal fire" (Jude 7), or what Christ Himself calls "everlasting punishment" (Matt. 25:46). We perfectly understand in this case his difficulty in accepting the interpretation: "torture through time without end."

He certainly thinks that such never ending pain, even for the greatest sinners, would even be against the sense of simple righteousness and particularly contrary to the pitying mercy of the God whom Christianity knows. In this he is undoubtedly right. This would be merciless and unfair. But how can our theology avoid a certain trend toward pagan spiritualism if it is declared that the term "eternity" has nothing but this spiritualized sense? How can eternity be assumed to have nothing whatsoever to do with concrete time, a simple duration?

Admittedly, "eternal" may, in some contexts, be more emphatically a concept of quality than a concept of time. For instance this may very well be the case in John 17:3: "This is life eternal, that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Here "life eternal" certainly implies a life in the highest degree. But why should we necessarily separate this sense of the word "eternal" from the sense of literal duration? The fact that it is "the deepest and most extreme type of life imaginable", does that exclude its being a "life without end in time" as well? Why not realize that the two meanings supplement each other. They go perfectly well together. If we insist on splitting them up, we run a serious risk of becoming dualistic and spiritualistic in our thinking. Christian can retain a perfectly spiritual understanding of the term, "eternal" without having to give up every sense of temporality in that term. To that end, what they must first understand is this: Time is not, in itself, evil or inferior, a despicable notion! One good thing about our life to come is that it shall never cease, is it not? Just because it is so perfect, it can also bear to go on and on, day after day, millennium after millennium. Just because it has supreme quality, it can also have infinite quantity. Is not this part and parcel of the harmonious totality in Christian thinking? And now the "problem of eternal punishment":

Why should not the punishment of the ungodly be eternal both in the sense of extreme degree and the sense of unending duration? The fact the man is doomed to die and remain dead forevermore, instead of enjoying the life which God had intended for him, is a tragedy of the highest degree and of everlasting effect for the person concerned. Eternal death is eternal punishment. It is a sentence that will never be annulled.

In other words, I do not deny that the adjective "eternal" may have a definitely qualitative connotation, in connection with both life and death. On the contrary, I do admit that an intimate knowledge of God and His love is the essence of God's eternity. And, of course, the same profoundly spiritual interpretation may then become valid, but in a reverse application, in the case of "eternal punishment" or "eternal death". They could be paraphrased as "the loss of that power of perceiving His love ... the incapacity of loving: no greater damnation can befall any." But don't let us forget that the literally unending duration of this death is what makes it so irrevocable, so endlessly tragic.

And now to the concept of "temporal" and to the real notion of duration: Do these, according to the Gospel, represent something definitely and necessarily inferior, even unworthy? Are they something too this-worldly and vulgar? Are they so "matter-infected" that decent theologians have to rack their brains to find some way to spiritualize away the time element in them?

And immediately one more question: To put it quite bluntly, does the Sabbath have so much of that "temporalness" in its essential nature that there is no hope of "redeeming" it, of seeing it in a worthy connotation?

My unswerving answer would be: This is not at all realistic. It is not consistent thinking! Where would be the consistency in granting that double potentiality to the concept of "eternity" (viz. "eternal life" versus "eternal death"), but refusing a similar consideration of the concept of "time"? Why should not time, as well, possess this ambivalent potentiality in it of being either good or evil, either blessed or cursed?

To the great Hebrew realists, to whom the task was confided to give verbal expression to God's message of truth, it has appeared a self-evident thing that such an interpretation must be accorded to "time", as well as to "eternity". In fact, to them eternity was nothing but unending time. The two are not made up of different stuff. It is pagan spiritualism that insinuates into the minds of Occidental Christians that eternity is timelessness, and nothing else. It is again Plato who has left us his heritage of thought. It is not Jesus Christ.

Briefly, I would not hesitate to assert: It is again just our inveterate thought-pattern of pagan idealism that has gradually made it appear to us as if time were, in itself and quite inevitably, a negative dimension. Little by little we have been tricked into believing that time is an element in which original man, sinless man, cannot have any chance whatsoever of feeling perfectly at ease. A curious idea has been deeply rooted, namely that time, as a category of existence, is bound to come to an end! An entirely "new dimension", philosophically speaking, is supposed to supplant it; that is, an element crushingly "superior" to it, called "eternity". In other words, the time element which the Creator once devised for Adam's existence, appears to have turned out to be something like a sad mistake, on God's part. "Time is bankrupt!"

Is that trend of thought biblical? Is it endorsed by one single author within the canon? Not so far as I have been able to discover.

But how has this myth managed to establish itself then? And when? Let us look at the case more closely, and try to understand it. We do know what tragedy once happened to man. He fell into sin. From that moment onwards, how was he likely to feel about time? He was bound to look upon it with rather mixed feelings. Time tended to be either too long or too short, never just right. As life became a burden to man, so did time. For the two coincide. So time was felt as an intolerable curse, an actual damnation. On the other hand, there was always a haunting fear that it might run out too fast. In either case time came to be feared as the great anomaly. Time was the heavy road leading inevitably right down to death, the monster above all monsters.

And now, how do we evaluate this whole pessimism about time? I wish so sincerely that such pessimism could be passed off as nothing but a bad dream. But alas! There is too much of drab reality in it for that.

It might in fact seem appropriate to state about time in general, as we know it today, what some old sun dials used to say about the hours: "Omnes vulnerant, ultima necat." This is true: Each single hour does give us a new wound, and the last one does kill us. There is no denying this gruesome human fatality. So we do understand man's reaction.

But was all this evil the fault of time, as such? No-no. That is but a case of superficial projection. It was the fault of sin. How could duration, in itself, be a hostile element, a vile element that should be shunned? Simple common sense ought to tell any man that time, as such, is good enough. If it were inherently "no good", then the Sabbath would be "no good" either. And the same would apply to the Creator. What a blasphemous implication!

Let us be reasonable. Time as such is not a negative, despicable thing. What fills time is decisive. Sin has filled man's time for millennia now. That is why time has been contaminated--and accordingly depreciated as "base"--"in itself". In other words, its notorious "inherent vileness" is a quite gratuitous assertion. I say this simply to vindicate the cause of the Sabbath, the cause of God. For the Sabbath is time, and God is the Creator of the Sabbath.

So what will have to be our final answer to Maurice's claim that duration is a notion Christ has "deliberately excluded" from His gospel concept of eternity, the only thing really worthwhile for human beings?

That "deliberate exclusion" of the notion of time has never taken place, unless, indeed, in the weird depths of spiritualist-influenced human brains!

Was God's historical descent into time, in the bodily form of Jesus Christ, just a temporary phenomenon? This is a searching question, to which we shall give quite special attention later. So far, this question:

Should Man be Longing for Timelessness as A Proper Way to be More Like God?

Even our best and most realistic Christian writers sometimes come up with remarks suggesting that they may not, after all, be entirely reconciled to man's fate of "having to live in the dimension of time exclusively". Take the case of C.S. Lewis. This brilliant author gives most interesting illustrations of some problems we get involved in for the simple reason that we do not grasp the essential difference between God and man, between the Eternal One and the time-limited one. An agnostic may complain of the following problem: "I can believe in God all right, but what I cannot swallow is the idea of Him attending to several hundred million human beings who are all addressing Him at the same moment."

Lewis thinks "the sting of it" is here to be found in the "timelimitedness" of human thinking. And here he has most interestingly expressed the predicament involved. The common trend is described as follows:

Most of us can imagine God attending to any number of applicants if only they came one by one and He had an endless time to do it in. So what is really at the back of this difficulty is the idea of having to fit too many things into one moment of time.(2)

I think it would be safer to say: God is not limited by time. For what foundation, philosophical or religious, do we have for claiming that God is not in time? What the Gospel of incarnation tells us is something quite different. Not only is it true about God that He is in time, but He has made it a particular point to be registered as being in our time. Not only is He to be found in space, but He takes particular pride in being the God who has adopted our realm of space as His favorite dwelling place. God has made Himself man. He made Himself your contemporary and mine. Your countryman and mine. At the same time He remains God, wholly and fully. Thus He is forever beyond the limitations of the time and space He has for you and me. Hence it is right enough, no doubt, as Lewis humanly puts it:

If a million people are praying to Him at ten-thirty tonight, He need not listen to them all in that little snippet which we call ten-thirty. Ten-thirty, and every other moment from the beginning of the world, is always the Present for Him. If you like to put it in that way, He has all eternity in which to listen to the split second of prayer put up by a pilot as his plane crashes in flames.(3)

It is a great relief thus to know that God does not "have to deal with you in the mass." He definitely has time for you! He gives full attention to you, exactly as if you were the only creature He ever created, the only sinner whom He sets out to save. He dies for you individually. And there is no exaggeration whatsoever in the statement that He would have died for you even if you had been the only man ever falling into the misery of sin and death. In other words, we should not be astonished at all at statements of that kind. To doubt the truth of them would be simply illogical, according to the consistent logics of the Gospel. For, in strict accordance with this line of thinking, it would be downright absurd if God did not give you, as the single individual you are and will always be, an absolutely undivided attention. In other words, He treats you as if you were the only creature in the whole universe whom He had to worry about. This devolves naturally from the fact that God is the One He is: namely, the God of unlimited love, and further a God entirely free from all other essentially creaturely limitations; in other words, it is a natural thing that God gives you all this attention for the simple reason that God is God.(4)

Certainly our plain reasoning about these things may also put a weapon in our arsenal against other attacks from the spirit of doubt and negation, other voices suggesting that Christ "has not come in the flesh." Lewis is not the only man who has seriously asked himself: "How did the whole universe keep going while He (Christ; that is God, the great Creator and Sustainer) was a baby," or "while He was asleep." But in order to tackle this apparent problem, Lewis evidently deems it necessary to go into what I would call a spiritualistic (or platonically idealistic) trend of thinking. He assumes as a fundamental difference between God and man that while God has an existence beyond all categories of time, man is "trapped" in the realms of time. The universe, according to Lewis, could be "kept going" even during the time when Christ had his literal, temporal sojourn in Nazareth as a human baby for one reason only: As virtual God He was "not in time at all." He was in that "entirely" different dimension, called eternity. He was not "helplessly enclosed" within the time element He has ordained as the category in which men exist, and have their only existence. Again the whole "sting" of the infidel remark, he says, is contained in the "time word": "While He was a baby"; how could this Son of man "at the same time" be God who knows all things and sustains all things?

So the answer is, according to Lewis, that the human reasoner here commits an act of utter confusion: he infers that Jesus Christ, even in His capacity as God, must be confined in that same creaturely category" of time. The naive child assumes that the time spent by the baby Jesus was "cut out of" the existence He had as the Eternal One, thus virtually leaving a yawning gap, you might say, in the eternity; a gap, during which all things were doomed to break down and vanish. The logical truth, however, is bound to be that God can never be "cut out of" His eternity, His divinity. Now, are these reflections by Lewis at all realistic?

I can accept the author's view that Christ, Son of God and Creator of the world, never ceased to be eternal and divine. For this never happens to God. That would be a contradiction in terms, and reality knows no such contradiction. We must accept this, not as something we can clearly explain, but as one accepts an axiom: It is self-evident, and in perfect harmony with any logics proceeding from the throne of the Omniscient One, whether we call that logic human or divine. But here is quite another question: Does this quality of being eternal mean being beyond time, so being in an entirely different element of existence than man? Does the quality of being divine consist in sharing a property characteristic of Plato's idea and nothing but that? For, as far as I know, there is only one thing that manages the precarious existence beyond time and space: That is, the absolutely impersonal world of pure abstractions.

The salient point of our discussion of this topic, then, is a note-worthy--and in my opinion symptomatic--remark made by Lewis in connection with the difference here envisioned between God's time-lessness and man's time. I shall underline the most striking formulations, as I consider that matter, my reader may then reflect and see if this contains something characteristic of that departure from full realism

which seems to be the mark of our cultural environment. The substance of Lewis' idea, I freely admit, is admirably realistic; but its formulation is spiritualistic.

You cannot fit Christ's earthly life in Palestine into any time-relations with His life as God beyond all time and space. It is really, I suggest, a timeless truth about God that human nature, and the human experience of weakness and sleep and ignorance, are somehow included in His whole divine life. This human life in God is from our point of view a particular period in the history of our world (from the year A.D. one till the Crucifixion). We therefore (erroneously) imagine it is also a period in the history of God's existence. But God has no history. He is too completely and utterly real to have one. For, of course, to have a history means losing part of your reality (because it has already slipped away into the past) and not yet having another part (because it is still in the future): in fact, having nothing but the tiny little present, which has gone, before you can speak about it. God forbid we should think God was like that. Even we may hope not to be always rationed in that way. 5 (Emphasis supplied.)

"God has no history". In my opinion, a formulation of that kind smacks of spiritualism and therefore should be avoided. The same applies to "timeless truths." I think what is here actually suggested by the intelligent men who use the term, is that those truths apply to all times. So they are what the German language would call "allzeitig" and not at all "zeitlos". In some people's minds it might be a most confusing expression to say that God "has no history". In the first place this might dangerously obscure the fact that God is the One who precisely did not think it unworthy to go into history, even man's history, and stay there, not only "till the Crucifixion", but for the rest of His life, that is, eternally, during a future without end. As far as God's relation to human history is concerned, it tends to convey a dangerously erroneous idea, I think, to say that "He is too completely and utterly real to have one." Where does this notion stem from that there is something more or less antagonistic to reality in the essence of history? That notion certainly has no birth-right in Judeo-Christian thought. There is much reason to fear, on the contrary, that our proneness to make formulations of that kind is rather due to the influence exercised upon our thoughts and our thought-forms by the prevailing spiritualistic trend of pagan philosophy in the Western World. It is platonic spiritualism which, from the beginnings of our culture, filled us with this weird yearning toward an unknown region we might call "non-time"; that is, the "hope not to be always rationed in that way". In what way? In the way our Creator has seen perfectly fit for me: the "time" way, the "history" way. Realistically considered, I think there is only one theoretical possibility of escaping the extreme human-ness of that "rationing"; that is to become God oneself, not the God of the Bible, but Plato's God (the Idea). That would presuppose the "divine" spark in human nature which pagan idealism has always spoken about as an original endowment in man. Man, from times immemorial, enjoyed thinking of himself as eternal. To him that meant "timeless", platonically and spiritualistically divine: that is, gloriously free from all "rationing" in terms of the limitations imposed upon creatures by the "time bondage". Please permit me to repeat my protest against this philosophy.

Let us repeat: Time as such is not a negative, a despicable thing. No-no! What fills time is decisive. Sin has filled man's time for millennia now. That is why time has been contaminated -- and accordingly depreciated as base -- "in itself". In other words, its notorious "inherent vileness" is a quite gratuitous assertion. I say this because I just have to vindicate the cause of the Sabbath, the cause of God! For the Sabbath is time, and God is the Creator of the Sabbath.

So what will have to be the final answer to Maurice's claim that duration is a notion Christ has "deliberately excluded" from His Gospel concept of eternity, the only thing really worth-while for human beings?

That "deliberate exclusion" of the notion of time has never taken place, unless, indeed, in the weird depths of spiritualist-influenced minds!

Was God's historical descent into our space in the bodily form of Jesus Christ, just a temporary phenomenon? This is a searching question, to which we shall give quite special attention just in our further treatment of the Sabbath topic.

The Remarkable Idea That God's Existence in Eternity is Absolutely Timeless. Is this a Christian and Biblical Heritage of Ours, or a Pagan One?

I feel obliged to give ample consideration to this question. For it happens to be quite closely related to another question, and a crucial one in this work: Is the Sabbath really worthy of the epithet "eternal" in the most deeply religious sense as well as the temporal sense of that adjective?

Here we should first have a rapid look at some striking formulations made by theological and philosophical writers of ultra-modern time. Even a rather popular book may be cited: George W. Forell, *The Protestant Faith*. He is here speaking about the interminable discussion, carried on by theologians of all times, regarding a person's state between death and what the Bible calls the resurrection.

The fundamental problem in all these discussions is the assumption that time is not only a category of the human mind but also a reality in God. The problem disappears, however, if one is prepared to take seriously the scriptural evidence (sic!) that in God there is no time. 6 According to this "scriptural evidence", God's existence is absolutely timeless. God's essence, allegedly, is beyond both time and space. And eternity and time are supposed to be opposite terms. For, as other authors express it: "There can be no

divine eternity in time". Now what does that commonly emerging conception of God as "timeless" and "spaceless" actually imply? It might, of course, sometimes mean nothing but this, God is not subject to the same limitations as creatures. That would make realistic sense.

In that case it would mean no more than what Moses expresses in the 90th psalm, so something perfectly realistic:

Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hast formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting thou art God... For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night.

In other words, God is not limited by definite periods of time, like creatures are. He is the infinitely superior one, the "Ancient of Days" who has the perfect overview over all events, past, present, and future. He is without beginning and end, endlessly different from creaturely beings, limited men, totally dependent on the Eternal One for their very existence.

This is altogether Biblical philosophy. But what do philosophizing theologians often mean by their "timeless" and "spaceless" God? Where pagan platonic thought forms are prevailing, our theologians put something very different into the words they here use. According to them, God's existence simply cannot have anything in common with the time-space realism of this world. Time and space, they think, belong exclusively to a world of creation and generation. Such a world is "necessarily subject to the hazards of emergency and decay", and to the more or less "despicable" process of change, a phenomenon which is under no circumstances supposed to happen to God. God, it is inferred, could never be subject to the vicissitude of change. If He were, He too would be a victim to corruption. This is the immediate conclusion. Is it Biblical and realistic?

Why is change here thought of as something absolutely incompatible with the nature of an eternal God? And what connection is there between time and space on the one hand, and change on the other? It is the pagan platonist's idea about perfection that leads spiritualist theology astray here. Divine perfection, according to Platonic idealism, is the perfectly Impassive One. If He suddenly began to engage Himself heartily in the affairs of created beings or anything belonging to the contingent world, He would immediately cease to be the great model of ultimate perfection. It follows that this "ideal" God of the pagan "idealist" should not react at all to any accidental changes in the external world. If He did have any heartfelt reaction of that kind, He would be seriously suspected of being Himself subject to the hazards of change and accidental happening. It is tacitly assumed that, if change of any kind is ever to happen to a God who is already perfect, only one thing can be the result: He is bound to change in the direction of a lesser perfection. In other words, God would be perfect no longer. What a catastrophe of change, ontologically speaking! Imagine the only Changeless One "yielding to the sordid influences" of a changing world, thus miserably abandoning the glory of His own changelessness!

Is the Bible's concept of divine perfection like that? By no means. It has been moulded by an entirely different philosophy, the philosophy of divine condescension, of divine lowliness and heartfelt compassion.

But what then has caused our philosophizing theologians to assume so readily and rashly the idea that change, per se, is such a despicable thing? This is not at all so difficult to understand. They naturally took their point of departure in the idea that the this-worldly facts of a time-and-space contingency constitute an inferior order," definitely non-divine attributes." To tell the truth, they rather considered them as somewhat anti-divine, if you permit the term. And now every common-sense creature does know a fact that cannot be disputed: Time and space mean change. The very flow of time is synonymous with change. And the very idea of spacial extension leads any sound human mind outward. In other words, if that mind has not yet been entirely denaturalized by philosophical trends of static inertia and egocentricity, its natural trend is other-centered, not self-centered. So there is nothing necessarily inferior about change. Accordingly, why should there not be a change of mind taking place in God? I am frankly asking you the question. His character is unchangeable, but just therefore His attitude changes.

When God sees you, His dear child, commit sin, His heart at once changes from gladness to terrible sorrow. That is the theology of Biblical realism.

There is, however, also another reason why theorists in this theological field make the erroneous assumption that temporality and spacial extension (spacial form) do not pertain to God, in fact that they are incompatible with His essence as the Perfect One, the "totally Other." And among conservative and relatively Bible-oriented theologians I believed this is the main reason: It is commonly inferred that space and time are creations. God has called them into existence, just as He has called you and me, or any part of His material universe, into existence. Hence--and now notice the bold conclusion--time and space are assumed to share with us the quality of constituting part and parcel of corruptible nature? And how then could they fit into the world of God Himself?

Now, is this assumption a self-evident one, devolving naturally from the teachings of the Bible about God and His world? Is it right to say that God has created time and space? Why do theologians appear to be so sure about that? In my opinion that would be cocksureness. I would not be surprised if it is once more just the pagan heritage of our Western philosophy which makes us draw conclusions of that kind

so rashly. We seem to say that God "could not possibly condescend" to such unworthy depths of creaturely profaneness. He could not exist, like sordid matter does, on a level as "mediocre" and "this-worldly" as time and space.

Frankly, why do we, philosophizing theologians of the West, assume so readily that God's eternal existence is just timeless and spaceless? Did not ever the idea occur to us that time-space reality might simply be synonymous with existence, generally speaking? Let us put it differently: Can anyone really be, without being somewhere, and at some time? Can I--or anyone--exist without existing here and now? Notice, I am speaking about persons. I am also speaking about the Persons par excellence, God the Father and God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. I am not speaking about abstractions. They are the only ones I know for sure can "exist beyond time and space." Or, at least, they appear to exist. I sometimes fear that existence is too great a word for the abstractions of pagan idealist philosophy.

Does it amount to downgrading God, or making blasphemous human statements about Him, if I say that He shares the characteristic of all concrete persons, as far as I know, namely that He has a form, and that He is endowed with literal personality? It means something definite, of course, to suggest as the prophets do, for instance, about God the Father, that He has a form. For the term "form" inevitably suggests an existence in time and space. The Bible's childlike image of God is that He possesses specific and concrete existence. He is not a mere abstraction, something philosophers, only, can grasp and enjoy.

Am I here "dragging God down" to the level of finite creatures? No, time is infinite; and so is space. I am not speaking about the universe or any finite created thing. I am not speaking about what God at a given moment decided to put into time and space. For that must be finite, indeed.

When I say time and space I am concerned with dimensions that do not know any limits, is not that right? No reasoning person can deny their endlessness. But if they are endless, what further question could we reasonably ask? This one: Why should not time and space have room enough even for God, the Infinite One? The universe is finite, let that be frankly admitted. Finiteness applies to all things that have been created. That is one of their most important characteristics. But time and space are decidedly different from the universe in this respect. It demands just a bit of common sense to realize that there is no necessary limitation you can sensibly think of to the dimensions of time and space. Wherever you imagine yourself arriving in the world of space-time reality, there is always something beyond, something further that has to be granted. And this is not just vain theoretical speculation.

So if God is in time and space, He certainly is in something real. In other words, he is in a state of reality. But to affirm this is just tantamount to affirming that He has real existence.

Now it may very well be that some people do not at all want Him to have real existence; that is another matter. In fact, perhaps most of us do not always so ardently desire God to be all that real. Western heirs of platonic idealism may not be so eager to have any personal God exist anywhere, or at any time. They would obviously prefer to relegate His existence to a world of pure abstractions and virtual nothingness. It would seem so much safer for sinners to have a God limited to a pure vacuum, where He cannot "get at us." Time and space, however, are not mere emptiness in that spiritualistic sense. They are on the contrary realistic dimensions.

In short, I am afraid that the philosophizing theologian's weird longing for timelessness and spacelessness is a trend more human than divine. It has no birthright in the land of true Christian philosophy. Its underlying intention and final effect is not in *Dei majorem gloriam*.

Here one question has to be faced very openly. It has caused serious confusion recently in Seventh-day Adventist circles, and beyond those circles. For it has been permitted to have a wide publication through a book called the *Openness of God*. The question itself may be legitimate enough, and it is a captivating one: In my context here I may formulate it as follows:

How Could that God of Time-Space Realism Manage to Transcend, for His Own Part, the Barriers You and I Would Logically Face, if Called Upon to Foretell How a Certain Creature, Endowed with Freedom of Will, Would Act in a Case of Moral Choice. How Could Even God Foresee and Foretell what "Does Not Yet Exist" as a Given Reality, Since that Moral Decision Has Not Yet Been Made?

Some would formulate the question quite bluntly in this way: How could God be omniscient in the absolute sense of the term, including even prophecy, in fact, prophecy of things we must consider to be among the most crucially significant events in history?

Of course, to a philosopher of the purely spiritualist kind this would be a problem he would skip with the greatest elegance and unconcern. For he knows no God in time and space. In reality he knows no personal God whatsoever. A Seventh-day Adventist realist is in an entirely different position. In fact, Seventh-day Adventism emerged as a particularly realistic form of Protestantism, embracing an astonishingly complete spectrum of Biblical philosophy. Prophecy was an outstandingly significant feature of that movement almost from its very beginning around the middle of the nineteenth century. I am speaking about prophecy as something literally fulfilled in the contingent spacetime history of free agents called men.

So when I now am trying to evaluate the philosophy of some men within the ranks of present-day Adventism who have had the courage to venture into the field of philosophical studies, I must first mention

something that has impressed me most positively. Their degree of realism has been an example strengthening my own courage considerably. And here I make no exception for writers such as Jack Provonsha and Richard Rice, who have had the boldness to even take up a discussion of the thought-provoking topic mentioned above.

Let me then stress this thing which has aroused my sincere admiration. Again and again I am overwhelmed by a feeling of thankfulness to God for the blessings our SDA heritage has had in store for us as students of Biblical philosophy. I do not ascribe that heritage of genuine realism so much to the ingenuity of our pioneers, but rather to God's miraculous intervention through the divine revelation coming to us graciously and gratuitously, directly from the Spirit of Prophecy.

So it also gives me great joy to observe how strongly the above-mentioned teachers, both of them entrusted with most influential positions within the frame-work of SDA education on the highest level, seem to assume as something almost self-evident a foundation of time-space realism, rarely to be found within most circles of Mainstream Protestantism. That tacitly assumed basis, from which both men take their point of departure is, evidently, just the clear philosophical notion which Christians need have no doubts about: The God of the Bible is a God having all His eternity in literal time. So when the Scriptures inform us that He has existed from everlasting and has known all there is to know, from everlasting, then that can NOT intelligently be understood in terms of barren idealistic timelessness, but quite concretely in meaningful terms of endlessness in time--millions and billions and trillions of years backward, just to choose one imperfect human way of expressing it.

In fact neither of these serious researchers just named, nor any other clearsighted Seventh-day Adventists, would have felt so tremendously impressed about God, if the way He managed that formidable longevity was simply by means of the poor trick invented by spiritualist idealism; in other words, the way pure formulas, or any impersonal abstractions, manage to "exist eternally". If this should happen to be the way you and I, as well, were supposed to have eternal life in the future (the platonic way), then we would hardly be impressed by the implication of the term salvation, would we? (See *Agape and Eros*, pp. 193-205.)

Oh no, Rice--to take him and his book first--obviously does not for a moment assume his God to be some sort of impersonal automaton, the Aristotelian "Prime Mover", who Himself is not moved one bit, either in His heart or in spatial respect. As far as the time element is concerned, whether applying to God or men, Rice has a basic realism that can hardly be questioned. Here he certainly has something precious in common with his teacher and colleague Provonsha. It gives such an indispensable meaningfulness to Christianity to know that God is in time--with you and me! He certainly enjoys heartily being with us in that realistic way, the Emmanuel way. We may quite intelligently entertain the notion that God has actually always been with us, with all his heart. Even during that eternity of His when we, as yet, did not have any literal existence, He was heartily engaged in preparing, moment by moment, an eternity in the future with us. Evidently He has been looking forward to that new eternity with you and me. We shall share with Him a life in time without end, and that even on the very same planet, given to us from the beginning: the Earth; that is, the Earth made new. At least I do think this childlike conception of God and His eternity is indispensable for Seventh-day Adventist realism. What a unique glory to have literal time and space in common with the Eternal One!

But if I must insist on making evident where I think Rice and Provonsha are convincingly right in pointing out God's fellowship with man, thanks to the wonderful realism the lives of the two parties (God and man) have in common, then I must be equally conscientious in pointing out where a certain Whiteheadian philosophy, entering upon the scene, causes the same authors' realism to break down miserably. That happens to any student of philosophy who takes the risk of pushing to an unwarranted extreme what is common to God and man, with respect to time and space.

The onesidedness we here may easily fall a victim to, consists in forgetting that after all God is God, and therefore quite different from man, or any other creature, in one decisive respect: He is not subject to the same limitations to which the dimensions of both time and space inevitably expose every creaturely being. In fact, if God were hopelessly circumscribed by the time element in His existence, that would mean a tragic failure in His ability to function as a dependable Creator. Being incapable of foreseeing, in detail, what turn things would take at any point of future developments would mean nothing less than a risk of exposing created beings to serious jeopardy all along the line. How could this convey to us the image of a God having all things under His control at any given moment?

Does the Bible present any scripture which must be interpreted to this effect? I have already referred to Psalm 90 by Moses. Please read once more what I say on page 126 about the thousand years which in God's sight are "but as yesterday when it is past or as a watch in the night." If this does not mean that our Creator is a God of pagan Greek timelessness, then it can mean just one thing. It must mean that He has a freedom of movement in this time-space world which finite creatures know nothing about. For they are precisely limited with regard to both time and space. It is just God's perfect overview over all events, past, present and future, that proves Him to be the infinitely superior One, the "Ancient of Days" for whom no secrets can ever exist.

According to Rice, however, time becomes the same unsurmountable barrier to God's free outlook as to man's. And notice, it is just the most decisive and significant things in men's future lives that escape His foreknowledge! Could there be a more illogical and unfortunate type of anthropomorphism than this?

So Rice's message to the world is a pretty sad one: God is not omniscient. Our current idea in this respect is a "misconception", foisted upon our minds by "conventional theology"! The most destiny-laden facts about an individual is a closed book, an unbreakable secret, even to the great God in heaven; that is, until the moment when Man, that unique being here below, has finally agreed to disclose them to Him!

And now what is the argument applied in order to make this theory plausible? It is not a new one. It is as old as speculative humanist philosophy itself.

But now, first a word about the motive for launching such a theory. I like to believe that this is most idealistic. As on so many previous occasions in the history of ideas, the intentions seem to be the very best. The positive purpose of making the theory available to wavering truth-seekers, is to put into their hands an efficient argument against those who ask this allegedly troublesome question to Christian meaningfulness: If God knew from the beginning that Lucifer and Adam would fall into sin, why did He create them? The answer provided by Rice and Provonsha, as well as by numerous speculative theologians before them, is very simple: God did not know!

My question here is bound to be: In the first place: Is that solution of the question necessary? In the second place, even if it were, would there perhaps be some serious side-effects resulting from the suggested remedy? Would the "patient" more certainly die of those than of the malady they were supposed to cure? I have already mentioned one "side effect" of the theory which would suffice, all by itself, to make it most dubious, namely the weighty complaints which might, intelligently, be raised against a Creator who embarked upon the adventurous exploit of creating a world of conscious beings, without knowing with any amount of certainty what the final result would be like.

Of course it can't be denied that we are here confronted with most intriguing and most thrilling questions, every single one of us. Does God know at this early moment exactly what is going to happen to a human being like you and me? Can He know today--and foretell at any time--who among us will accept salvation and who will be lost?

Rice's answer is no, no, no!

The author of the "Openness of God" gives to this answer the appearance of some sort of axiom; so a matter of self-evidence, which is not in need of any proof. It must be taken for granted by the very nature of its "inherent logicalness." In order to convince us of its ineluctability he repeats over and over again one categorical argument: If man has been given true freedom of choice in his deepest life--and Christianity informs us that he has--then no moral action he will have to decide for himself in the future can be predicted in the present. If it has not yet been determined, it is no actual reality at all. Even God cannot know it.

It is suggested that simple realism demands our acceptance of this affirmation as a matter of course. In order to make this truth about God seem less restrictive in terms of describing God as a limited Being, the blunt statement of God's non-omniscience is couched in expressions such as the following: God certainly does know all there is to be known. But the future choices of a human being, equipped with freedom of will, just are not. And no one can be supposed to know what is non-existent.

It is made to appear as if knowing those future choices would just be a sign of shameful unreality. We should not expect God to distinguish Himself as such a Master Unrealist.

The final formulation of the only conclusion available seems to be this: You cannot logically have both man's volitional freedom and God's unlimited foreknowledge at the same time. This is the "great truth" untiringly pronounced with the impressive force of axiomatic finality.

I agree wholeheartedly with the writer that the topic he has selected for his book is a most serious one. It should not be pushed under the rug.

"Our understanding of God has enormous practical significance. What we think about God, and how we respond to Him, are closely related. An inaccurate view of God can have disastrous effects on personal religious experience." (The Openness of God, p.8).

This is an awe-inspiring truth about our writers' willingness to write and our publishers' willingness to publish. I am trying to respond faithfully to that challenge.

### **Omnipotence and Omniscience in Theological Literature, Past and Present**

In my book, *The Maligned God*, I have discussed at some length certain modern theological writings similar to that of Richard Rice, relative to another capital point in God's essential attributes, namely His almight. (See Chapter III: *The Myth of a Demiurgus Emerging Once More*).

I did not at that time think it possible that a corresponding case of heterodox publication would happen in my own church. Now, if we are to have an open forum, it ought not be a onesided openness. I have been expecting some kind of publication expressing contrary views about God. I have not seen it so far. Hence the present initiative on my part. I have felt duty-bound to produce, to the best of my ability, counter-arguments to Richard's philosophy. To begin with, that may remain in the field of human



logicalness, which seems to be the main line he himself has chosen. But I would never dare to stay too long in that field. It might very well happen, you see, that my philosophical sagacity would abruptly come to a dead end. Still that sophisticated battery of philosophical demonstration, managed with such dexterity by my dear colleague and brother, would not make me all that unhappy. A true vindication of God, the great Maligned One, is not dependent on sophisticated arguments of sharpwitted human philosophy. The simple testimony of the Holy Scripture is more than sufficient in any case of this kind. The pioneers of Seventh-day Adventism never found it difficult to establish the fact that, in plain Biblical theology, the idea of God's unlimited foreknowledge on the one hand and the great gracious gift of God to man, that is, volitional freedom on the other hand, go side by side. Was the Spirit of Prophecy un-Biblical in proclaiming that there is no limit to God's omniscience, His all-inclusive knowledge?

I know no one who, more emphatically than Ellen White, points out the precious fact about freedom of choice in man. At the same time I do not know anyone who, more emphatically than her, points out that God's foreknowledge is without any limitation:

"God and Christ knew from the beginning, of the apostasy of Satan, and of the fall of Adam through the deceptive power of the apostate." (Review and Herald, April 5, 1906.)

In Desire of Ages that plain statement has become particularly explicit:

"From the beginning, God and Christ knew of the apostasy of Satan, and of the fall of man through the deceptive power of the apostate. God did not ordain that sin should exist, but He foresaw its existence, and made provision to meet the terrible emergency." (p.22)

In his appendix, Rice shows that he perfectly well knows Ellen White to go clearly against his views in passages of that kind. And where, then, does he find the courage to go against that "conventional viewpoint," as he terms it, of old-fashioned Seventh-day Adventist theology, characterizing it as deficient in logical thought? Of course we must now have a more careful look at Richard's own pattern of logic, and finally compare that to the pattern of logic we find in Biblical realism.

It is a dominant idea with Rice that the future would have to be "definite" and the reality "closed" in "any view of absolute foreknowledge". By that he means that freedom of choice would be excluded. He thinks this would mean a return to pagan Greek philosophy. Accepting the idea of God's perfect omniscience would simply be tantamount to accepting the old Aristotelian ideas of a STATIC world of God. Is that true? By no means. I would freely admit that Aristotle, in spite of his battle against some of the most meaningless extremes in Plato's idealism, still remained nothing but a poor pagan platonist, in the last analysis. (See my work *Man--the Indivisible*) The Bible's conception of God is poles apart from that. It is a dynamic world glowing with personalism and meaningfulness. But does that prevent it from speaking quite categorically about an absolutely omniscient God? The God who has revealed Himself to us in His word is most eager to agree wholeheartedly with Richard Rice, regarding a generous freedom of choice granted to man. But does ever that force Him to speak in terms of doubt or ambiguity about the degree of foreknowledge He Himself has at His disposal at any moment? I for my part know no single passage in Holy Writ that could be interpreted in that direction?

Who then is consistent in his elementary logic in this matter? Is it our God in heaven or is it Richard Rice?

This must be a question worth going into more thoroughly. Or can Seventh-day Adventists tolerate being looked upon as platonic spiritualists for the simple reason that they are known to have a firm faith in both the foreknowledge of God and man's volitional freedom at the same time?

### **The Confusing Common-Place Reasoning of Equating Foreknowledge with Predetermination**

There is something strange happening, not only to Richard Rice, but obviously to every one of us. We are so prone to commit an almost unbelievable error. It does not help one bit to try and camouflage that error by means of sophisticated philosophical expressions. It still remains the basic misconception which invariably led even theologians of outstanding intellectual capacities to fall into the meaningless pit of the doctrine of predestination. Again and again human beings succumb to trends of confusing the notion of a simple foreknowledge with some sort of active determination of the thing known. Of course it is precisely when the thing foreknown happens to be something seriously evil that this confusion tends to manifest its regrettable consequences. A Creator who knows that His creature will take a bad turn, and finally be lost, is immediately imagined as predestining that the creature is to be lost.

Rice too speaks symptomatically about a certain fixation or predetermination of a person's destiny as the inevitable result of a mere principle of foreknowledge with God. Don't let us be too hard on Calvin. He was a human being like you and me and Richard Rice. So he was liable to the same stereotypes of human thought.

I sometimes try to counteract this kind of spurious reasoning in my classes by an illustration which some will despise as too simple indeed. I ask my students if they think they will leave our classroom the very moment when the bell goes. "Of course we will," is their answer. "Well, gentlemen, I foresee you will, but do you think it is my foresight that causes you to leave so resolutely?" "No, sir, we would leave whether you foresaw it or not. We have other things to take care of than your classes." (Of course, that is

no more than I should have been equally well aware of all the time, and I have no reason to be offended by the fact that in reality I play a very limited role in my students' lives, after all.)

Well, the straight question our present discussion has to face unflinchingly must be the following: Does God's foreknowledge about good and evil, however complete that knowledge may be, in any reasonable way, constitute an active force producing that good or that evil?

Do we realize what a sad misunderstanding may be the final result of such an erroneous trend of thinking?

Again and again the old question is raised by unreasonable creatures like you and me:

If God is Omniscient, Ought He Not to be Able to Create Only Such Persons About Whom He Could Foresee That They Would be Saved, Rather Than Lost?

Or let us just as well render that idea, word by word, as Rice has formulated it:

"If God could foresee infallibly every future event and every future decision, then He must have known in advance which creatures would remain loyal to Him and which would disobey. Consequently God could have prevented evil, simply by creating beings whom He foresaw would always choose good. The world would thus have been populated with morally free beings who would never, God knows, misuse their freedom to reject His authority. There could have been both creaturely freedom and complete moral security."

Are you not impressed? Be quite frank now. I for my part have hardly ever failed to be somewhat stirred by this classical argument,--an argument definitely directed against the fairness of a fully omniscient Creator-God, as the Bible clearly describes Him. Is my troubled thinking, however, in reality, due to an element of true intelligence in this case?

Is it not bizarre--incredible--how easily our human intellect can be led astray to the point of finding this piece of reasoning intelligent? Maybe no more than a couple of minutes ago you may have agreed fairly well with me that God's generous introduction into man's life of a marvelous endowment (the free will) is bound to imply a definite either-or, an absolutely inevitable risk to both the creature and His Creator; that is, in man's case, a tremendous option, simply leaving a most serious burden of full responsibility for the outcome, on man's shoulders. --And then, suddenly, you seem to have lost everything you had so recently arrived at. The entire serious logic of volitional freedom has been left in the lurch. It has been cruelly sabotaged, as it were, in favor of opposite trends of thinking, trends of a definitely disordered fantasy.

We have suddenly stooped down, both you and I, to a strange maneuver. We are suddenly involved in cutting the perfect totality of an indispensable alternative option into "two halves", so to speak. Of those two we go on keeping the one, while we seem to have no hesitation about throwing the other right into the ditch.

Dear friend, what has here, once more, been the underlying spuriousness of our disrupted thinking? Simply this: we suddenly decide that God's mere foreknowledge, all by itself, ought to be perfectly sufficient to settle the whole matter. Foreknowledge is obviously now assumed to intervene actively and spectacularly, just like some sort of modern *deus ex machina*, once so familiar to the tragedies of classical antiquity. That "god" there happened to be the last and only hope, when man's affairs tended to become hopelessly entangled. The *deus ex machina* would take care of the whole mess, preventing the ultimate calamity in the nick of time.

Our present case certainly is not the first occasion on which man has magically endeavored to escape from the dilemmas of his crooked ways, simply by way of adding a corresponding portion of crooked thinking. We just introduce regular magic as the great boon, our last infallible solution. And we claim, angrily, that God should have availed Himself of that kind of magic intervention in order to relieve us of our personal responsibility for the outcome of an individual creaturely choice. Why did He fail to take away all risks from our lives?

Is this a worthy type of solution? No, to religion and philosophy alike, it is an absolutely unworthy hoax. The magic *deus ex machina* may enjoy great favor on the level of romantic literature with its confusing showers of subjectivistic reasoning, but it can never, never be accepted as legal tender within the realms of Christian theology; that is, Christian thinking.

If you and I today have the boldness to formulate sentences pertaining to the nature of the Eternal One, open statements that go straight against everything the Bible states about God, thus reducing divinity to mere humanity, we just do not know what a dangerous business we are engaged in. For we will always end up being convinced that our own special pattern of thinking must be impeccable.

If Rice's ideas about God were right, how could God, hundreds of years before the birth of Cyrus, prophecy with such unwavering certainty about this individual person, that he was one day going to do the eternal Ruler's bidding in a historical context of supreme significance? Or, to take a short-term prophecy we all know so well, how could Jesus foretell with such infallible foresight that Peter would deny Him three times before the cock managed to crow once, on that memorable morning?

I tell you ahead of time, said Christ to His disciples, in order that when it comes to pass, you should know for sure that "I am He"; that is, the Omniscient God of heaven. The first Christians learning

the details about Peter on that occasion, could not fail to be convinced. Even for a limited span of time like that, no one with less than an absolute degree of foreknowledge, could ever have saved his reputation of being an infallible Prophet.

Provonsha suggests that Christ's ability to foretell so accurately what would happen to Peter (his obstinate denial), might be accounted for by His accurate knowledge of Peter's general character, since He could read that man's heart at any given present moment. Peter's actions in the future might be regarded as "necessitated by his imperfect character" ("Freedom and Foreknowledge," a handout to classes in theology at Loma Linda University, p. 12). What does that introduction of a "necessity" mean here? Does it mean that where there is no getting away from the evidence of perfect divine foreknowledge, the expositor is forced to return, after all, to the notion of a non-freedom of the human will ("servum arbitrium"), a notion he has been fighting bravely and most admirably in all the rest of his writings? Is it all that important to ban the suspicion that volitional freedom and divine foreknowledge can exist side by side?

By the way I shall have to admit that Provonsha does not confine his introduction of the Spirit of Prophecy to the obscure corner of an appendix in his discussion of FREEDOM AND FOREKNOWLEDGE (OR MAYBE MORE CORRECTLY, IN THIS CASE: FREEDOM VERSUS FOREKNOWLEDGE). In fact his essay is so teeming with quotations from Ellen White's writings that you might be tempted to think she is the main source of Jack's ideas about this topic. He gives ample space to pointed passages like the one in *Desire of Ages*, already referred to: "From the beginning, God and Christ knew of the apostasy of Satan, and of the fall of man through the deceptive power of the apostate. God did not ordain that sin should exist, but He foresaw its existence, and made provision to meet this terrible emergency." Here, however, Provonsha has recourse to an interpretation of the expression "from the beginning" which bears every sign of what I have often called the "adult spirit". The "child"

Ellen White, even if she had lived to be 100 years, would never have managed to be sufficiently sophisticated to think in categories of that order. She was not one of those modern Westerners who, in Bonhoeffer's terms, have "come of age". So I would definitely call Provonsha's interpretation of her words a Reinterpretation. "Again," he says, "we may ask, what is meant by the term 'beginning'" Provonsha is making reference to something he has said on page 8 about a well-known OT statement that God knows the end from the beginning.

"But from what beginning? Surely not God's beginning since He has none. And yet, if there is a point in time short of eternity, where He becomes able to foretell this end, the traditional argument is demolished. Might we not be able to say, 'knows the end from the beginning' insofar as the end is in or a consequence of a beginning." (Ibid. p. 8.)

What is this trend toward reinterpreting plain Biblical language? Is it part and parcel of Christian realism? Not the way I have come to understand it. Rather it is a vain subterfuge.

I am glad that I here have an opportunity to prepare something very important I have to say later on, about some incredible developments of recent date toward what some critics, originally springing out from circles of the very core of an old-fashioned Seventh-day Adventism, call by the rather ambivalent name of Sabbatarianism.

I see my brother in the faith and colleague Jack Provonsha as a fairly typical exponent of an attitude which a large number of our learned theologians today are gradually adopting. You may feel awkwardly perplexed when you try to evaluate some of these people. On the one hand they may manifest a warm appreciation of something as radically characteristic of Seventh-day Adventism as Ellen White's writings. On the other hand they may go squarely against most essential points of the explicit realism contained in those writings.

What does this ambiguity mean? I assume that most readers of *Insight Magazine* have found a recent article by Provonsha (or rather an interview with him) comfortingly Christian. It has helped me to understand that interesting personality still better than ever before. Here is a man who expresses a heartily sincere desire for Christian fellowship, I may safely say Seventh-day Adventist fellowship. To the surprise of some he even proclaims that he considers himself to "be in the mainstream of Adventism", as the interviewer's expression goes.

And then he immediately goes on to express something which I assume to be right on target. In my book entitled *Omega II: The Satanic Dynamics of Pagan Philosophies, Infiltrating the Endtime Church* I speak about this at great length under the classical title of SYNTHESIS, a wonder-making device in modern Western philosophy which is expected to reconcile the most irreconcilable opposites in the holy name of philosophy. Our old teachers have taught us in a way that has certainly left its deep imprint upon our minds and hearts. But let me now come back to what Provonsha adds immediately after having assured us that he considers himself to be in mainstream Adventism:

"I am also committed to the notion that language must always be updated. The way in which we express our truths must be kept contemporary or we'll cease to really talk to people. I feel that it is my duty to see that the thought forms and language continue to express contemporary ways of looking at things. Many Adventists do not understand the essence of their message; they simply know its language. To them, if you have changed the language, you have changed the message. I'm afraid that many who have

committed themselves to the church have done so at a much too superficial level. The essence of what's involved in the doctrines such as that of the investigate judgment and the heavenly sanctuary has not been well understood."

Maybe we shall soon find out what this speech actually means. Hopefully it is something better than that barren humanism we are all tempted to espouse these days. With that wish I have come to the conclusion of my present chapter.

Why Are we Tempted to Find Something so Fascinating and Attractive in Certain Definitely Unbiblical Conceptions about God?

As a general rule, why do we human beings seem so anxious to have a God who does not know our future, rather than one who knows it intimately? This might very well be just another case of a well-known urge in man's inmost nature: Our self-dependence and our insistence on personal sovereignty in all things seems to be threatened to the same extent that another Person knows all about us. Man does not want anyone else than himself on the throne of his life. This is what inspires humanism to behave in the strange ways it usually does.

In our present case that type of reaction in man is of course fundamentally nonsensical. It is just ridiculous to imagine that God's total foreknowledge about us could do us real harm in any possible way; the more so as we ought to be familiar enough with the fact that God's character is tender mercy, harmoniously blended with perfect justice. His eye of omniscient providence, constantly resting upon us, ought rather to fill us with gladness and trust. For it is the warranty par excellence that no efforts will be spared for the purpose of bringing us safely into the promised harbor. The only thing that can fail is our own willingness to be led in.

Now, how does the theory launched by Provonsha and Rice compare to this? To tell the truth, what they draw up in front of our wondering eyes, is the most meaningless image of God ever invented. It is a God who, like a blindfolded madman, has launched out on an adventure whose eventual success or tragic failure He had no qualifications to foretell. And all this is done in a vain attempt to meet the slanderous tales of wicked detractors who shout that "if God has the foreknowledge He boasts about, and still does not save all those whom he has created, then He is worse than the devil himself." Is it necessary for Christians to accommodate such detractors, just stammering: "Oh, please excuse our doctrinal mistake. We retract everything we have said about God's perfect foreknowledge. Of course He is not really omniscient."

What will happen to us if we yield to such an act of cowardliness? Take our situation today. You know what inevitably happens to God's people on earth at present with more seriousness than ever before. They are faced with passages in His Word in which He goes to the "strange extravagance" of foretelling events of tremendous eschatological magnitude, involving the most hidden depths of human hearts. What if you and I, in the face of such a challenge, should say haughtily: Whence does that God derive the authority to proclaim such things? Have not our most learned theologians proved that prophecy is a virtual impossibility?

The Case Parapsychology Compared to the Case of the "Openness-of-God" Philosophy of Rice and Provonsha

A double fact of the strangest kind has overwhelmed me, as I have now had opportunity to compare two groups of learned researchers of the present day. One group is that of modern parapsychology, whose fantastic conclusions I have tried to evaluate with all the realistic knowledge at my disposal, that is, in the light of Biblical theology. (The Science of the Occult. Its Revolutionizing Findings about Precognition, Seen in the Light of Christian Realism). What is the conviction at which those men of modern science have arrived, after a long-term program of intensive research in university laboratories, ranging from the West Coast of the United States to the Ural Mountains of the USSR? It is simply that MAN possesses, in himself, as a natural endowment, the wonderful ability to go beyond any barriers, conventionally known, of time-space limitation!

In other words, the fabulous thing has happened that MAN is now being crowned as the great precognition master.

About the very same time, however, something at least equally strange is taking place in another field of most sophisticated academic study. Men of serious Biblical research, concentrating their quest around the nature of God, arrive at the conviction that the God of Heaven does not possess the ability of breaking through the limiting barriers of time. He does not have a present knowledge of what is to happen in the future to the essential destinies of personal minds. Thus He is not entitled to speak knowledgeably about this.

What a fantastic shift of the roles attributed to MAN and GOD respectively. Could you think of a more audacious attempt at tearing God down from His heavenly throne, and putting man upon it?

What has surprised me most about parapsychology is not its proud claims regarding man's congenital gift of precognition (just another term for foreknowledge). No, it is the failing response, on the part of Christian thinkers and Christian scholars, by and large. Why are they so silent in the face of such a

sledge hammer hurled against the rock-bottom philosophy of the Bible, applicable to all fields of realistic knowledge?

And now you should also be able to guess what surprise me most, as regards the formidable sledge hammers -- one after the other in rapid succession -- having been hurled out against the most precious and absolutely crucial corner stones of our faith as a people. What is here happening, right in our midst, is unprecedented. But worst of all is our individual failure to react.

Are we just cowards? Or do we consciously and intentionally connive with the enemy?

I must refer my readers to the above-mentioned book *The Science of the Occult*, dealing realistically with those "revolutionizing findings" about precognition, which have shaken the minds of serious laboratory researchers of late. It is in the light of Christian realism, that I have dealt with this "impossible problem." And that is the writing in which I have dealt most thoroughly with what the Bible says, unmistakably, about the extent of God's knowledge. Of course time does constitute a realistic dimension in God's existence. Here, too, the Bible is clear as noonday in its realism. But not for one moment is the idea permitted to emerge that time rises up in front of God as a sort of barricade preventing the Creator from having a perfect knowledge of what the future of His created world is going to be like. On the contrary, precisely that perfect foreknowledge is triumphantly brandished as the sign par excellence of God being God.

After having dwelt for such a regrettably long time on this modern denial of God being God, we shall now pass on to something gloriously positive, namely what the Sabbath commandment in the Bible reveals in a magnificently logical way in terms of God being FREE. There is nothing more marvelously inspiring to the student of God's character, as the absolutely Incomparable One, than the FREEDOM of God. Let us get to know the supreme way in which the astonishing philosophy of the Holy Scriptures manifest the Character of that divine freedom. You will be surprised to discover how it is revealed in the very formulation of the Sabbath texts. Remarkably enough, that is a formulation modern logicians of our world today would qualify as illogical. And then, upon deeper reflection, it is seen to possess a logic without flaw.

But now first I want you to see, through a simple illustration, what the evident result would be if God were doomed to be circumscribed by the barriers of unfreedom that humanist philosophers have imposed upon him.

I just want to take the case of a miracle to which the gospel of John gives great prominence. In his 11th chapter John treats the happening in a way that clearly indicates his intention to gradually move toward a climax of dramatic tension. That gospel writer is the only one of the four, by the way, who mentions the event at all, which fact has led some super-learned expositors to infer that it can hardly have been a commonly known event at all, and accordingly of dubious historical value.

We prefer to have implicit faith in what the Bible says. And what does it say about what happened to Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary? He simply died. That has happened to many people. The remarkable fact of the present case, however, was that he was raised from the dead, right in front of a large assembly of people.

Now has it ever occurred to you what a "dangerous act" Jesus here ventured upon, if certain philosophizing theologians are right about God's limited foreknowledge? Where did He "find the courage", the matchless self-assurance, to wake up to new life -- and to the new human risks of perdition -- a person who was already safe for the final event of translation at the time of the great resurrection. His sister Martha expresses very clearly her firm faith in that safety there: "I know he will arise in the resurrection of that last day." (John 11:24). But it is equally clear that she is all the time suggesting to Jesus the possibility, on His part, of an act of resurrection of a more immediate and most extraordinary kind. "I know that whatever you ask of God, that He will give you." (verse 22).

Does Martha think seriously about a certain "openness" to be feared in the case at hand. I am speaking about an openness to which living persons in our world are always exposed; that is, the openness toward two alternative options. Let us not deny the danger that manifestly exists for any human being to whom is given the opportunity of a prolonged life span in this world of hazardous possibilities? Still we do not blame Martha. We know what a great balm it would mean to her heartache to have her brother back in the family again. We can easily forgive her if her suggestion should turn out to be an act of thoughtlessness.

But now, what about Jesus. If Provonsha and Rice are right in their "God talk" (their philosophizing reasonings about God's possibilities, or rather impossibilities, of knowing with certainty what any particular human being will do in the future, regarding the most decisive issues of life), then the question is bound to arise -- and it is bound to be a question filled to the brim with secret blame: How in the world could Jesus take upon Himself the responsibility of waking up from the dead even one single of the numerous human creatures He actually did wake up at the time of His earthly ministry? That is the implicit question.

Could a blame of this kind, even just tacitly implied, be anything short of regular blasphemy?

There is one thing we should know: If God were without a perfect foreknowledge, He would also be without the ability to intervene in a fully satisfactory way at any time that intervention was needed. He would be at the mercy of unforeseeable events. He would be a hopeless victim of the most formidable enemy of all freedom: AUTOMATISM.

One Biblical concept diametrically opposite to that of automatism, in terms of humanist scientism (determinism), is divine providence. And what happens to that Providence (with a capital P, making it something very close to a synonym for God Himself), at the moment when the openness-of-God theory is accepted? Providence turns into a nonentity. For when the Bible's God says: I shall "lead you with my eye", then that would have to be a leadership made meaningless or impossible. In fact, how could an eye made partially blind, blind to the most decisive moral events in a creature's life in the future, give any leadership (guidance) whatsoever in terms of "seeing ahead of time", or "looking forward" to something. For that, you see, is what "providence" means.

Ironically, the good intentions of the openness-of-God theorists have turned into the very opposite of what they intended. They evidently were most eager to take away the curse of barren automatism that seemed to be brooding over our poor space-time world. We can understand such humanist theologians perfectly. They are unable to find meaningfulness in either stoic fatalism or in Calvinist predestination. However, their humanism turned out to be a tragic solution to the "problem." The result of their "remedy" has proved more meaningless than anything else. Their ingenious theory simply prevents God from intervening providentially. If that non-intervention were a logical necessity, as they claim, then our surrender to automatism would have to be complete.

Would it seem likely that we, as Christian realists, could have much to gain by going to pagan philosophers, spiritualist and pantheist humanists, in our efforts to vindicate the maligned God? (It will be my duty, in another place, to go more deeply into the surprising story of how -- and why -- Alfred North Whitehead, a most gifted theorist of Occidental philosophy, became a 20th century heir of Platonic idealism and spiritualism, eventually going into the same cryptic type of downright pantheism which I have ascribed to Plato in my chapter: "The Genius of Platonism", in *Man -- the Indivisible*. That is a case of philosophical acrobacy which our usual historians pay little or no attention to. We should here be aware of one important fact in the history of ultra-modern Western philosophy: It is to Plato, the father of Western spiritualism, Whitehead attributes the discovery that "the divine element in the world is to be conceived as persuasive agency and not as coercive agency." Of course this may sound very meaningful. It would seem to provide a halo of the greatest honor to both God, Plato and Whitehead. The great British philosopher praises this hypothesis of an exclusive persuasion in God as one of the "greatest intellectual discoveries in the history of religion" (*Adventures of Ideas*, p. 213.) At first glance, the ingenious theodicy of philosophizing theologians of this class may appear to exempt God from responsibility for evil. But does it really? I think the very opposite is a demonstrable fact.

We do of course all know what ultimate escape the spiritualist thinker manages to find in order to still save his own weird concept of meaningfulness. That is the famous theology called "universalism": The absolute goodness of God is imagined to come to His rescue in the nick of time. God is "so good" that He will -- automatically so to speak -- find a way to save even the devil himself in the last round.

Little do those super-humanists realize that, with this final trick of their salvation philosophy, they have reached the bottom level of all irrationality. The last ingredients of a necessary JUSTICE, as an elementary reality in God's Agape, have then been cast overboard. (Please see *The Part of the Story You Were Never Told About AGAPE AND EROS*, p. 72, ff: "Does Agape Explode All Known Barriers of Law and Justice?", and particularly pp. 145-167: "The Fable about a Separation of Law and Gospel" -- Nygren's (and the hyper-heretic Marcion's) daring suggestion is, that we have to face the fact of a veritable offence (an undeniable scandal) in Christ's parable about the stern sentence passed by the Great Judge, the Owner of the vineyard, regarding the salary to be paid to two different categories of workers). "The offence only ceases when the principle of justice itself is eliminated as applicable to the religious relationship." This is what the famous author of the first modern dissertation on "Agape and Eros", Anders Nygren, dared to pronounce. Are you and I equally scandalized to see stern justice having its proper place right in the core of God's Agape? Are we bound for the fairyland of universalist pansalvation theology? Are we looking forward to the magic of automatic atonement (at-one-ment with God)?

#### The Universality of the Dead Universe

A term most closely related to that of "eternity" in the pagan platonic sense, is that of the "universal". So this is the proper time to evaluate that as well. Let us then courageously resume the questionable part of Father Lagrange's previously mentioned assertion, in which he stated the "necessity" for the Church to modify certain points in the Decalogue "in order to give it a character just as universal as that of the gospel".

Again I ask, in what respect is Sunday "more universal" in its fundamental character than the Sabbath?

I do feel, with Alfred Vaucher, that it would be considerably more correct to say: In instituting Sunday in the place of the Sabbath, the Church was anxious to give the fourth commandment a character "just as universal as the sun cult".

Just how was the sun cult "universal" then? Of what type is the universality of the sun cult? My answer: It is, and always has been, the universality of a dead universe.

What do I mean by this? Let me be a little more explicit: A sensational turning-point in the history of Christendom happened when its members became "adult". That is my way of expressing a fateful event in human lives. Some will call it different names and maybe also evaluate it very differently: Men reach an epoch where they "come of age." And that certainly happened to Christendom a long time before the days of Bonhoeffer. Very early indeed Christianity managed to establish itself comparatively well as a "world religion", really able to "compete" --in an external, political way, the way that men understand and admire -- with other world religions. The event coincides fairly well with the triumphant establishment, at about Constantine's time, of compulsory universal Sunday observance, in a world in which a sun-worshipping type of paganism had for a long, long, time been prevalent.

In fact Christianity, as such, had this one single chance of asserting itself in its life-and-death battle against its constant rival, paganism: It must maintain its proverbial peculiarity (see Titus 2:14: "a peculiar people"). On the other hand, paganism had only one chance of saving its proud, boastful "universality", its precious prerogative of not being "local" or "transient". That was by systematically levelling down that very peculiarity, in its rival, the newly emerging Christian world religion. In other words, it was just by means of elevating a stupefying compromise as the great governing principle. The important thing was to take away from Christianity its very differentness, reduce it to an impersonal dummy. This is exactly what it takes to become "universal" in the vain pagan sense of the term. It is very much the same means and the same goal that have inspired ecumenism of various types and at sundry times. But why, then, is man so surprisingly anxious to save his "universality" in this cheap sense of the term, -- almost at any cost?

Here I feel rationally compelled to stick more closely than ever to my previously stated theory: Man in our culture, the most unhappy and internally disrupted being in history, is torn asunder by two opposite forces: One is his still functioning sense of duty toward self-surrender, -- a total submission of self to God. For this same man -- recognize it or not -- did have his historic encounter with Jesus of Nazareth. The other force in his life is his never vanquished pagan desire for self-indulgence and self-glorification.

So it is by no means his sober-minded realism (the definite choice, marked by an "either-or"), that has gained the upper hand in man. It is rather his sentimental day-dream of wavering, wishful thinking that has won the day and now bosses him around. But that undecisiveness causes him to opt for any trail in the wilderness that may happen to appear least menacing to his human desire for momentary peace of mind.

One thing is sure: he has obviously selected his "gods" from among those who are most notorious for their flat anthropomorphic mediocrity. He likes to make sure that they are not too different from himself -- and by no means greater than himself. Above all they should not distinguish themselves through any form of salient personality. Such traits in them would make him definitely uneasy. For his secret desire is to be a god himself, a god among other gods, --primus inter pares. This self-deification is a phenomenon I have already alluded to (and shall describe more closely in another chapter) as a curious type of "theology" pervading all paganism.

And what was always man's easiest way to make sure of his own "divinity"? I have found it precisely in that ultimate "democratization" of the "divine", realized by pantheism. Universum turns out to be the one great god, penetrating everywhere; and what a gentle, harmless god that is! Humanity has finally arrived at the last summit, its blissful dream of pantheist automatism.

And we, also, have finally arrived at the salient point of our present demonstration: This is precisely what I meant by my expression, the universality of a "dead universe":

You will have no difficulty in realizing what an outstandingly pleasant god the Sun must be: he happens to be the most conspicuous phenomenon of that "comfortingly automatic" universe of which man hails himself as another part,--an "equally divine" part. For the sun, you see, is, even in all its splendor, a phenomenon fairly undisturbing to that "blessed" calm and regularity that has, from times immemorial, been the ideal of pagan thinking. Its proverbial clock-work fidelity --or let us rather say uniformity and monotony, in order not to become too personal -- is suggestive of such an "admirable" degree of non-intervention; and the "greatest thing of all", impersonalism.

Admittedly, even with the sun, the sham god above all sham gods, irregularities are not entirely excluded. For instance, occasional eclipses do occur "once in a blue moon." They certainly were not always particularly reassuring occurrences to folks in primitive lands or in primitive times. In many dramatic texts from ancient history we vividly perceive how the usual feeling of man's "astrophysical security" was suddenly shaken when those glorious majesties of the sky (the sun and the moon) began to indulge in some capricious mood of "behaving differently." To be quite frank, from the dawn of our era,

among average heathens such "natural irregularities" as eclipses have provoked a consternation unknown to the genuine Christian, the man dependent on God. Why was there no similar sudden terror in his soul? Simply because, with the Christian, intervention is an expected phenomenon, the normal phenomenon. It is even hailed as a desirable phenomenon, the one great phenomenon we need if we are not to perish! The historical records of Christendom at times of dire adversity are uncontradictable evidence of this.

But a main concern of pagan religions was invariably the opposite. (I have already alluded to that peculiarity in my characterization of modern pantheism, as compared to the common type of idolatry in more primitive lands.) Even at their best, pagan religions as a whole appear to have had one great preoccupation: the negative one of just pacifying one's gods, or rendering them harmless, as far as feasible. This supreme aim is pursued by means of mystic rites and incantations, sometimes even by means of human sacrifices. More "advanced" non-Christian religions have fairly different means, but the goals are the same.

It all concurs to tell an almost incredible tale, the tale of a definite and most desperate pleading. A pleading for "divine" neutrality. For non-intervention! The virtual content of that pathetic supplication is simply that the gods -- if gods there be -- may please abstain from interfering with the lives of humans!

Hardly ever do we see the strange undercurrent of pagan disruption in human minds more glaringly revealed than in times when some threatening "freakishness" on the part of a higher and personally intervening Authority, far above the "innocuous deadness" of an insensible universe, suddenly seems to undo all customary theories of an "automatic uniformity", otherwise elevated to the dignity of an axiom for that universe. The week of creation was one case of such an intervention in our world. And what a majestic intervention it was, both cosmologically and spiritually speaking, on the part of a personal God. The second coming of Christ will be another one. It is contrary to the very spirit of Holy Writ to water down, or spiritualize away, the shaking drama (that is, the realism) of those interventions. To do so is to tell God that He is not considered as a real friend, far from it! Politicians who feel that their country is threatened, are often anxious to have their potential enemies sign treaties of non-intervention. Do we men consider God as our great "potential enemy"? If not, then why are we so eager to take away from our image of Him one of His main characteristics: the great mark of the God who intervenes -- the Sabbath!

Simple realism forces us to say that the "hope" of the genuine pagan, whatever his cultural level, is a desperate hope. It is, indeed, the hope of Nirvana indifference, of ultimate "neutrality".

Shall I then venture upon a psychological interpretation which may rationally cover the evident facts of intelligent men's strikingly hostile attitude toward the Sabbath commandment, the clearest order of the God who intervenes?

Frankly speaking, I cannot arrive at any other than this one: It is a desperate urge to lull oneself into a daydream "reality": the "status quo" of sheer wishful thinking. It is the vain attempt, on the part of theorizing and generalizing pagan idealism, to impose its abstractions as the exclusive values,--even at the expense of life itself. "Circulos meos noli tangere", says the blind stubbornness of that intellectualistic exclusivism of a pagan pride. "Don't touch my circles!"

Note that those circles had been drawn already by the "eternal ken" of philosophizing humanity. So they should not be interfered with by any other intelligent force.

At proper intervals man makes particular ex-cathedra enunciations about his own infallible autonomy in all matters of moral behavior in his life. Evidently that is when he feels a particular need of assuring to his own heart that he is "a law unto himself." But right in the midst of those boastfully ringing votes of self-confidence there are audible overtones of what is most vexing in all extreme fits of self-consciousness. What is that secret fear still haunting the minds of past masters in human ethics? It is obviously a lurking anxiety lest some mysterious element may after all have escaped from the loosely knitted framework of the theoretical schema of eternal moral obligations universally embraced by the keenest human minds.

The God of biblical legislation has constantly been accused of being a tyrant. But what about the tyranny devised by human ethicists at the moment when they launch their definitely spiritualistic imperative: "See to it that you do conform to a universal principle of perfect automatism in your moral life."

The trend and the underlying motive here should be clear as noonday to the watchful eye of the historian of ideas, enlightened by Christianity. Every token of a personal interference on the part of God, the truly Autonomous One, is received by a gentile world with visible displeasure, nay with open protest. That is invariably seen to be the response of a humanity saturated with the spirit of self-agrandizement

Would it be preposterous then to draw this conclusion: If the Sabbath is the adequate symbol of a personal creatures' most personal meeting with a most personal God, then Sunday is bound to be the symbol of personality-fearing idolater's most impersonal meeting with a most impersonal idol. In one word, it is man's wilful encounter with automatism, as the great favorite god of this world.



2Mere Christianity, 1964, p. 141.

3Ibid., p. 142.

4Lewis has an interesting illustration making the difference between God's eternity and man's time clear: "Suppose I am writing a novel. I write, 'Mary laid down her work; next moment came a knock at the door!' For Mary who has to live in the imaginary time of my story there is no interval between putting down the work and hearing the knock. But I, who am Mary's maker, do not live in that imaginary time at all. Between writing the first half of that sentence and the second, I might sit down for three hours and think steadily about Mary. I could think about Mary as if she were the only character in the book, and for as long as I please, and the hours I spent in doing so would not appear in Mary's time (the time inside the story) at all." Ibid., p. 142.

5Ibid., p. 144.

6George W. Forell, *The Protestant Faith*, 1960, p. 247. Emphasis supplied.

## CHAPTER XXI

### SIGN OF A FREE GOD -- SABBATH VERSUS AUTOMATISM

Now you have probably heard the concept "automatism" mentioned just a sufficient number of times to feel the need of a definition. In other words, the pedagogical moment has arrived for an explanation that will "stick". And no topic, I think, could be more proper for such an explanation than that of the Sabbath.

Genesis 2:1-3 contains the first information the Bible has to give us about the Sabbath. Does it provide any polemic against automatism as a pagan view and longing? Let us have a close look at the exact wording:

"Thus the heavens and the earth were finished and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he rested from all his work which God had created." (Emphasis supplied)

Was it really on the seventh day that God "ended" His work? Then what does "ended" really mean? Was not man the last creature He created; in fact, the crowning glory of His creation? And did not this take place on the sixth day?

First, who is the hero, the focal point, of the creation story? Karl Barth, in his *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. III, Book 1, says:

"It is not man, entering upon the work appointed at the creation, who is to be the hero of the seventh and last day of creation... It is not man who brings the history of creation to an end, nor is it he who ushers in the subsequent history."

Who is it then? It is God! The rest is first and foremost God's rest. This first Sabbath day is clearly described as a most solemn occasion filled with God's joyful satisfaction. God rejoiced wholeheartedly in what had taken place.

And what are the features of God thrown into relief by this historic rest? The first is His freedom. God asserts His freedom just as much by resting from His work. He reveals Himself as the Autonomous One, you might say, just as much by celebrating the "end" of the work, as by starting it. In my vocabulary, "freedom" here is just the opposite of "automatism". Freedom is the extremely good thing in this context. Automatism is the extreme evil. And perhaps it is an automatism in this same sense that Barth too has in mind when he says:

"A world principle without this limit to its creative activity would not be free like God, but would be tied to the infinite motion of its own developments and evolution. In its unlimited creative activity it would not really belong to itself. It would not really be active, but entangled in a process imposed upon it and subjected to its higher necessity." (Ibid. Emphasis supplied)

This aptly describes what I mean by the tragedy of pagan automatism; that is, the automatism asserting itself, not only in every spiritualist's outlook on life, but equally in every evolutionist's outlook on science. How different from this is the attentive Bible student's image of God as he observes Him in the first Sabbath text of the Bible.

What is freedom? Barth tries to explain it as follows, still in connection with Genesis 2:2:

"A being is free only when it can determine and limit its activity: and only the works of a being like this are acts. God is a being like this. His creative activity has its limits in the rest from His works, determined by himself, i.e., the rest of the seventh day. His freedom revealed in this rest is a first criterion of the true deity of the Creator in the biblical saga." (Ibid)

Let us compare this freedom of the Genesis Creator, the Creator who rested on the Sabbath day, to the boundness of pagan "creators". For it would be wrong to say that paganism does not have its "creation sagas". On the contrary, it does know the most weird types of some sudden comings into existence. Paganism has remarkable records, indeed, of certain "fits of the supernatural".

In primitive thought and primitive religion there may be no miracles in the Biblical sense. But instead there is magic. Certain mysterious formulas, for instance, are conceived of as producing the wonders. And they produce them automatically. This, I think, is an essential thing to notice. That automatism even avers itself as fatal to the magician himself sometimes, as in Goethe's dramatic poem, *Der Zauberlehrling*, the Sorcerer's Apprentice.

That miserable tinker's unfortunate fate consisted just in not being able to stop. He had observed his master's tricks of conjuring up things by means of a fixed formula. So during the sorcerer's absence he wanted to do the same thing himself. But he had failed to retain the formula that was to stop the process. This also reminds me of a similar tragedy in a popular Scandinavian fairy tale: A little girl belonging to a very poor community has by accident found a magic saucepan. She has also hit upon the magic formula that causes that pan to start cooking. It produces porridge automatically -- unending quantities of it. All the hungry people of the village are happy and enthusiastic! But alas, the girl does not have the necessary magic word to stop the process. So the whole village soon becomes inundated by porridge. There is place for nothing but porridge. The people are simply drowned in the swelling waves of the invading ocean of porridge.

One hardly knows what to call an event like that. Is it a tragicomedy of pure tragedy? Wherever a religious point of view prevails, it would probably have to be relegated into the realm of pure tragedy.

How different the Creation story in Genesis, chapters one and two! When the God of the Bible, as the great master Wonder Maker, calls into existence His wonderful worlds, this is no process of an impersonal -- or a more or less mechanical -- type of magic. The creative act is always dependent on the Creator's conscious will. He has made up His mind to create. And He does create. The whole process coincides with His personal determination. Its conclusion, as well as its development in every detail, is therefore minutely in accordance with His majestic command.

As a rule, the pagan gods are essentially different: They are not gods of creation. They are properly gods of contemplation, therefore, essentially inactive. At least this applies wherever pagan theology takes a more serious character, as in spiritualism. Here, neither beginning nor end causes any trouble to the immortal gods. It all floats into one great confusion of everything and nothing. Their "perfection", if any, is that of the eternal cycle. I could think of nothing better than inertia to describe the essence of this inability to either begin or end. Here it is short-sighted to think of the inability to end as less tragic than the inability to begin.

Let us illustrate this double tragedy of automatism, versus the blessedness of personal and conscious initiative, by referring to a well-known, concrete case of recent astronomic events.

The end of the year 1968 might have become memorable in a negative sense, a peculiar nightmare sense, if the travel of three astronauts around the moon had failed at some decisive point. In that case millions of radio listeners on planet Earth would have spent their Christmas holidays witnessing a tragic drama, impressing upon their minds what it really means to be at the "mercy" of automatism.

When those spacecraft pilots set out on their course and gradually left behind the familiar reals of their native planet's gentle pull, that was nothing but the physical abandonment of three men to a certain automatism. For most of the time of those three days they were in the grip of just that inertia whose law says: Without any power from outside a body cannot change either the speed or the direction of its movement. On approaching the moon they did apply, with success, just such a power. So at a given moment they did escape the sad lot of just continuing endlessly into the depths of outer space. They managed to bend their way into orbit around the moon. But as soon as this stage was reached, we may say that they had fallen into the clutch of a new automatism, namely that of a resultant between two inexorable powers; on the one hand, the gradually increasing pull from the moon as a larger body irresistibly attracting a smaller body: the spaceship; on the other hand, there was still the "stubborn" force of eternal inertia, this time in the form of the so-called centrifugal power; that is what tries to prevent us from performing circular movements. In every-day life it is described as out tendency to "go off at the tangent", just like a boy's toy plane, kept at the end of a string.

Those two forces together, keeping each other in check, is what produces any body's circular movement around another and larger body, this time a spaceship in orbit around the moon. But if that movement never changes all by itself, this means that it is automatic.

By and by the thrilling moment arrived when it was to be seen whether the three astronauts would prove able to free themselves from this automatism, too, through a new initiative on their part. They had the power and applied it in the right way at the right moment. This lucky command of the situation sent them on their way toward their old home planet again. But of course immediately after the change had been realized, they were once more in the "claws" of their merciless foe: automatism. If this new clutch of automatic happening had not been loosed at the right second when they approached the earth, there would have been a 10,000 mile per hour crash and nothing more. A new personal intervention on the part of those men was needed in order to prevent a catastrophe.

We here get some illuminating idea of what a wonderful privilege it is for man to retain some morsels of free initiative--the privilege of stopping something, of changing his course, or decisively breaking out from the blind tracks of routine movements.

What then is the true significance of the concept "end" in the Bible's first record of a merciful God's unique Sabbath exploits? I have no hesitation in describing even this "negative" or "passive" detail (the ending of His work) as an "exploit", for it may assume the dimensions of heroic feat, of majestic performance.

In what, then, did this "rest from work", this mysterious "ending", really consist?

Obviously most readers have taken it to mean just "finishing off" -- full stop! And who could blame them for understanding it in this way? "To end" does mean this in all common usage of speech. To end a work, is to perform it all the way up to its final phase: and this is what any human being is supposed to have behind him by Friday night, isn't it? So, when Genesis 2:2 states that God ended His work on the seventh day, it almost looks to you and me as if He ended it a second time. If someone circulated the rumor that every week you tend to end your work only on the seventh day, you would hardly for very long preserve your reputation for being a good Sabbath-keeper, I am afraid. People in the church would shake their heads at you, saying: Oh, that's bad. He should have all that finished on Friday evening.

Perhaps we have in our imagination the picture of a human artist who is fully absorbed in his art. Just imagine such a "creator" on the human plane: At the end of his regular work days he "finishes" a work of art. Then comes his day of rest and relaxation (if he has any). But his mind is still so completely on his work that even on the holiday he goes to his studio. Before he recognizes what has happened, he is absorbed in his work once more. He has found some detail with which he was not satisfied. Now he gives his work a "last finishing touch". He literally "ends" it--hopefully in full earnest this time.

Was this the way God "ended" His work on the seventh day? Was it a matter of a finishing stroke? We understand that this sense must have been the one foremost in the minds of the Septuagint theologians. In fact, they simply assumed that the expression "on the seventh day" here must be an error, necessitating an amendment. It ought to be replaced by "the sixth". And they actually did change the text on that point.

But I agree with Barth that this "emendation" makes null and void the deeper sense of "end" as descriptive of an essential trait in the personality of Yahweh, the unique Author of the Sabbath institution. Precisely the seventh day was the day when God put into effect His plan, not to do any more what He had been doing. We might express it in this way perhaps: On the Sabbath day He made this significant creative work of His the great occasion for an actual celebration. He celebrated its end; that is, His own glorious ability to have a total break, and to enjoy it, whenever this was the new form of initiative in which he took the greatest pleasure. Ending assumes the sense of glorious divine completion (kalah). This is the sense Yahweh intends to inculcate indelibly on His people's minds. But what, then, is that quite unique trait in God's character that is here revealed?

First we ought to make sure whether the Bible really has a peculiar mode of expression here, an expression exactly corresponding to a typical mode of thought. The theologian B. Jacob confirms that this special meaning of the word "to end" (to refrain from further creation) is not an isolated phenomenon. He compares Ex. 2:2 to 2 Chron. 29:17. I must remind my reader, by the way, that here, as well, the topic is sanctification, or consecration; that is, the most elevated of all elevated actions where the Creator establishes a most solemnly intimate relationship with His intelligent creatures. The reference is to the inauguration of the sanctuary, how the priests "sanctified themselves" and then "went into the inner part of the house of the Lord, to cleanse it" (2 Chron. 29:15,16). Some special circumstances are mentioned, and the time it took:

"Now they began on the first day of the first month to sanctify, and on the eighth day of the month came they to the porch of the Lord: so they sanctified the house of the Lord in porch of the Lord: so they sanctified the house of the Lord in eight days: and in the sixteenth day of the first month they made an end." (2 Chron. 29:17)

What was the thing of which they "made an end" on the sixteenth day? It evidently was something very great. And during how many days had this been going on? During fifteen days. Still, not on the "fifteenth", but on the "sixteenth" only, did the work of those fifteen days come to its fulfillment. This--and only this--was the great day when the priests "made an end" (killu). Then they ended their work in the important sense that they did not work any longer. They realistically demonstrated their blessed stage of completion, fulfillment: The enjoyed rest was a great reality. It was the definitive break from the routine of daily action. It was the greatest act of all.

May we perhaps put it in this way--and that applies to all real and significant accomplishments: The day of "no more work" is a day at least as important as the whole series of "days of work". The efficient "proof" of an end is reserved for this day only. It is the day decisive confirmation that the work is done. In the case of the Sabbath, there is actually a solemn celebration of the fact that this work now belongs to the glorious record of past accomplishments. So this is a day of full satisfaction, of final

triumph. Thus, the very fact of staying away from further work may turn out to be, not only perfectly equal, but sometimes even superior, in its significance, to the fact of working.

This may be one sense in which the truth of an old word of wisdom is confirmed: "Better is the end of a thing than its beginning." (Prov. 7:8).

The seventh day was, in an important sense, definitely better than the sixth. Maybe I could illustrate this matter as follows: Suppose you have made the great decision on a late Wednesday night that this is going to be your last day of smoking. You solemnly put a note in your calendar on Wednesday, February the 10th: "I quit the dirty habit of smoking!" You gather your pipe and your tobacco packages and your cigarettes together and make a solemn bonfire. You are definitely through with this miserable thing that has enslaved you for years. It is the evening of Wednesday, February 10, 1982. What a glorious day. What a memorable day in your life.

Well, I do not say that this is not a great day, a decisive day. But there may be a greater and more decisive day in front of you. For remember that the real test is not on this Wednesday night. Your body may have had all the nicotine it demands for this day, and during the night you are fast asleep anyway, I assume. (You did not at any time get to the point where you smoked in your sleep, did you? I never heard of somnambulatory smoking.)

But there is a day coming. That is Thursday the 11th. What about that day? As far as I can see, that is the day you "stop smoking"--if you make it at all! That is the first day when it really means something whether you take another cigarette. Wednesday the 10th was perhaps the day you "finished smoking" in a very theoretical way. And I do not say that theories are useless or insignificant. They have their place in the household of human life. But there is nothing like the practice--the practical realization of those nice theories. So Thursday the 11th is the day when you really prove that you quit smoking. Thursday is the day of triumph and of real exploit as far as your decision to quit smoking is concerned.

So I think the Biblical way of reckoning here is a most realistic one. Do you still feel superior in terms of stringent logic? You are wrong.

And now we come to the main reason why the Sabbath may be said to symbolize God's freedom and all that freedom stands for:

In that freedom there is something implied that human philosophy does not at all immediately realize as self-evident. I am referring to love. With God, freedom is entirely in the service of love. Freedom is simply the way love lives and expresses itself.

This is an idea among the most difficult for man to grasp. The type of "love" man is naturally acquainted with, is Eros. But that is the type in which the creature has perverted his freedom. Eros is the perversion of Agape. Hence it comes to happen that man, whenever he tries to philosophize about freedom, even in terms of perfect freedom, total freedom, such as the Creator has, he is tempted to reason along rather spurious lines. To the human thinker that unfailing autonomy of God (His unlimited freedom)--for instance in matters of creative power, of unhampered initiative, His perfect ability to do or to refrain from doing--all this is immediately conceived of as something that would tend to "prevent Him from being primarily the Loving One." What a fallacious trend of philosophy.

This is where we human reasoners need to be reminded again of one remarkable coincidence: In what does that constant initiative on the part of God consist? It consists in His free movement of bending down. And in what does His character as the Loving One consist? It consists in that same bending down!

This is the practical way things infallibly work with God. And every time the outcome is bound to strike, with utter astonishment, those theoretical experts in this little world of ours who have made it their speciality to observe "how gods generally behave". The God of the Bible inevitably dumbfounds them. He scandalizes them, for this is not at all the way gods "are supposed to behave"!

Yahweh does not only turn to "the other one". He even turns wholeheartedly to the smallest of the small among His millions of other ones. The incredible marvel of this divine alterocentricity is not just in its going out. It is in its going down! This is humility, if ever there was one. And what philosopher-theologian, I wonder, could ever refrain from being scandalized when some non-philosophical or non-theological layman speaks about his "humble God"? Where else, except in the Bible, did men ever read such "laughable stuff" as the story about God's divine humility!

Still, the Lord of Life, and the Lord of the Sabbath, the One without whom nothing was made of all that was made, Jesus Christ, tells us just exactly this incredible story about Himself. He speaks about His own Person as the great Exemplar worthy of being imitated by all men. But that is not vain-glory. It is an offer of realistic help to the desperately helpless ones. And let us notice one thing particularly. It constitutes an appealing call to the restless ones--calling them to the only haven of realistic rest.

A more beautiful or a more illuminating Sabbath scripture could hardly ever be found that this: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Matt. 11:28-30) Emphasis supplied.

When were ever words spoken about law and grace in a more holistic way? Every dimension and depth of the full Agape is here plumbed, to reach the bottom.

But there is none. So even God's freedom, in the sense of His perfect autonomy, should never be understood in terms of some hard, vainglorious self-dependence or a total in-dependence of those helpless creaturely other ones.

Please include in your conscious knowledge this tremendous fact: There is a tender considerateness in God's heart, a matchless delicacy in His mind, that strictly forbids Him to force His will in any way upon the life of one single human creature. This obliges Him to wait and wait, so patiently and so watchfully, at the door of the human heart-- that curiously constructed "door", having its knob on the inside only.

Once He has been admitted, He works effectively, although still at every moment with the same delicate considerateness for man's own freedom and divinely granted liberty of choice--the incomparable wonder of His majestic creation in man. God completely transforms the heart of that man. This is the creative power of heavenly grace.

So there is the most delicate process of a mutual interplay between the freedom of God and the freedom of man in that whole work of sanctification, of which Sabbath rest is not just an abstract symbol, but a concrete medium and an active intervention.

We should not be misled by an apparent harshness in theological formulations such as the one previously quoted: "It is God, not man, who is the hero of the Sabbath." Before we get to know what the terms employed really stand for, we may be equally rebuffed by some rather "egocentric-looking" statements in the Bible, as well.

For instance: "The Lord hath made all things for Himself" (Prov. 16:4). Without hesitation you might be tempted to interpolate here: for "His own benefit", "His own honor". Even the gospel prophet quotes the Eternal One as saying, "For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it: for how should my name be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another." (Isa. 48:11).

In view of those formulations, what weight can we ascribe to the highly alterocentric statement from the lips of the same Yahweh to some Jewish legalist:

"The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore, the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath." (Mark 2:27,28).

In a way, those last two verses, taken together, may perhaps represent the apparently opposite viewpoints meeting each other in great harmony, after all. For, on the one hand, the purpose for which God has made the Sabbath is a perfectly alterocentric one. It is definitely for the sake of man, His beloved creature, so urgently in need of true rest. On the other hand, Christ insists on making it crystal clear that He is the Lord of the Sabbath. This Lordship which He so insistingly claims as His own, is a most glorious one. It possesses a glory He will never, never, "give unto another" (Isa. 48:11). Thus we have an apparently "egocentric" determination on the part of the Almighty One, the Only One, the everlasting God, to remain unique.

We now come to the salient point: Precisely in what does that unique and inalienable "glory" of the Godhead consist? This must be important to know because the entire Bible refers so emphatically to it. Before one has made the most elementary effort to find out what the Biblical concept of God's "glory" really is, it would be not only unrealistic and unscholarly, but outrageously unfair to assume that God's "glory-seeking" gives evidence of downright self-centeredness.

So far we have done nothing more than touch the fringes of the marvels which God had in store for man, from the moment that He invited him to have his historic encounter with the mystery of the Seventh Day.

Little has it been realized, however, even today, what a drama was here going to be triggered at the end of the aeons, actually turning the Sabbath into a veritable "time-bomb", destined to explode every sophisticated argument that human ethics proponents have been forgoing during 6000 years. That explosion cannot fail to shake the lives of realistic men anywhere, as the Sabbath is finally seen to interfere crucially with the basic structure of all ethics.

P.S. As soon as we can afford to publish the second volume of this book about the Day of Destiny, you will finally have the satisfaction-- or the exasperation--of a still closer encounter with the drama already taking definite shape, in terms of a life-and-death battle over the Sabbath issue, -- within the Church, as well as in the world at large.

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