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DO WE REALLY KEEP SUNDAY SPECIAL?

By Roger Carswell

On April 15th, 1986 the Conservative Government with a majority of over 150 had its Shops Bill defeated. The fact that our God still answers prayer was clearly demonstrated. I felt jubilant. The battle was won. However, there appears to be a Christian tendency to undo what has been achieved.

Cathedral Shops

Cathedrals and churches opposing the Shops Bill were still opening their shops and trading on Sunday. This was rightly mentioned in the House of Lords. Embarrassed bishops there may have been, but it has not affected these practices.

The Ten Commandments

There are some in the churches who are now arguing that we are under no biblical obligation to keep Sunday special. Are we really to believe that God gave Ten Commandments, but that only nine are applicable for today? The Lord Jesus did not come to destroy the law but to fulfill it. As Bishop Ryle said, *'I cannot find a syllable in their (the Apostles') writings which teach that any one of the Ten Commandments is done away...I believe that the coming of Christ's Gospel did not alter the position of the Ten Commandments one hair's breath.'*

Sabbath Observance

The Sabbath Day, ordained in Genesis 2, was observed before the Commandments were given. For example, the Israelites were forbidden to gather manna on the Sabbath day. But in the New Testament each of the Ten Commandments was repeated, including the fourth. Jesus Himself said that the Sabbath was made for man and urged His followers to pray that their 'flight be not on the Sabbath'. However, the early Christians began to observe the first day of the week as their Sabbath. Our motive for keeping it is that on the first day of the week, Jesus rose from the dead and made his first and second appearances to His disciples; the Holy Spirit came on the gathered disciples.

On the Lord's Day, we remember the work of God's creation, Christ's work of re-creation and the Holy Spirit's work of procreation.

Sabbath Breaking

Perhaps we are in danger of being moulded into the world's pattern. We are no longer shocked by the open breaking of God's commandment. The world does not understand our position. In the Leeds marathon, run on a Sunday, amplifiers played the theme music of *Chariots of Fire* to accompany the competitors. So much for Eric Liddell's stand!

The Lord's Day

As Christians, we have the duty, which is surely a great delight of remembering the Sabbath day to keep it holy. In Isaiah 58 vv 13 & 14 (R.A.V.) we read 'If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight; the Holy day of the Lord honourable, and shall honour Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words, then you shall delight yourself in the Lord; and I will cause you to rise upon the high hills of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the Lord has spoken.'

Perhaps we need a new slogan for Churches: 'Keep your Sunday Special'. I am convinced that if as Christians we sought to honour the Lord on the first day of the week, He in turn would honour us

seven days a week. Sunday is not a day for worship in the morning and recreation for the rest of the day. Is it too much nowadays to expect people to attend Church more than once on this day? Are our spiritual lives so impoverished that we find ourselves at a loss for anything to do on a Sunday? Surely we should relish the opportunity not to work (except where our job is an act of mercy or necessity) but to spend extra time with the Lord, reading the Word, praying and having fellowship with the Lord's people.

McCheyne used to go to bed early on Saturday, so that he could rise at 6 a.m. to spend the day with the Lord in private devotions and public declaration. Perhaps our Sunday has after all been hijacked – not by a godless government but by the neglect of God's people.

Roger Carswell is an itinerant evangelist.