

10. THE SABBATH ON A ROUND WORLD

MR. CANRIGHT the Baptist raises the old objection to the seventh-day Sabbath, that it cannot possibly be kept on a round world. Concerning this, he says:

“The stubborn facts nearer home show that God's children do not, and cannot, all 'observe the same period together.' Everybody knows that it is Saturday in India some twelve hours sooner than it is here, and that it is Saturday here twelve hours after it has ceased to be Saturday there. In Australia the day begins eighteen hours sooner than it does in California. So the seventh-day brethren in California are working nearly the whole time that their brethren in Australia are keeping Sabbath! Come even nearer home than that. The sun sets about three hours later in California than it does in Maine. So when the Seventh-day Adventists in Maine begin to keep the Sabbath at sunset Friday evening, their own brethren in California, where the sun is yet three hours high, will still be at work for three hours! So, very few of them on this earth, 'observe the same period together.' While some of them are keeping Sabbath on one part of the Earth, others of them are at work on another part of the earth.' Seventh-day Adventism Renounced, p. 174.

So there we have it. The world being round, it is impossible to obey God's law in respect to the Sabbath, says Mr. Canright. Strange that God should have made a Sabbath for a world which He knew to be round, isn't it? But there is a still stranger thing. That is, that this very same identical earth that is so round, and which rotates so fast that one cannot possibly keep the Sabbath, presents no difficulties whatever to the person who desires to keep Sunday! This we also are taught by Mr. Canright, for in the same chapter in which he attempts to prove that on account of the earth's being a globe the Sabbath cannot be kept, he confidently informs us that Sunday can be kept. Note his teaching on this point:

“Under the new dispensation of the gospel, other circumstances have arisen plainly and grandly marking another day as the all-important day in Christian memory—the resurrection day.' Ibid., p. 176.

He further says:

“The essential idea is that we should devote one day in seven to religious duties. To secure the highest good, all should unite in observing the same day. From the days of the apostles the Christian church has, with one consent, observed the day on which Jesus rose from the dead, the first day of the week, or Sunday. “-Ibid., p. 181.

He explains that the difficulty about keeping the Sabbath is the existence of a “day line,” and that this jumps about so from place to place that “there is no possible means of fixing the day of the original Sabbath. “ - Ibid., p. 184.

Surely this reasoning is more profound than enlightening. Just how it is that Saturday cannot possibly be kept on a round world, but Sunday can be, is, to say the least, a bit confusing. Does he perhaps mean that on Sunday the earth flattens out, and thus the difficulty is overcome for the day, and that it then resumes its globular form until the next Sunday rolls around? Or does the day line stay fixed on Sunday, so that the particular day can be located, and move about only on Saturday, making it impossible for that day to be found? In any event, there is evidently no difficulty experienced in locating Sunday in any part of the Earth, for, according to Mr. Canright, “from the days of the apostles the Christian church has, with one consent, served the day on which Jesus rose from the dead, the first day of the week, or Sunday.”

“From the days of the apostles.” This covers a period of nineteen hundred years. And, says he, during this period Britains have kept Sunday. They have done it, he claims, 'With one consent,' that is, Christians in America, Europe, Australia, China, wherever they have been found during these nineteen hundred years, have all agreed on the question of which day was Sunday. They have done it “with one consent,” with no mix-up over a round world, a day line, lost time, or any of these scary hobgoblins; they all agree that Sunday, the definite day upon which our Lord was raised, can be found, yea, has been found, and is everywhere known. Upon this all have been agreed for nineteen hundred years; and yet, would you believe it? The seventh can neither be found nor kept! The world is too round. Time keeping has not been accurate

enough. Day lines move about so. The north and south poles present serious obstacles; and there are so many reasons-not the least of which is the fact that men invent such arguments for the press purpose of getting rid of a plain command of God with which their lives are not in harmony.

Surely this kind of reasoning answers itself. What candid person would say that Sunday can be kept on a round world that has a day line, but that Saturday cannot? What advantage could one day possibly have over another in this respect?

Seventh-day Adventists have never claimed that the Sabbath could be kept in all parts of the world at the same moment of time. They may be illiterate, as Mr. Canright tries to make them appear, but their ignorance does not quite reach to the point where they fail to recognize that each day of the week travels around the earth, and that the Sabbath therefore does not come to people in all places at once, and therefore cannot be kept by all people at the same time. What they do claim is that wherever one may be, in the Orient or Occident, he can keep exactly the same day as his fellow Christians keep on the other side of the world, but his keeping of the day must be at the time when the day comes to him, and has no relation to the question as to when it comes to those in other countries.

When God made the Sabbath, He made it for a round world, and made the sun "to rule the day." Genesis 1:16. Therefore, as an obedient child of God, it is my duty to keep the day when in the divine order it comes to me, without finding fault with God's arrangement.

As has been pointed out, Seventh-day Adventists have missions and missionaries in almost every land of earth, the "Land of the Midnight Sun" not excepted, and never yet have we heard from one of them or from their converts any complaint about not being able to find the Sabbath because the world is round, or for any other reason. Sabbath keepers are in no difficulty on this point. The difficulty, when it arises, is always in the mind of someone who desires to oppose and discredit the Sabbath, and never in the mind of one who desires to keep it.

THE DATE LINE, OR DAY LINE

Discussing the so-called lost-time question and the date line, in an article in Present Truth, published in Washington, D.C., in its issue of July 15, 1926, Mr. C. P. Bollman, associate editor of that periodical, said:

"Considerable dust has been thrown, in the study of this subject, by introducing the question of the date line, which the Standard Dictionary (article, 'Date;' subtitle, 'Date Line') defines thus:

"An imaginary line fixed upon as the point where the reckoning of the calendar day changes: in nautical practice, the meridional line 180° from Greenwich, but practically running through Bering Strait and irregularly through the Pacific Ocean. East of this line the day is dated one day earlier than on the west of it."

"This location of the day line, or date line, is not an arbitrary human arrangement, as might at first thought seem to be the case. Its establishment in the Pacific Ocean was clearly due to the position of the continents and the divine plan for peopling the earth. It is conceded by all that Asia as the cradle of the race. Spreading naturally from their original home, the children of men carried the day and week with them to the eastern confines of Asia, and to adjacent islands. But even before this was accomplished, the course of empire had begun to run toward the west, and so continued until the westward and higher tide of settlement and of civilization met the conservatism of the East in the Pacific Ocean. Thus God by His providence established the date line in the only place possible, all things considered. Man did not establish, but simply discovered, this line in the place where the Creator by His providence had put it when He made the world and formed man upon it.

"Technical questions as to the identity of the week and of the weekly Sabbath are never raised, except as an excuse for not obeying the fourth commandment just as it reads, 'The seventh day is the Sabbath.' Nobody has any difficulty 'in identifying any day -of either the month or the week in any part of the earth, except the seventh day.

"Large bodies of Christians, as the Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Methodists, etc., emphasize just as strongly the importance of keeping the definite first day of the week, as do the Sabbatharians the obligation to observe the definite, identical seventh day. Such technical questions are raised, not because of practical difficulties encountered in identifying the Sabbath in any part of the world, but only when an excuse is sought for not complying with the plain and explicit terms of the fourth commandment. The question is not only an impeachment of the intelligence of the great majority of both first-day and seventh-day observers, but infinitely worse yet, it charges the Almighty Himself with folly in giving to the race a

commandment that in its very nature could not be obeyed. All the other days can be clearly defined, but the Creator's memorial of His finished work is so illusive, some would have us believe, that it cannot be identified!

“The fact is that not the Jews only, but the whole world, in the providence of God, have the weekly cycle, to which no reasonable or probable origin can be assigned other than the Mosaic and other ancient and similar accounts of creation. The Creator says in His law: 'Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. . . . The seventh day is the Sabbath.' Ex. 20:8-11.”

LOST TIME

Speaking to the question of a proposed thirteen-month calendar, in the House of Representatives, June 11, 1929, Mr. Sol Bloom, a member from New York City, said this concerning the possibility of losing or gaining time in travel:

“When we speak of losing or gaining a day in travel, we are really giving a new definition of the word. We are defining days, not in terms of the journey of the earth on its axis, but rather in terms of the journey of human beings around the earth, which is quite a different thing. The trouble, of course, grows out of the fact that the traveler moves from the given point at which he began to measure the day. If days be defined in terms of man's journey around the earth, without making allowance for his changing point of measurement, then the most unbelievable possibilities arise.

“Let us imagine an airplane capable of travelling a thousand miles an hour. A man starts westward in such a plane at noon Sunday. The sun is always overhead, because he travels westward at the same rate as the sun. Twenty-four hours later that is, on Monday noon-he reaches again the spot whence he started, and still the sun shines overhead. When he alights from his machine, would he be correct in declaring that it was still Sunday noon?

DAYS CHANGE IN TRAVELLING

“When a person travels, his days are of abnormal length.

“For example, the New Yorker who travels westward across the United States finds it necessary to set his watch back one hour on three different occasions in order that the time by his watch shall correspond with the true course of the day. Otherwise his watch will register 3 P.M. when the California sun is only at high noon.

Pursuing such a course westward at a thousand miles a day will bring the traveler back to his starting place in twenty-four days-estimating the world's circumference at exactly 24,000 miles, for the sake of the illustration.

“But each of his twenty-four days has been twenty-five hours long. Therefore in his trip around the world he had accumulated a total of twenty-four extra hours. If he has not already dropped them an hour at a time, he must finally drop the whole twenty-four at once, if he wishes to keep his reckoning correct. Now twenty-four hours equal one day. Therefore he drops a day. But is a moment really stricken from his life on that account?”

To say that “the Sabbath cannot be kept at the same identical moment of time in different time belts,” is to assume a difficulty which does not exist. As Mr. Bloom says:

“Neither the Sabbath command nor the Bible anywhere speaks of time belts, or of keeping the Sabbath at the same identical moment of time. The Good Book tells us that we should keep the seventh day, and that we should keep it 'from evening to evening.'

“Mr. Speaker, God does not ask man to base his obedience upon what other men in other parts of the world may be doing.”

All of this is good, sound common sense, and moreover is in harmony with the Scripture. The human family, in God's providence, began to make its circuit of the earth from Western Asia and the eastern Mediterranean. One portion of mankind went eastward through Asia into the fringe of islands on that side of the Pacific, carrying the reckoning of time. Another portion of the human family journeyed westward, across Europe and into the New World of the Americas and the island fringe beyond, carrying the reckoning of time. There is exact agreement the world over. In God's providence the westward and the eastward marches of civilization meet in the mid-Pacific, and there, as we have already seen, His own providence, in the history of the human race, fixes the day line.

A just solution to this day-line round-world problem, therefore, shows that no real difficulty exists in the matter of keeping the Sabbath, and that as a matter of fact any day can be found on any part of the earth, and -observed by those who are disposed to observe it.

True, those who keep the Sabbath cannot begin its observance simultaneously in all parts of the world, for, as has already been shown, the day does not begin on all parts of the world at the same time. One cannot begin to keep the seventh day until that day comes to that part of the world where he is. It is not one-seventh part of time, a specific, uniform twenty four hour period to be kept by all at the same identical time, that God has hallowed and sanctified, but the seventh day. It matters not to the Sabbath observer in China whether or not his brethren in America start and close the Sabbath just when he does, but he is particular about keeping the same day that they keep when it comes around to him. The Sabbath is none the less sacred to him because of the fact that it is not observed at the same identical instant of time by others in other lands.

No one in New York or Chicago would refuse a Monday morning's paper because in Berlin or London the people have had their Monday's paper hours before. We each take up Monday's duties when Monday comes, wherever we are. All the Lord asks of man is that he shall keep the seventh day holy when that day comes to him. And it will come. The sun is the divinely appointed timekeeper for man (Genesis 1:15-18), and it never fails. When the holy day comes, keep it.

The Sabbath comes to the East before it comes to the West; but as it passes around the world, it is the same blessed, holy day everywhere. The day line in the Pacific Ocean, which is offered as evidence that the Creator made a world and a Sabbath which do not fit together, is in itself an absolute answer to the argument that the fourth commandment means only that one day in seven should be kept. It is said that Sunday is a seventh part of time; and so Sunday, the first day, will do as well as Saturday, the seventh day. But the fact that every traveler must change his own reckoning of time by one day in crossing the Pacific in order to keep the true sun time, which marks the days for all nations, forever dispenses with this "seventh part of time" theory. The transpacific traveler could not follow the "seventh part of time" theory and still keep his Sunday. For in travelling one direction he would have a week of only six days, and the other way his week would have eight days. Thus if he stuck to Sunday, he would find himself observing either one-sixth part of time or one-eighth part of time during the week in which the line is crossed, depending upon the direction traveled. But no such dilemma ever confronts the Sabbath keeper. He observes a day, not a certain part of time. Wherever he finds "the seventh day" or wherever the seventh day finds him, he keeps it.

IN THE LAND OF THE MIDNIGHT SUN

But can the Sabbath be found and kept in the Land of the Midnight Sun, where it is six months day and six months night? We will permit Mr. Canright to reply to this objection. The following paragraphs were printed by him before he rejected the true Sabbath and while his vision was still clear:

"It is claimed that at the north pole there are several weeks when the sun does not set at all; and again there are weeks when it is dark all the time. How can the seventh day be distinguished and kept there? . . .

'Frequently those who raise this objection are strict observers of Sunday, the first day of the week. If there is any force in this objection, it comes with equal weight against Sunday keeping. How can they keep the first day there? If they can find the first day, cannot we find the seventh? If they can keep Sunday, cannot we keep the Sabbath? But there is no trouble in either case. The days of the week are plainly marked there as well as here. Read the travels of Dr. Kane, Hall, and others who have been there. Did they experience any difficulty in keeping the reckoning of the days? None whatever. The days are marked off by the

revolutions of the earth, which are there, as well as here, indicated by the position of the sun. The most of the year, the sun rises and sets there the same as here; that is, as far north as men have ever penetrated. [Or, in other words, as far north as there are human inhabitants.] So far, there is no difficulty, of course. In midsummer, for a short time, the sun is above the horizon all the time. Being so far north, a person can see the sun in its entire circuit around the earth, day and night. But it is easy to tell when it is overhead at noon, when it is going down in the west, when it is directly underneath at midnight, or when it is rising in the east in the morning. Can we not tell the time of day here by the position of the sun in the heavens without seeing it rise and set? Certainly. Then if we could see it all the way around, could we not tell just as well as when we see it only part of the way around? Of course; and so those testify who have been in the arctic regions.

“But how is it in the winter when it is night for weeks together? I believe there is no time that rays of light cannot be seen in the south at noon of each day. This would be sufficient to mark each day. But the revolution of the earth can be as plainly and as easily told by the position of the stars at night as it can by the sun at day. Any one accustomed to observing the stars knows this. They appear to rise and set and to go around the earth the same as the sun. Indeed, astronomers always reckon the day by the stars. Read the following letter which I received from an eminent astronomer touching this point:

“OGDEN, UTAH, Sept. 24, 1873.

ELDER D. M. CANRIGHT: By observations of the stars, the time can be found out at any time, day or night. Knowing the time at which any star ought to be in the meridian, we find the difference between noon and the observing time, or the local time. Stars being visible in the daytime and at night, on all places of the earth, it is possible to determine the time without seeing the sun.

“(Signed,) 'DR. F. KAMPF,
“Astronomer of the U. S. Corps of Engineers.'

So, then, the exact time of day can be told by the stars, and they can be seen in the absence of the sun. Hence this objection is without foundation. . . .

“Those who keep Sunday live in all parts of the earth, and have traveled all around it both ways. Do they find any difficulty in keeping the first day? Not in the least. This objection is all imaginary; for, practically, no one ever had any such trouble. Seventh-day Adventists and Seventh-day Baptists are scattered nearly around the globe; and yet they find no difficulty in keeping the seventh day Sabbath....

“The Lord commands His servants all around the world to keep the seventh day. Each one is to keep it when it comes where he is, not when it comes where some one else is. When it comes to those in Asia, they can keep it. Several hours later, it comes to England, and then they keep it, and so on around the world.

“This is sufficient to show that there is no such difficulty as this objection supposes.” - The Morality of the Sabbath, pp. 80-87.

“And now to trace you round this rolling world,

An eastern and a western route you've twirled,
And made out nothing by the spacious travel,
But what I call a wretched, foolish cavil.
And now to make you clearly understand
That Sabbath day may be in every land,
At least those parts where mortal men reside
(And nowhere else can precepts be applied),
There was a place where first the orb of light
Appeared to rise, and westward took its flight;
That moment, in that place the day began,
And as he in his circuit westward ran,
Or rather, as the earth did eastward spin,

To parts more westward daylight did begin.
And thus at different times, from place to place,
The day began-this clearly was the case.
And I should think a man must be a dunce
To think that day began all round at once,

So that in foreign lands it does appear, There was a first day there as well as here. And if there was a first,
the earth around, As sure as fate the seventh can be found. And thus you see it matters not a whit, On which
meridian of earth we sit, Since each distinctly had its dawn of light, And ever since, successive day and
night; Thus while our antipodes in darkness sleep, We here the true, primeval Sabbath keep.”

WILLIAM STILLMAX, quoted in Review and Herald, Feb. 3, 1852.