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# Sabbath Rest as Peace and Tranquillity

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Resting on the Sabbath means entering into a state of peace and tranquillity and happiness.

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By SAMUELE BACCHIOCCHI

ANOTHER SIGNIFICANT BIBLICAL MEANING of the Sabbath rest is peace and tranquillity. In Genesis 2:2 we read, "And on the seventh day God *finished his work*" (R.S.V.). The statement seems rather paradoxical. We would think in fact that God's work was finished on the sixth day,<sup>1</sup> inasmuch as we read in the same verse that God "rested on the seventh day."

A modern rabbi offers an interesting explanation of the apparent paradox contained in the text. He writes: "The ancient rabbis concluded, there was an act of creation of the seventh day. Just as heaven and earth were created in six days, *menuha* ["rest"] was created on the Sabbath. 'After the six days of creation—what did the universe still lack? *Menuha*. Came the Sabbath, came *menuha*, and the universe was complete.'"<sup>2</sup>

Concerning the Hebrew word *menuha* the same author explains: "*Menuha* which we usually render with 'rest' means here much more than withdrawal from labor and exertion, more than freedom from toil, strain or activity of any kind. . . . To the biblical mind *menuha* is the same as happiness and stillness, as peace and harmony. . . . It is the state wherein man lies still, wherein the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest. It is the state in which there is no strife and no fighting, no fear and no distrust."<sup>3</sup>

After He created the heavens, the earth, and all its creatures, God created the Sabbath rest, that is, peace, tranquillity, and happiness for the human family to enjoy on the Sabbath day. To those who have entered into the joyous experience of the Sabbath rest, resting on the Sabbath means entering into a state of peace and tranquillity and happiness.

Is not Friday night the happiest of the week? We may feel tired after a week of toil, especially if we have been burning the midnight oil, but when Friday night comes we gladly lay aside all our work and worries, knowing that the day of peace and happiness has finally come. In later years the Jews expressed this motif of peace in their Sabbath's songs and prayers. Returning from the synagogue on Friday night, they would join in singing "Peace be with you, angels of peace."<sup>4</sup> As the head of the house entered the door which opened into the

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room that glowed with Sabbath candles and cleanliness, they would all join in singing the *Shalom Aleikhem*, the song that greeted the Sabbath angels of peace who had come to visit their home:

"Welcome, O ministering angels,  
Angels from on high,  
Who come from the King of kings,  
The Holy One, blessed be He.

"Enter in peace, angels of peace,  
Angels from on high,  
Who come from the King of kings,  
The Holy One, blessed be He."<sup>5</sup>

The motif of peace was expressed not only in songs but also in the Sabbath prayers. For six nights the Jew would pray: "Protect our goings and our comings," but on Friday night he would pray: "Gather us under the tent of thy peace."<sup>6</sup> Peace was also the theme of the Sabbath greeting. As they greeted one another on the Sabbath, the Jews used the words *Shabbat Shalom*, that is to say, "I wish you a Sabbath of peace."<sup>7</sup>

After a tormented and tempestuous week, the Sabbath rest provides an island of stillness and tranquillity, where man can safely harbor to regain peace. During the week often man's relationship with his fellow man beside him, with nature around him, and with himself, becomes tense and disorderly. The Sabbath rest is designed by God to restore that harmony, unity, and wholeness in the soul of man, that too often during the six days of work have been shattered, broken, and split.

The Sabbath rest contains and proclaims a message of peace and happiness. God, by creating the Sabbath rest, offered a special gift to the human family, a gift that is renewed every week and that the human soul desperately needs: the gift of peace and happiness. The peace of the Sabbath, we noticed, is not only a present temporal experience but also carries with it the promise of the eternal joy, happiness, and peace reserved for God's people in the new world. Massi fitly expresses this when he says: "The rest of the seventh day gives to men a foretaste of the rest and peace which will be enjoyed in the new world—that will be the great Sabbath."<sup>8</sup>

In the light of the Biblical and Christian tradition, the Christian who enters into the Sabbath rest not only experiences a blessing of peace and happiness but also gains a foretaste of the eternal joy and peace reserved for those who from Sabbath to Sabbath shall worship before God (Isa. 66:23).

## Sabbath Rest as Consecration

One of the most prominent words of the Bible is *qadôsh*, "holy." It is a word that expresses the mystery and majesty of Deity. It is interesting to notice that the first thing that God consecrated as holy was not an altar or a mountain or a sanctuary, but a day: "So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it [that is, made it holy]" (Gen. 2:3, R.S.V.). Later in the proclamation of the Ten Commandments, twice God proclaimed the Sabbath holy. First in the form of a reminder to man, "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Ex. 20:8). Second, by presenting the Sabbath as a time which God Himself has made holy, "wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it" (verse 11).

The Sabbath day was chosen by God as the tangible and perpetual sign and symbol of the covenant, of the engagement and commitment of the people to God. It was the sign and symbol of loyalty. The ancient rabbis distinguished among three aspects of holiness: the holiness of God's name, the holiness of the Sabbath, and the holiness of Israel. The holiness of the Sabbath preceded the holiness of Israel. The

## Your Church and Your Marriage—2

IN OUR LAST COLUMN we began discussing marriage in relation to several points made by Richard Fredericks, current AIA president. He suggests a course of studies with a minister—a structured, programmed, several-months' long course—before the wedding can be performed.

Certainly most Adventists will be in agreement with this plan. And I should like to add that the minister should have more than a superficial knowledge of the engaged couple. A handshake at the door after a sermon on Sabbath cannot qualify as "knowledge." For instance, a minister who is asked to perform a wedding should ask himself some rather weighty questions—and repeat these same questions to the engaged couple, even at the risk of being thought impertinent. Why does the couple wish to be married? Have they "gone too far" in their relationship and have decided that marriage will erase their sense of guilt? Are they marrying because one or both are impatient with home rules and restrictions and view marriage as unlimited freedom? Obviously if the couple wants to marry for the wrong reasons, marriage is a travesty.

Richard feels strongly about this. "I could fill pages with stories of friends in my life who have stood before the altar for all the wrong reasons, without an understanding of all the right ones and without any knowledge of the difficult adjustments that lie ahead."

Another aspect of Seventh-day Adventist marriage that doesn't get the attention it so vitally needs is this: How much basic Christianity and grounding in the church does the engaged couple have? Up until this point, they've been able to rely on parents to carry forward the Christian practices that are so necessary if the

church is to be the center of their lives. Family worship. Faithful attendance at Sabbath school and church services. Ingathering. Special group meetings. Regular, systematic giving. They'll have to be self-propelled from the moment the "I now pronounce you husband and wife" echoes through the church. Or, even more devastating, one may have to propel the other, and that just doesn't make for a particularly happy relationship. The "propelled" partner may feel that he has merely exchanged one boss for another. And the "propeller" may (undoubtedly will) resent being cast in the role of surrogate parent.

When you come right down to it, if a couple hasn't made Christ a very definite part of their relationship during courtship, it's unlikely that He will occupy an important place in their marriage. For instance, how many times have the couple studied the Bible together? How many times have they prayed together—not a superficial kind of "sentence prayer" in a group, but just the two of them, in a deep, meaningful way?

I was greatly encouraged by Richard Fredericks' thoughtful approach to this most important of subjects. I hope he speaks for thousands of Adventist young people. If he does, then I see better days ahead.

We need "a clear understanding of what this most holy of unions is all about. No one has spent time to explain what it means to grow as one flesh, that this is not accomplished by (the newly married couple) wrapping themselves up in each other, but in centering their relationship of love in Christ, and becoming one in the perfection of His love."

And that really is what marriage is all about. Jesus and your church are essential to the success of your marriage.

reason seems rather obvious. By keeping the Sabbath holy, consecrating the time of the day wholly to God, the Israelite himself became holy, totally consecrated to God. This is clearly brought out in the stipulation of the covenant that God made with Israel: "You shall keep my sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you" (Ex. 31:13, R.S.V.).

In the covenant relationship the observance of the Sabbath day assumed a twofold significance. On one hand, as we read in Exodus 31:13, it was the vehicle chosen by God to sanctify the people. On the other hand, it was the tangible sign by which the people could consecrate themselves totally to God: "Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the Lord" (verse 15, R.S.V.). Dubarle points out that while in the offering of the first fruits or first-born, the first was consecrated and this had the effect of desecrating the rest for secular use, in the case of time, the situation was the opposite: "The offering of time, accomplished on the last day of the week, and not on the first as was the case in the offering of the material goods, had the effect of consecrating the whole time, in as much as it tended toward the day of meeting with God." <sup>9</sup>

### Total Commitment and Consecration

The Sabbath rest is then the sign and the pledge of man's total commitment and consecration to God. Renouncing the utilitarian use of one portion, man recognized the sovereign domain of God on the totality. Danielou observes that "the Sabbath expresses the consecration of the time to God as the temple expresses that of the space." <sup>10</sup> While for the celebration of most festivals objects were used as the unleavened bread, the lamb, the sheaves, the horn, the palm, for the observance of the Sabbath no object was required, except a soul that loved God. A deep devotion and love for God is really all that it takes to observe the Sabbath.

Man's life is a measure of time. The use that man makes of his time is indicative of his priorities. We have no time for those toward whom we feel indifferent, but we find time for those whom we love. We may have little money to spend, but we all have a measure of time to use. The way we spend our time is an indication of where our interests lie. The Sabbath rest is a test of man's loyalty and love for God. To be able to withdraw on the seventh day from the world of things to meet the invisible God in the quiet of our souls, means to love God with all our hearts, soul, and mind. Like in human relationships, fellowship can be experienced only by spending time together, so in our relationship with God real communion is possible only when, having turned off our receiver to the hundred voices and noises that draw our attention, we take time to be with God and listen to His voice. The Sabbath rest enables man, as Thomas Aquinas rightly expresses it, "to set aside some time of his life to vacation with God—*ad vacandum divinis*." <sup>11</sup>

Christ provides us the supreme example of the consecration of the Sabbath time to God. He attended the religious services of the synagogue: "He went to the synagogue, as his custom was, on the sabbath day. And he stood up to read" (Luke 4:16, R.S.V.). Christ used the Sabbath time to listen to and to proclaim the Word of God. "He was teaching them on the sabbath; and they were astonished at his teaching, for his word was with authority" (verses 31, 32, R.S.V.; cf. chap. 13:10). He was mindful in a special way of the physical and social needs of man. Luke reports that as Jesus left the synagogue on the Sabbath day He "entered Simon's house. Now Simon's mother-in-law was ill with a high fever, and they

besought him for her. And he stood over her" (verses 38, 39, R.S.V.). It was on the Sabbath that Christ healed the man with the withered hand (Matt. 12:9-21; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:6-11), the paralytic woman (Luke 13:10-17), the man who had dropsy (Luke 14:1-6), the paralytic of Bethesda (John 5:1-16), and the blind man (John 9:1-38). Christ's consecration of the Sabbath time to the Father was therefore accomplished both by participating in the religious services—listening to and proclaiming God's Word—and by providing His warmth of fellowship and His healing service to the outcasts of the society. (Something to ponder in articulating a theology of the Sabbath rest!) In the light of Biblical, Jewish, and Christian teaching, the consecration of the Sabbath time to God is realized in religious exercises as prayer, study, singing, meditation, and humanitarian actions.

This brief survey of the Biblical and Jewish and Christian notion of the Sabbath rest may form a basis for a reevaluation of our present-day concept of the religious significance of the Sabbath rest. To dissociate rest from worship on the Lord's day is to deprive our worship of its essential ingredient and natural context. It is important to recognize, as Massi aptly comments, that "rest for the Jews was an act of worship, a type of liturgy."<sup>12</sup> A rediscovery and return to the Biblical notion of the Sabbath rest could offer today not only a new orientation on how to spend the Sabbath day but also could revitalize the relationship between man and God.

The Sabbath rest, we have noticed, has acquired added

significances in the unfolding of the plan of salvation and it evokes and commemorates God's saving acts on behalf of man. It reassures man that God's creation and redemption is perfect and complete. It offers man a concrete opportunity to accept and experience God's marvelous gift of life and of redemption. It gives a sense of completion to man's work and meaning to his life. It proclaims a message of past, present, and future deliverance—a genuine liberation from the slavery of work, selfish greediness, and sin. It contains God's gift of peace and happiness to the human soul, which for the Christian is a foretaste and a reassurance of eternal peace.

The Sabbath rest finally is the sign of our love, loyalty, and commitment to God. By consecrating a portion of our time to God, we recognize His dominion over our life and over the whole creation. □

Concluded

#### REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup> The Septuagint and the Syriac version read "sixth," which reading has been adopted, for example, by *The New English Bible*.
- <sup>2</sup> Abraham J. Heschel, *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man* (New York: Farrer, Straus and Young, 1951), p. 22.
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>5</sup> Samuel H. Dresner, *The Sabbath* (New York: The Burning Bush Press, 1970), p. 33.
- <sup>6</sup> Heschel, *op. cit.*
- <sup>7</sup> Dresner, *op. cit.*, p. 53.
- <sup>8</sup> Pacifico Massi, *La Domenica* (Napoli: M. D' Auria, 1967), pp. 32, 33.
- <sup>9</sup> A. M. Dubarle, "Signification religieuse du Sabbat dans la Bible," *Le Dimanche*, *Lex Orandi* 39 (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1965), p. 52.
- <sup>10</sup> J. Danielou, *Bible and Liturgy* (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1956), p. 223.
- <sup>11</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II, 2, question 122, art. 4, reply 1.
- <sup>12</sup> Massi, *op. cit.*, p. 366.

## For the Younger Set

### Two Boys and a Lie

By RICARDO U. CUSI  
as told to Ella Ruth Elkins

THE HOT PHILIPPINE sun beat down on Jun as he hurried toward home from school. His heart ached, and he could scarcely see to find his way because of the tears that spilled out of his eyes. As he neared home, he blindly ran up the footpath that led to his nipa (*nee'-pä*, a tropical palm used widely in the Philippines for houses) house, and burst through the doorway.

"Mother, Mother! I won't go to school anymore!" Jun stood there crying loud and long.

Jun's mother came hurrying. Grandmother was close behind. Father was home and he too hurried in to hear what all the fuss was about.

"Why are you not going to school anymore?" Mother asked.

"I'll never go to school again! This is my last day!" Mother pulled her son

close. "No, no, child. This is not your last day. But tell us what happened."

"Well, one of my classmates named John said I did some bad things that I didn't do. I'm ashamed to tell you what it was. So I'll not go to school anymore. Besides, he always teases me." The tears started all over again.

"Did you tell your teacher about it?" Mother asked.

"No, I just came home without my teacher knowing a thing about it. He doesn't even know where I am." Jun tried to wipe away the tears, but soon more took their place.

Grandmother stepped forward and took Jun's hand. "All right, now. We'll go to the school and we'll solve this problem!"

The teacher listened carefully to everything that Grandmother and Jun had to say. When Jun was finished, the teacher said, "I'll talk to John and to the other children and get this thing cleared up."

The teacher called for John's parents to come to

the school. After they arrived, the teacher called all the students together, and in front of everyone asked John, "Did you say those bad things about Jun?"

John looked a little afraid. "No, sir. You can ask my classmates. They will tell you I didn't."

So the teacher began asking each child. But all the pupils said that they had not heard John say anything at all like that.

John's mother had a disgusted look on her face. She stepped forward. "My child would not do anything like that. But if he ever does, I will spank and beat him! But I know my child is a good boy. He would never think of saying such a thing!"

The teacher rose. "All right. We'll all go home now, and I'll have to be the one to solve this."

That night the teacher prayed, "Dear God, please help me solve this problem. I know this thing will only get worse if it is not solved. So do help me, God. Tell me what to do. Amen."

The next day the teacher called the children in one by one. "Tell me, did you really

hear John say those bad things about Jun?"

Each one admitted that what Jun said was right—that John really had said those terrible things about Jun.

At last the teacher called in John. "John, tell me the truth. Did you say all those bad things about Jun?"

"No, sir."

"Don't be afraid. A good boy tells the truth."

Now it was John's turn to cry. "Sir, I'm sorry. I really did say those things!"

"Why did you tell a lie?" asked the teacher.

"Because of my parents. They will not trust me anymore if I tell them I lied, and I'm afraid they'll beat me, and I'll be punished."

"No, my child, they will not stop trusting you if you tell them the truth, even if you do have to tell them you told a lie. I'll explain this to your parents."

With tears in his eyes, John asked God to forgive him for the things he had said. And he asked Jun to forgive him too. Jun and John became good friends and soon forgot all about what had happened.