

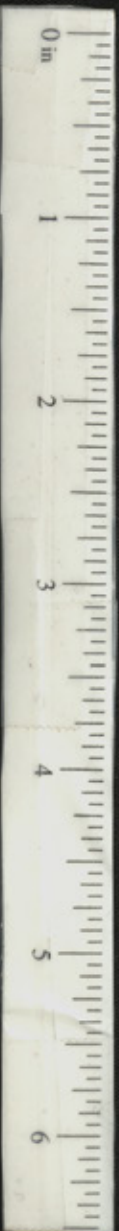
Adams

No 8

Subject

My view of the Sabbath Question

W. S. C. B. F. A. R. M. C. O. N. T. A. I. N. I. N. G.



## MY VIEW OF THE SABBATH QUESTION.

In order to clear the way, as we say in military campaigns, I wish to make a few personal statements concerning the Sabbath observance.

Statement I. Certain church members and the "world" misunderstand my position as a disciple of Christ. *On the sabbath question.*

The certain church members, themselves believing that God has given such a positive law or Commandment, that it must be kept as unto Him, and that no possible deviation from its rigid provisions is right, take it for granted that I, as a disciple of Christ, agree with them.

But I do not. I say of this reasoning as the Scripture says of all such things. The letter killeth; but the Spirit maketh alive.

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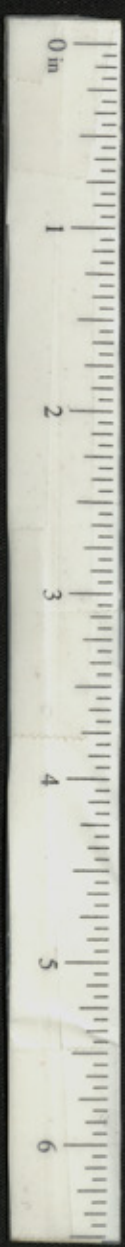
plumb-line Sabbath-philosophy which has no sympathy with suffering and over-tasked humanity.

In this straight-laced light they regard the divine law itself of "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." I answer squarely and unhesitatingly: That is not my philosophy.

Behold! My honest belief is the reverse, to-wit: The Spirit of gentleness and not rigidity, of kindness and not unkindness, of common sense and not fanaticism, of intense sympathy with suffering and not cruelty, of lifting the heavy burdens from body, mind and heart, and not piling up rocks of demand and stone-heaps of unwelcome duty!

II. All creeds made by man only, however saint-like they may have been, creeds manufactured for other men to accept and carry out, are troublesome things. It is better to go to the head of the stream with your pitcher than to drink

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muddy water. It is better to go to the Bible. As a disciple of Christ I have long ago purposed in my heart and faithfully endeavored to do this. The fathers, the leaders of the dark ages, the reformers, the christian ~~or~~ commentators, Catholic, Greek, Armenian, Lutheran, Wesley<sup>a</sup>n, Calvinistic, and what-net, <sup>be made to</sup> must not impose upon American christians their interpretation and application of Sabbath Orders.

We cannot properly take their clubs and cudgel humanity with them. We must not extract all the sour vinegar we can from their apple-juice and make ~~them~~ <sup>men</sup> drink it and call it sweet cider; for it is not sweet cider, it is vinegar. It would be better to attempt by law as many do, to prohibit men from drinking cider at all.

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the residue upon men as the genuine, appetizing article!

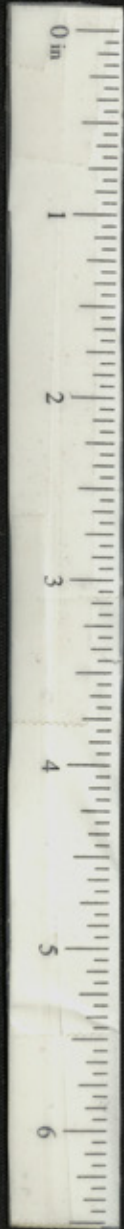
So much then for ~~the~~<sup>our</sup> cavalry skirmish, the field-clearing; let us now fall back upon main lines; and see if we can prepare to help just a little in the solid battle.

III. Jews and Gentiles, Christians and Infidels, Railway men and Editors, men and women toilers of all descriptions, mules and oxen, horses and donkeys, all the patient animals that work, all, all, men and animals, that need to labor, need also to rest. This rest is in precise accordance with the exact law of necessity, which, with all his dim-sightedness, even an atheist might see.

How essential to rest, the daily toil! How sweet and remunerative the ensuing nightly rest in sleep. It is indeed nature's sweet restorer.

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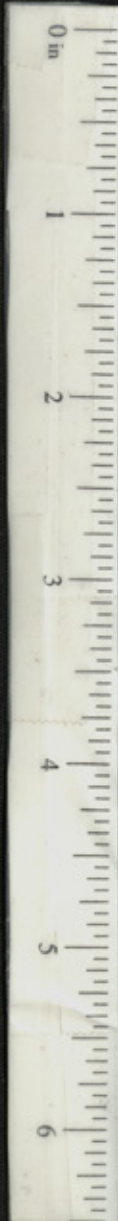
Still that daily respite is not enough. We in the Army believe it demonstrable by actual trial, that, all things being equal, a longer march can be made in forty days by resting men and animals one day in every seven. It is a wise law, this Sabbath law.

The law of one day in seven, rightly interpreted, is a gentle, kind, loving, sympathetic, humane law.

What a horrid tyrant, what a soulless tormentor of men and animals, that spirit, which, to heap up filthy lucre, says: "Thou shalt never rest one day in seven. Thou shalt labor every day, till thy back is bent, thy brow is wrinkled, thy legs are weak and tottering, till thine eye is red and restless, and thy soul like the troubled waters which cast up mire and dirt."

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horse, ever-strained in racing, pours out his sweat and falls in his tracks; but the woman by ever-work is crushed and soured, while the man is brought <sup>The</sup> to dust without pluck and without hope.

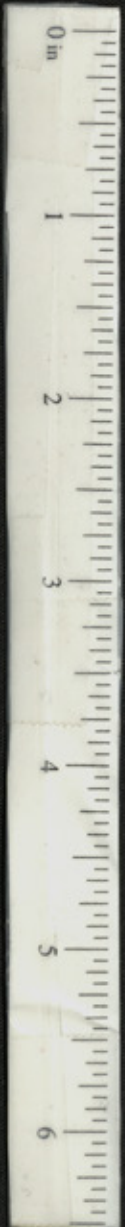
These are not fancy pictures; for the tormenting tyrant Spirit is abroad and his progeny are seen holding place, stepping proudly on our farms, in our mines and workshops, and in the streets of our throbbing cities.

The tyrant Spirit is full of resource and deceit. He uses alcohol, licentiousness, superstition, the mirage of gambling, the attractions of Sunday games, Sunday theatres, Sunday revelry, anything in the vast range of tempting things, to burden poor men, women and children, depriving them of a true Sabbath and other needed God given rest-periods.

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Let working people lead off in this matter as they do in other matters. Let them say to the law-makers: We claim the Sabbath-day. Capitalists have no manner of right to take it from us. The rich may have their luxuries but they shall not take our Sabbath-day for their gain. All employers must give us one day in seven!

IV. Do not understand me as boasting when I say: "I am a disciple of our Lord." I simply mean that He is my teacher and I am His scholar. What then does He teach concerning this Sabbath Commandment?

On one Sabbath-day this teacher, a young man then about 31, calling himself the Son of man, took several of his scholars with him for a short journey, certainly on errands of mercy. They crossed a wheat-field. The scholars were

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hungry, and so did what was lawful on any other day than the Sabbath, they plucked the heads of wheat and, rubbing out the kernels with their hands, ate them as they went along.

Naturally enough some strict constructionists, like these who in our war would break up the whole country rather than mar the letter of the constitution, followed these scholars and teacher, and complained loudly that in rubbing out the wheat and eating it they broke the Sabbath law. How quickly the great teacher rebuked and answered them by their own scriptures.

David, their model king, broke <sup>in the letter</sup> another even more sacred law. He entered the holy house where the Tabernacle was, and ate the shewbread and gave some to his hungry soldiers. His act was approved.

Again, the Priests always do abundant work

hungry, and so did not eat until on any other day than the Sabbath, they finished the heads of wheat and, rubbing out the kernels with their hands, ate them as they went along.

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on the Sabbath in sacrificing; and they are blameless. Then, as though that was not enough to stop every foolish objector to the end of time, the young teacher said:

"That in this place, (i.e., in that wheat-field) is one greater than the Temple." The Jews revered the Temple above the old Tabernacle. *Yes!* It was to them next to God.

Then how logically follows: "For the Son of man, (nearer to God than any Temple,) is Lord even of the Sabbath-day."

We in the Army understand the principle. The President gives the command, "have parade every evening except Sunday". That becomes the law unto us. Suppose he should come to Fort Hamilton and when there say to the Commandant, "omit the parade every alternate day." The President had made the first law; and the Pres-

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ident could thus change his own law.

The Institutor and Governor of the Sabbath could and did modify the interpretation of the Sabbath-law. Notice how he rebuked the fault finders: "If ye had known what this meaneth 'I will have mercy and not sacrifice', ye would not have condemned the guiltless."

Whatever others may hold to, Christians are bound to read the old Commandments in the light of Christ's teaching. He emphasizes his liberality still more when he said again:

"The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath."

Here then is the completed statute:

- (a) Abstain from work one day in seven.
- (b) But do not make your rule too rigid; for the rule was made for your best good.
- (c) Yield at once in your observance to the

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- (a) Abstain from work one day in seven.
- (b) But do not make your rule too rigid; for  
the rule was made for your best good.
- (c) Yield at once in your observance to the

natural law of necessity.

(d) Works of mercy are not to be omitted because it is the Sabbath.

(e) The spirit of the Commandment doubtless is to make a day of rest, one day in seven; therefore it is of little consequence whether we have the first day of the week called "Our Lord's Day", or the Jewish Sabbath. But all should agree to keep the same day.

Now, V. In conclusion let us apply our principles.

Here is a disciple of Christ. He has his church and his Sunday-school. It is, as he regards the matter and as in church fellowship he has obligated himself,- it is his duty to attend divine worship and to help in the school. Let him do so. He is setting a good example. His children too, are better off than if playing

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base ball in the suburbs of the city, or hunting in the forests. They are in better company and are imbibing good principles. They are more likely to grow up good and useful men, than those who have no manner of regard for the Holy Day.

But here is another typical man, who is a rough working man. He works all the week, has but little means for clothing, and he has no taste whatever for the church, the school, or for cultured society. Will you put hard restrictions on him? No indeed. I would, if I could, try to persuade him that our Lord is his true friend; I would have our law makers preserve to him the right to rest one day in seven from his hard toil; rather than be constantly forced to lose it by a hundred cruel task masters; or led to miss it by false advisers.

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only or lost to him by false education.

Concerning him the true disciple of Christ must say: He may walk through the fields on the Sabbath day. He may eat grain or bread on the Sabbath day. He may and should do good and not evil to his wife and children on the Sabbath day.

But many cry out: "Shall the day, our rest-day, be only a day of worship and religious culture?"

I answer: No. Christ our Lord did not require the day to be only a day of worship and religious culture.

Another, a religious company, asks:

"What then shall it be, a mere holiday - a day for visiting and amusement?"

Certainly this idle, mere amusement inference from Christ's teachings would not be fair, or wise.

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Somewhere between men of extreme opinions there are men who are truly wise. The Spirit of wisdom lies between extreme doctrines.

The fact is that large masses of people simply cannot, with present minds and hearts, keep the Sabbath in a Spiritual sense. Still our Master says to them, tenderly, "come unto me all ye that toil and are carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest."

Oh, how I wish that all the hard working men and women in the world could feel the pulsations of our strong sympathy for them! We do not want cross, dissatisfied, pessimistic, malignant, half-crazy fanatics to have their own way. They oppose a Sabbath for rest and refreshment, because they hate God and hate man. They argue for liberty - but only mean to put upon men the heavy chains of lawlessness and crime. They

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plead for anarchy. They pray for chaos. They lead to great darkness. They love the slime-pits of death.

Let the Lord our Leader breathe upon us anew; let Him increase our faith and our endeavor, so as to plant our standards of loving kindness among the surging millions.

Every whit of light we shed; every iota of culture we bring to the little ones, the benighted ones, helps them the better to understand and keep the Lord's beautiful rest-provision - His charming, recuperating, joy-giving Sabbath Day.

12.  
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