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To say that these are troublous times characterized by strenuous struggles for goods, position and power is to say something trite. It is equally trite to say these times are also characterized by religious indifference and doubts, moral delinquencies and a worship of mammon. So no one questions the need of reforms or of helpful admonition relative to many things.

We who are gathered here are deeply concerned, of course, with the faith and practices of our people. Partaking of the spirit of the times there is more or less questioning among us relative to these things. Conditions are different and are continually changing. Should not some of our practices likewise change is a question frequently asked. In view of all this some even of our devout members ask for advice touching matters of our faith and practice.

## COMMANDMENTS REGARDING THE SABBATH

A question in the minds of many, particularly of our young people, asks what is a proper observance of the Sabbath day—what may we do and may not do on Sunday? And in view of what they see this is a reasonable question to ask. They are familiar with the injunctions given to ancient Israel:

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. (Exodus 20:8-11.)

This quotation is made of course from the Ten Commandments. But concerning the Sabbath we may further read that the Lord spoke to Moses, commanding him thus:

Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, verily my Sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you.

Ye shall keep the Sabbath therefore; for it is holy. \* \* \*

Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel forever. (Exodus 31:13-17.)

A violation of this law of the Sabbath by ancient Israel was a matter so serious that the Lord commanded the offender should be put to death.

In the course of Israelitish history we read that successive prophets rebuked the people for neglect or profanation of the Sabbath. Nehemiah ascribed the affliction of the nation to the forfeiture of divine protection through Sabbath violation (Neh. 13:

15-22). Through Ezekiel the Lord reaffirmed the significance of the Sabbath as a mark of His covenant with Israel, and sternly upbraided those who observed not the day. (Ezek. 20:12-24)

Yes, our moderns say, ancient Israel was taught that the Sabbath day was holy and its profanation was a very serious offense. But conditions then were vastly different from those of today. We agree.

#### TEACHINGS OF MODERN SCRIPTURES

But for guidance in matters of faith and practice, Latter-day Saints are not wholly dependent upon the Bible and ancient prophets. Fortunately we have modern scriptures and modern prophets—invaluable possessions. The Lord has spoken in this dispensation as well as in dispensations of biblical times.

What do these scriptures and prophets teach in our day relative to Sabbath observance and other religious duties? Let us see.

As early as August, 1831, only sixteen months after the Church was organized, the Lord gave a very beautiful revelation through the Prophet Joseph Smith, reaffirming the biblical code of a religious life acceptable to Him.

I quote from Section 59 of the Doctrine and Covenants:

5. Wherefore, I give unto them a commandment, saying thus: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy might, mind, and strength; and in the name of Jesus Christ thou shalt serve Him.

6. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Thou shalt not steal; neither commit adultery, nor kill, nor do anything like unto it.

7. Thou shalt thank the Lord thy God in all things.

8. Thou shalt offer a sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in righteousness, even that of a broken heart and a contrite spirit.

9. And that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day;

10. For verily this is a day appointed unto you to rest from your labors, and to pay thy devotions unto the Most High;

11. Nevertheless thy vows shall be offered up in righteousness on all days and at all times;

12. But remember that on this, the Lord's day, thou shalt offer thine oblations and thy sacraments unto the Most High, confessing thy sins unto thy brethren, and before the Lord.

13. And on this day thou shalt do none other thing, only let thy food be prepared with singleness of heart that thy fasting may be perfect, or, in other words, that thy joy may be full.

14. Verily, this is fasting and prayer, or in other words, rejoicing and prayer.

15. And inasmuch as ye do these things with thanksgiving, with cheerful hearts and countenances, not with much laughter, for this is sin, but with a glad heart and a cheerful countenance—

16. Verily I say, that inasmuch as ye do this, the fulness of the earth is yours, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, and that which climbeth upon the trees and walketh upon the earth;

17. Yea, and the herb, and the good things which come of the earth, whether for food or for raiment, or for houses, or for barns, or for orchards, or for gardens, or for vineyards;

18. Yea, all things which come of the earth, in the season thereof,

are made for the benefit and use of man, both to please the eye and to gladden the heart;

19. Yea, for food and for raiment, for taste and for smell, to strengthen the body and to enliven the soul.

20. And it pleaseth God that He hath given all these things unto man; for unto this end were they made to be used, with judgment, not to excess, neither by extortion.

21. And in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is His wrath kindled, save those who confess not His hand in all things, and obey not His commandments.

22. Behold, this is according to the law and the prophets; wherefore, trouble me no more concerning this matter.

23. But learn that he who doeth the works of righteousness shall receive his reward, even peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come.

24. I, the Lord, have spoken it, and the Spirit beareth record. Amen. (Doctrine and Covenants 59:5-24.)

#### PRESIDENT JOSEPH F. SMITH'S ADVICE

But the critic who wants a free Sunday may say this revelation was given a hundred years ago when conditions were also vastly different from those today. In reply I call attention to the fact that the Church has today a divinely inspired leadership as it had then. What do these leaders say? Let me quote some of the words of President Joseph F. Smith as found in "Gospel Doctrine," as follows:

The Sabbath is a day of rest and worship designated and set apart by special commandment of the Lord to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and we should honor and keep it holy. We should also teach our children this principle.

True, Sunday is a day of rest, a change from the ordinary occupations of the week, but it is more than that. It is a day of worship, a day in which the spiritual life of man may be enriched. A day of indolence, a day of physical recuperation is too often a very different thing from the God-ordained day of rest. Physical exhaustion and indolence are incompatible with a spirit of worship. A proper observance of the duties and devotions of the Sabbath day will, by its change and its spiritual life, give the best rest that men can enjoy on the Sabbath day.

What shall we do on the Sabbath day? \* \* \* Honor the Sabbath day and keep it holy, just as the Lord has commanded us to do. Go to the house of prayer. Listen to instructions. Bear testimony to the truth. \* \* \* When we go home, get the family together. Let us sing a few songs, read a chapter or two from the Bible, Book of Mormon, or Doctrine and Covenants, and discuss principles pertaining to advancement in divine knowledge. \* \* \*

It is imperatively necessary at all times, and especially so when our associations do not afford us the moral and spiritual support which we require for our advancement, that we go to the house of the Lord to worship and mingle with the Saints, that their moral and spiritual influence may help to correct our false impressions, and restore us to that life which the duties and obligations of our conscience and true religion impose upon us."

The reason for this required course upon the Sabbath day is plainly stated in the revelations. It is that one may more fully keep himself unspotted from the world; and to this end, also, the Saints are required to go to the house of prayer and offer up their sacraments on the Sabbath day.

Now, what is the promise to the Saints who observe the Sabbath?

He then read from the revelation given in Section 59 of the Doctrine and Covenants the words of the Lord that I have already recited and proceeded to remark:

All these blessings are promised to those who keep the commandments, among which is the important one, to observe properly the Sabbath day. The Lord is not pleased with people who know these things and do them not.

He went on to say:

Men are not resting from their labors when they plow, and plant and haul and dig. They are not resting when they linger around the home all day on Sunday, doing odd jobs that they have been too busy to do on other days.

Men are not showing zeal and ardor in their religious faith and duty when they bustle off early Sunday morning in automobiles to the canyons, the resorts or places of amusement with their wives and children. Not in seeking pleasure and recreation do they offer their time and attention in the worship of the Lord; nor can they thus rejoice in the spirit of forgiveness and worship that comes with partaking of the holy sacrament.

People are not keeping holy the Sabbath day, when they spend the day loafing around the village ice cream stand or restaurant, playing games or in riding, fishing, shooting, or engaged in physical sports, excursions and outings. Such is not the course that will keep them unspotted from the world, but rather one that will deprive them of the rich promises of the Lord, giving them sorrow instead of joy, and unrest and anxiety instead of the peace that comes with works of righteousness.

I shall end my reading from President Smith with these words:

Let us play and take recreation to our hearts' content during other days, but on the Sabbath let us rest, worship, go to the house of prayer, partake of the sacrament, eat our food with singleness of heart, and pay our devotions to God, that the fulness of the earth may be ours, and that we may have peace in this world and eternal life in the world to come. (Gospel Doctrine pages 304-309.)

#### THE FIRST PRESIDENCY'S APPEAL

And now I give you a statement of the views of President Grant's administration relative to Sabbath observance. A few years ago the First Presidency published an editorial on this topic in the Deseret News. It was entitled "Sunday and The Home" and is as follows:

The Lord's day is a holy day—not a holiday. It has been set apart as a day of rest and worship. A sacred Sabbath begets reverence for God. It is not pleasing in His sight that the day be given over to pleasure seeking in places of amusement or elsewhere.

Sunday Schools and meetings have been so arranged as to meet the convenience of the people and leave a considerable portion of the Sabbath day without Church appointments. We earnestly appeal to the people to keep their meeting appointments faithfully and to utilize that portion of Sunday not appointed for meetings in promoting family association in the home, with the purpose of stimulating and establishing greater home fealty, a closer companionship among parents and children, and more intimate relations among all kindred.

We believe that it is unnecessary for families to go beyond their own homes or those of their kindred for the relaxation and association which are proper for the Sabbath day, and we therefore discourage more traveling than is necessary for this purpose and attendance upon appointed meetings.

Let all unnecessary labor be suspended and let no encouragement be given by the attendance of members of the Church at places of amusement and recreation on the Sabbath day. If Sunday is spent in our meetings and in our homes great blessings will come to our families and communities.

HEBER J. GRANT,  
ANTHONY W. IVINS,  
CHARLES W. NIBLEY,  
First Presidency.

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#### SABBATH OBSERVANCE A BLESSING

Thus, if we please the Lord, among other things we must do is to keep holy the Sabbath day. And the way to do this has not essentially changed from the days of Moses and ancient Israel down through the ages to the present moment.

But sad as it is to see, the modern Christian world has almost forgotten the sanctity of the Sabbath. With the vast majority the day has ceased to be holy. Instead it is a holiday, a day of amusements and pleasure-seeking, of all kinds of activities foreign to worship and holiness.

I speak of these things because some of our own people are becoming worldly minded with respect to the Sabbath. This is certainly displeasing to the Lord who will certainly withhold blessings otherwise obtainable.

We read in the Doctrine and Covenants these words:

"There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated. And when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated." (Doc. and Cov. 130:20-21.)

This is a law of the universe, governing things material, as all scientists know. Through the Prophet Joseph Smith we learn that it also applies to things spiritual.

The blessings divinely promised for keeping holy the Lord's Sabbath are invaluable, as the scriptures indicate. Hence let no Latter-day Saint sacrifice these blessings by going fishing, deer hunting, golfing, amusement seeking, joy riding, to sports, movies and games, or engaging in other Sabbath-breaking activities.

Brethren and sisters, let us show our confidence in the Lord and in the divinity of this Church by abstaining from participation in the sinful practices of Babylon, so common on every hand. In any case, as surely as the night follows the day we shall finally reap as we have sown. The Lord help us to sow wisely and well I pray in the name of Christ our Lord, Amen.