

Deus Vult  
By Rev. E. J. POOLE-CONNOR

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The strength of the Lord's Day Observance Society lies in its conviction that the keeping of Sunday as a day of rest and worship is a matter of obedience to the Fourth Commandment. In other words, it is a matter of compliance with the will of God.

The Society is quite prepared to show :

- that Sabbath Observance is a beneficent practice ;
- that Sabbath Observance assists in keeping body, mind, and soul in a healthy condition ;
- that Sabbath Observance safeguards the interests of the toiler ;
- that Sabbath Observance promotes happy social intercourse and strengthens family ties ;
- that Sabbath Observance affords leisure for the cultivation of all that is highest and best in man, as well as opportunities for more definitely Christian activities.

But it is not on considerations of this nature, however important, that the L.D.O.S. rests its case. The primary ground of its work and witness is this : that God has said " Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it *holy*," and that it is not only the privilege but it is also the duty of His creatures to obey His command:

Every movement that is to be effective must be based on strong principle. Human action is the outcome of a variety of reasons. Certain courses are followed because they are thought to be expedient, or desirable, or advantageous, or ethically right. But none of these springs of action—not even the last—is one tith as powerful as the assured belief that this or that should be done because it is the Divine will.

When the Crusaders in the eleventh century and onwards set out to deliver the Holy Places from the Saracens they were actuated by many, and sometimes by very inferior, motives. It is safe, however, to say that not one of these would in itself have been adequate to give effect to the undertaking, apart from the conviction embodied in the Latin phrase then in everyone's mouth, **Deus Vult**, God wills it. (Whether in their particular case God did will it is open to question. My point is : it was conviction, and not expediency, that alone made their enterprise possible).

So with the question of Sabbath Observance. If regarded merely as a matter of general advisability, or if it is advocated on any other ground save that of belief that God has instituted it, it will not carry us far.

If the constant assaults made upon this God-given heritage are to be successfully resisted, it is of the utmost importance that we should be able to emblazon upon our banners the motto of the Crusaders of old. Nothing else than **Deus Vult** will carry us through.

What are the grounds then upon which we rest our belief in the Divine origin and perpetual obligation of the Sabbath Day?

(1) In the first place, it is generally admitted that the Sabbath was one of two primeval institutions (Genesis 2. 3); the other being that of Marriage (Genesis 2.22-24). It is notable that in the case of the latter our Lord referred men to the conditions "in the beginning," as affording the truest pattern of what married life should be. We may reasonably infer that He would do the same in regard to the Sabbath.

(2) Sabbath Observance was incorporated in the Ten Commandments, with a introductory phrase calling attention to its earlier existence. "*Remember the Sabbath Day!*" Here again there is proof that "the Sabbath was made for man," for the Ten Commandments are not temporary or national, but universal, in their scope. They are the codification of eternal principles of right and wrong. As to their present application, if an Apostle could quote any one of them as expressive of God's will for Christian people (as St. Paul did in Ephesians 6. 1-3) we are warranted in concluding all of them to be of a similar character.

(3) Although the Sabbath Law is not exclusively Jewish, the great importance attached to Sabbath Observance amongst the Jews helps to give the measure of its general importance. Exhortations to keep the Sabbath, and solemn reproofs for neglecting to do so, were an integral part of the ministry of the Hebrew Prophets. Nehemiah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea and Amos—to mention only a few. The Israelites were sedulously trained to keep the Sabbath holy; to do so was part of their national life. All references to the subject in the New Testament must be considered against this background. It is sometimes said that the Apostles gave very little warning against desecrating the Christian Sabbath. There was no



need for them to do so. No normal Jew or Christian, would ever dream of violating the Divinely-given Fourth Commandment.

(4) The essential feature of Sabbath Observance is the hallowing of one day in seven—which day of the seven is so to be set apart is of lesser importance. There are good reasons for believing that the Day observed in primeval times was lost to Israel during the period of Egyptian bondage, and that the association of the Jewish Sabbath with the Exodus from Egypt is strong indication of this (see Deuteronomy 5. 15). If such were the case, the Day would be different, but the Sabbath principle would be retained. In a similar way the change from the seventh day to the first, following our Blessed Lord's glorious Resurrection—thus making the Sabbath the LORD'S Day—altered its position in the week, and added a new sacredness to it. But this did not affect its essential character. One Day in Seven was still set apart for God.

(5) Our Lord set an example of Sabbath Observance by regularly attending the Synagogue on that day (see Luke 4. 16). He was charged with breaking the Sabbath, it is true, by false teachers who were "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." But with what specific breaches was He charged? Was it with what we should now call joining in Sunday Games, or promoting Sunday Variety Shows? We might think so, to hear some persons talk nowadays. It was His healing of the sick, and the permission which He gave to His disciples to pluck and eat ears of corn, that were the head and front of His offence. If those that speak so loudly and ignorantly of our Lord's example as warranting a secularising of the Lord's Day were really to act as He did, they would be regarded to-day as rigid Sabbatarians!

(6) Sabbath Observance is not abrogated by the Apostle Paul's references to the abolition of the Jewish Sabbaths—note that the word is in the plural—in his letter to the Colossians (chapter 2. 16). There were more Sabbaths than the weekly one in the Jewish Calendar. That it is the purely Jewish Sabbaths, or the weekly Sabbath in its strictly Jewish aspect, and not the primeval "Sabbath made for man" that is referred to, the context makes abundantly clear.

It is on these and similar Biblical grounds we base our belief that Sabbath Observance is the

will of God, and not primarily a matter of human appointment or social legislation.

We would ask, is any man at liberty to violate any of God's Ten Commandments, so far as he is able to keep them? Is he free to commit murder, or adultery, or to dishonour his parents, or to steal? If he is not, then it is his duty as well as his privilege to keep holy the Sabbath Day. **Deus Vult!** God wills it!

We have spoken of the privilege and the duty of Sabbath Observance. While we stress the latter, let us be careful so to use God's Holy Day that the former aspect of it may be prominent. Let us give no occasion for it to be thought that we regard it primarily as a Day dominated by "Thou shalt not." Let us rejoice and be glad in it, and let us help others to do so; making it, in the highest sense, "A Day of Joy and Light." May we have grace so to rejoice in THE LORD that we shall, with equal heartiness, rejoice in His Day!

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## Lord's Day Observance Society