

## Chapter 2

# FROM SABBATH TO WEEKEND: RELIGIOUS ADVOCACY FOR A WEEKLY DAY OF RECREATION

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The modern weekend is a relatively recent innovation, brought about largely by impersonal forces such as industrialization and the emergence of a large middle class. But it was also brought about by a coalition of labor leaders and religious reformers. The earliest advocates for a weekly day of recreation were in fact Sabbatarians – those who believed civil law should reflect the fourth commandment’s injunction to “keep the Sabbath holy.”

In contrast to abolitionists and suffragists, who are remembered as successful and progressive, Sabbatarians are often remembered as failures and as enemies of religious liberty. To be sure, there are some good reasons for such judgment. When Jewish, Catholic, and Lutheran immigrants arrived in America with diverse Sabbath practices in the nineteenth century, for example, many Protestant Sabbatarians supported Sabbath laws as a symbolic means of asserting that America was a Christian nation. Moreover, in the long run, Sabbatarians largely failed in their goal to secure quiet Sundays free from both labor and recreation. Sunday or “blue laws” may remain on the books, but they are largely ignored and regarded as relics of an earlier era.

Still, the judgment that Sabbatarians were on the wrong side of history is too simple. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, a spate of articles, books, and organizations are turning to Sabbath-keeping as an antidote to the frantic and harried pace of modern life. Not only religious but also secular authors and organizations are appropriating the concept of Sabbath as a resource for resistance to time poverty. Take Back

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Your Time, an organization that advocates for more time off for American workers, has partnered with religious organizations toward this end; Balance4Success has a campaign entitled Taking Back Sunday; and atheist author Sam Harris has stated that “We may even want, for perfectly rational reasons, to say we want a Sabbath in this country” (Meacham, 2007, p. 58). Simply put, rumors of Sabbatarianism’s death have been greatly exaggerated.

Judging Sabbatarianism a singular failure is also ironic because the movement actually succeeded at least in some respects. “In their effort to realize their vision of a day set apart from the world,” writes McCrossen (1999), “Sabbatarians lost the battles but won the war: the state does not treat Sunday like the other days of the week. More importantly, neither do the American people” (p. 151). Sabbatarians were also successful with respect to an accomplishment for which they are seldom credited: establishing a weekly day of recreation. The weekend, which has become one of the most central and enduring features of modernity, arrived first in England and America – two nations with the strongest Sabbatarian traditions. The question arises: Is this a coincidence?

This paper argues that the weekend arrived first in England and America largely because of Sabbatarian advocacy. The topic is treated in three sections. First, Puritan Sabbatarians, especially in England but also in America, advocated for designated days of recreation as a means of preserving a religious Sabbath free from labor and recreation. Second, shifting the focus to America, nineteenth-century Sabbatarians were the earliest and most vocal supporters of the Saturday half-holiday movement. Third, Jewish Sabbatarians took the lead in advocating for the five-day week in the early twentieth century. Sabbatarians were thus in part innovators who helped usher in a distinctively modern ecology of time.

### **English Puritans and Days of Recreation**

We speak of leisure quantitatively – as a thing that can be measured – but perhaps the most significant difference between premodern and modern leisure is the qualitative transformation that made it measurable. In medieval England, as with premodern societies more generally, the boundary between labor and leisure was more fluid than fixed (Thomas, 1964; Thompson, 1967). Moreover, labor was seasonal and irregular. Seedtime and harvest were punctuated by many ales, wakes, fairs, saints’ days, and festival seasons such as the twelve days of Christmas and pre-Lenten carnival. Since the industrial revolution, by contrast, leisure has tended to be

periodic and regular, taking place primarily on weekends.

This transformation of leisure began as part of a larger transformation of society that had two primary sources, both associated with Puritans – the Reformation and the dissolution of traditional society (Hall, 1989). The emerging system of merchant capitalism began the process of decoupling labor from the rhythms of seedtime and harvest, and gave artisans and laborers more incentive to work longer hours than had peasants for whom compensation was not as closely tied to time. By the early to mid-seventeenth century, historians thus identify an “industrious sort of people” (Hill, 1967, pp. 124–144) and “an industrious revolution” (De Vries, 2008) – a trend toward longer labor and less leisure that preceded the industrial revolution. This newfound work ethic and “spirit of capitalism,” in Weber’s famous phrase, found ideological justification in the Reformation doctrine of vocation, which effectively refashioned work from a necessary evil to a source of moral virtue.

The historical implications of the work ethic for recreation and leisure are complicated and contested. While much popular literature depicts Puritans as opposed to most forms of recreation and leisure, many historians (Daniels, 1995; Struna, 1977; Wagner, 1979) suggest that the Puritans were fairly typical Elizabethans in their enjoyment of singing, dancing, hunting, fishing, wrestling, bowling, and even drinking and sex. The confusion is largely a category error. With respect to both belief and behavior, Puritans affirmed and enjoyed what they called “lawful recreations,” or those activities they judged refreshing rather than dissipating. For reasons of both doctrine and discipline, however, they vehemently denounced and prohibited “play” in the sense of unruly festivals that entailed rituals of inversion (Hall, 1989, pp. 166–212). Doctrinally, Puritans opposed saints’ days and the liturgical calendar for their Roman and pagan associations, as well as for the suggestion that some days are more holy than others. With respect to discipline, Puritans were also concerned about the rowdiness and licentiousness associated with church-ales, maypoles, Morris dances, Christmas wassailing, and pre-Lenten carnival (Burke, 1978, pp. 208–209). Protestant reformers thus pursued a program of calendrical reform. Whatever the causal relationship between Protestantism and the spirit of capitalism, Puritans and the industrious sort of people both had an interest in cleansing or “de-festivalizing” (Cressy, 1989, p. xii) the medieval calendar and replacing the old, irregular patterns of labor and leisure with a more regular pattern of work and rest.

Central to this project of calendrical reform was the Sabbath. To late

sixteenth century writers such as Philip Stubbs (1583), Richard Greenham (1592), and Nicholas Bownd (1606), the Sabbath was a holy day, not a holiday.<sup>1</sup> In their view, keeping the Sabbath holy entailed ceasing not only from labor but also from physical recreation because, as Bownd said, “we cannot have the present delight in the use of [honest recreations and lawful delights], and yet at the same time be occupied in the hearing of the word, and such other parts of God’s holy worship and service as he requireth of us upon the Sabbath-day” (Cox, 1865, p. 150). Although at the beginning of the seventeenth century such Sabbatarian views can be found among Anglicans as well as Puritans, and in fact the distinction between Anglican and Puritan was not yet as firm as it would soon become, the view that recreation refreshes the body and rest refreshes the soul increasingly came to be associated with Puritanism. Sunday, in this view, is the day of the soul; because “recreation belongs not to rest but to labour,” recreation’s proper time is the “secular” days of the week (E.E. as quoted in White, 1635, p. 234). Although this statement is commonly attributed to Francis White, the Anglican Bishop of Ely, often with the implication that Anglican and Puritan views regarding Sunday recreation were relatively continuous into the seventeenth century (e.g., McCrossen, 2000; Struna, 1996), White is actually quoting a writer whom he is criticizing. To White (1635), one of the main purposes of the Sabbath was always “to refresh and recreate people after toile and hard labour” (White, p. 237, see also Cox, 1865, pp. 166–73). That White’s book was commissioned by King Charles, dedicated to Archbishop William Laud, and subtitled “A Defense of the Orthodoxal Doctrine of the Church of England against Sabbatarian novelty,” suggests that by the early seventeenth century, Anglican and Puritan views on Sunday recreation were distinct. In short, the view that recreation “belongs not to rest” had become a Puritan distinctive.

But if recreation was not allowed on Sunday, when was it possible? None other than King James I asked this very question of those who would restrict Sunday recreation. When, in 1617, the magistrates of Lancashire County outlawed all Sunday recreation, James responded with a declaration affirming “the Anglican position” that recreation belonged properly to holy days, including Sundays. Acknowledging the emerging challenge of finding time for recreation, James wrote in *The Book of Sports*, “For when shall the common people have leave to exercise, if not upon the Sundays and holy days, seeing they must apply their labour and win their living in all working days?” (as quoted in Whitaker, 1933, p. 93).

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1 For more accessible excerpts of these works, see Cox, 1865, pp. 140–141, 145–151.

The conflict over Sunday recreation was thus political as well as theological. Because Sunday recreation competed with worship, Puritans seeking to reform the culture and the Church of England had a vested interest in Sunday as a day of rest, understood narrowly as worship and “the hearing of the word.” The church and crown, by contrast, because they sought to win the allegiance of the people and ward off any seditious assemblies (Hill, 1967, pp. 196–197), had a vested interest in Sunday as a day of recreation. Simply put, Sabbatarianism became more controversial in the years leading up to the English Civil War because it signified nonconformity.

Puritans were not deaf to the concern regarding time for recreation. In order to maintain and promote strict adherence to Sunday as a day of rest and worship, they advocated for designated days of recreation. Twenty years prior to the *Book of Sports* controversy, for example, Bownd wrote:

We do exhort them that be in government to give some time to their children and servants, for their honest recreation, upon other days, that they be not driven to take it upon this, seeing they can no more want it altogether than their ordinary food. And as we have seen that they are bound to give them some time to work for themselves, unless they will, by their over-much straitness, compel them to it upon the day of rest; so must they spare also some few hours for their refreshing now and then; seeing they can no more want the one than the other. (Cox, 1865, p. 150)

Similar views were advocated by William Perkins (Birley, 1993, p. 80) and, most notably, by the Puritan-led Long Parliament. In 1647, after burning the *Book of Sports*, Parliament passed an ordinance on June 8 that abolished all holy days and festivals other than the weekly Sabbath, including Christmas, Easter, and Whitsuntide. The same ordinance established “That all scholars, apprentices, and other servants” were to have “such convenient reasonable recreation and relaxation from their constant and ordinary labours on every second Tuesday in the month throughout the year, as formerly they have used to have on such afore-said festivals, commonly called Holy Days” (Ordinances of the Puritan Parliament as quoted in Whitaker, 1933, pp. 156–157). An additional ordinance passed on June 28, 1647, established that shops were to close and masters not to detain apprentices or servants “on the said day of recreation, . . . unless market-days, fair-days, or other extraordinary occasion” (Ordinances of the Puritan Parliament as quoted in Cox, 1865, p. 235).<sup>2</sup> This idea of designated days of recreation clearly traveled to New

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2 There are different versions of the texts in circulation. For excerpts and discussions see (Cox, 1865, p. 235; Hill, 1967, pp. 164, 197–198; Scholes, 1934, pp. 110–111; Solberg, 1977, p. 158; Wagner, 1979, pp. 149–150; Whitaker, 1933, pp. 156–157).

England, where Rhode Island passed a similar ordinance in 1654, and there is some evidence of Tuesday recreation in Massachusetts (Struna, 1996, p. 87).

Tuesday as a day of recreation does not appear to have been practiced widely in either England or New England. Nevertheless, the significance of the Puritan doctrine of the Sabbath for recreation is not merely in what it negated, but also in what it affirmed. Puritans advocated a pattern of recreation that was not only lawful and moderate, but also secular and regular. In this sense, modern leisure, in both its regularity and brevity, looks less like a departure from Puritan ideals than a fulfillment of them. Oliver Cromwell, who retired to Hampton Court from Saturday to Monday instead of taking the long summer vacations preferred by his predecessors, is thus said to have invented “that modified form of enjoyment to which hard-worked citizens have, in our day, given the name of the ‘week-end’” (Gardiner, 1901, p. 288).

### **Nineteenth-Century Sabbatarians and the Saturday Half-Holiday in America**

Although Sabbath-keeping enjoyed a kind of taken-for-granted status in seventeenth century New England, Sabbatarianism became a particularly intense political movement – what Chamlee (1968) called “the Sabbath crusade” – in the nineteenth century. When the Post Office Act of 1810 effectively opened post offices on Sundays, for example, Sabbatarians throughout the United States sent hundreds of petitions to Congress to protest (Fuller, 2003; John, 1995; Kramnick & Moore, 1996; McCrossen, 2000; Rohrer, 1987). This fervor was in part a function of the disestablishment of church and state. Given their negative associations with the Church of England, most evangelical and other Protestant Christians welcomed disestablishment, at least at the federal level. They did not, however, abandon their ideal of America as a Christian nation, but rather pursued the goal through more voluntary means (Handy, 1971). And the Sabbath, in the words of Lyman Beecher (1835), was “Heaven’s consecrated instrumentality for the efficacious administration of the government of mind in a happy social state” (p. 40). In the absence of an established church, practices such as Sabbath-keeping bore the burden of preserving America as a Christian nation.

A second reason for the politicization of the Sabbath is related to industry (McCrossen, 2000). During the half century starting in 1840, the United States became the most modern and industrialized nation

in the world. As factories went up in northeastern cities, factory owners and workers tussled over work habits, time regularity, and even workers' behavior after hours. Immigrants and native-born American workers from more rural environs arrived at factories with "premodern" work habits including drinking, gambling, singing, storytelling, reading the newspaper, coming and going without permission, and playing games of various sorts (Gutman, 1976). Owners, by contrast, employed the clock, the whistle, the work ethic, and piece-rate work as means of bringing regularity to worker behavior. Worker resistance found expression through tardiness, absenteeism, turnover, and the founding of labor unions. Over time, owners and workers struck a compromise: owners received the regularity they wanted, while workers secured shorter hours.

A byproduct of this industrializing process was the separation of leisure from work with respect to both time and space. As urban density made open space scarce and displaced forms of recreation familiar to those who had arrived from farms and shipyards, workers and their children took their games and festivals to the only public space they had — the streets. They also took to the saloons, theaters, and dime museums provided by leisure entrepreneurs, such as P.T. Barnum, who catered to the new demand for "going out" and who created new entertainment districts such as Coney Island and Times Square. Other groups responded differently to this crisis of leisure space. Members of the middle class largely responded by *separating* themselves into private clubs, taking excursions to resorts, and renovating their homes to include parlors with sofas and pianos. Methodists responded by *imitating* these resorts, creating alternative religious resorts such as the Chautauqua Institution, Ocean Grove, and Asbury Park, while the evangelical YMCA movement provided urban youth with pools and gymnasiums as alternative places to play. Yet another creative response to the crisis of leisure space was the parks movement. Unitarians (Bellows, 1857; Hale, 1900; Sawyer, 1847) in particular believed that the path to improving and uplifting immigrants and workers lay in *integrating* them with "the moral and religious part of the community" (Sawyer, 1847, p. 247) in public spaces such as Central Park. Although much of what has been written about the parks movement highlights the role of reformers, park advocacy came also from workers demanding more and better places to play (Hardy, 1982; Rosenzweig, 1979).

If the separation of leisure from work resulted in new, designated recreation spaces, so too with time (McCrossen, 2000). The byproduct of weekdays becoming pure workdays was that the demand for recreation

among workers became concentrated on Sunday. Although theologically liberal Christians including Unitarians and many members of mainline churches increasingly accepted Lyceum lectures, the opening of museums, and other cultural opportunities as consistent with Sabbath ideals, they also generally opposed boisterous and especially commercialized recreation on Sunday. Indeed, not only clergy and religious moralists but many who cared about respectability and decorum desired to maintain the quiet standards of “the Puritan Sabbath.” Just as reformer initiative and worker discontent combined to generate the idea of parks as a designated leisure space, so too they combined to generate the idea of Saturday afternoon as a designated leisure time.

The Saturday half-holiday movement got its start in England, where as early as 1845, *Evangelical Magazine* joined the Early Closing Association (founded in 1842) in advocating for early closing on Saturday (Whitaker, 1973, p. 50). To be sure, the idea of a Saturday half-holiday was not entirely new in the nineteenth century. At least one English source from the eighteenth century (Bourne, 1725) finds “a great Deference paid to *Saturday afternoon*” (p. 116), which the author attributes to Sabbath observance laws predating the Reformation. (More specifically, he attributes this deference to laws dating to 958 in England and 1203 in Scotland, when the Sabbath was understood to begin on Saturday at “noontide” – i.e., three o’clock in the afternoon). Nevertheless, the long hours required of industrial laborers forced the issue. The issue was also forced by “St. Monday,” a tradition of absenteeism on the part of some workers attributed to a combination of worker resistance to the regulation of time and the particular problem of Sunday drinking that carried over into Monday (Reid, 1976, 1996). Due to its transgressive nature, this early and unofficial version of the two-day weekend posed a cultural problem. The Saturday half-holiday, by providing a designated and approved time for lawful recreation and Sabbath preparation, presented a solution that appealed to employers and Sabbatarians alike.

Although the Saturday half-holiday movement did not gain much traction in the United States until the mid-1880s, Sabbatarians advocated for it decades earlier. A “more holy observance of the Sabbath will follow,” wrote Unitarian minister Frederick Sawyer (1847), if evening labor is abolished and Saturday afternoon is established “as a *quasi* holiday period, when neither clerks, apprentices, journeymen, nor any other class of persons, are expected to be at their business posts” (pp. 318–319). Sawyer was sympathetic to clerks and apprentices who recreated on Sunday, but proposed Saturday as a solution to the Sunday problem:



[A]s much as I prize the institution of the Sabbath, and believe in the wisdom of observing it as a day sacred to rest, as well as to holy devotion, I should be more astonished, if, under such circumstances, those over-tasked clerks and apprentices should fail to desecrate it. No! If a holy observance of the Sabbath is to be brought about, we must begin at the root of the evil, and give all classes time, during secular hours, for recreation and amusement, so that, when the Sabbath comes, it shall find us prepared, both in body and in mind, to welcome it as a delightful season of rest, both from the toils of business, and the excitements of amusements. (pp. 319–320)

The following year, Justin Edwards (1848), temperance crusader and secretary of the American and Foreign Sabbath Union, also endorsed the idea of a Saturday half-holiday. Before the movement really gained any momentum, the New York Sabbath Committee (1881) was also on record in its favor:

The importance of healthful recreation, and the free opening of museums, art galleries, etc., for the working classes, no one can deny. But this end is reached by the Saturday half-holiday, and by the shorter hours of daily labor, becoming so common in this country; while Sunday is saved to the higher uses and enjoyments of home and the worship of God. (p. 17)

Likewise, Sabbatarian activist Wilbur Crafts (1894) favored early closing on Saturday in order to provide “time for recreation outside the Sabbath” (p. 419).

From the earliest days of the movement in England, women especially were believed to benefit from more time for Sabbath preparation. In America, the Young Ladies Christian Association (“A Saturday Half-Holiday,” 1874) advocated for half-holidays as early as 1874. Later, perhaps in part because women were believed to suffer disproportionately from “neurasthenia,” a disorder of the central nervous system caused by the new fast-paced but physically sedentary work environment, the federal government’s standards for the Employment of Women (Juvenile Protective Association of Chicago, 1918) stated that “The Saturday half-holiday should be considered an absolute essential for women under all conditions” (p. 3).

In 1887, 40 years after Sawyer first proposed a half-holiday, and exactly 240 years after the Puritan-led English Parliament first proposed designated days of recreation, New York State passed a law recognizing every Saturday afternoon as a legal holiday (Laws of the State of New York, 1887). Under pressure from unhappy financiers and employers, the state senate, which had previously approved the bill unanimously,

sent the governor a bill less than a year later proposing to repeal the legislation, and to limit the half-holiday to summers only. Labor unions protested, calling the Saturday half-holiday “the greatest boon ever bestowed on workingmen” (Stevens, 1912, p. 524). Governor David Hill also protested. Strictly speaking, he pointed out the law affected only banks and public offices. “There is otherwise no compulsion anywhere. The law may be regarded as simply declaratory of the public desire that the people should observe the day, but it provides no penalties for its violation” (*Public papers of David B. Hill, governor, 1888*, 2008, p. 67). In defending the legislation, Hill also invoked the argument from Sabbath observance:

Recreation is desirable as well as rest and religious worship. If Sunday is the only day upon which recreation is possible to a large portion of our population, it will of necessity be used by them for that purpose. Our American Sunday will be better observed by setting apart the whole or a portion of every Saturday for the recreation and amusement which is now being crowded into Sunday. (p. 67)

The first Saturday holiday legislation in America was thus grounded in part on “civil Sabbatarianism,” the view that Sabbath observance was a public good and not merely a matter of private religiosity.

Although the New York law was “declaratory of public desire” rather than compulsory, the public desire was great indeed. Support for the Saturday half-holiday was widespread, and included Catholics as well as Protestants, and liberals as well as conservatives. The practice spread throughout the state and the country, and in 1892 Congress passed a similar half-holiday law pertaining to the District of Columbia (“An Act Making Saturday a half holiday”). The earliest and most vocal advocates of the movement, however, had been those opposed to Sunday recreation. From Sawyer to Edwards, and from the Young Ladies Christian Association to the New York Sabbath Committee, nineteenth-century Sabbatarians’ advocacy for the Saturday half-holiday was not a reluctant accommodation to modernity but an innovation born out of the old, Puritan distinction between rest and recreation. As one historian (Whitaker, 1973) wrote of the British context, “advocates of the claims of Sunday as a day apart were in the forefront of the movement for greater opportunities for recreation on the week-day” (p. 44).

### **The Five-Day Week, 1900–1940**

As a result of agitation by organized labor, combined with the grow-

ing conviction among Progressive reformers and enlightened business leaders that shorter hours would continue facilitating increased productivity, working hours continued to decrease between 1900 and 1920. Although data on average working hours are “treacherous abstractions that disguise enormous differences between regions and industries” (Rodgers, 1978, p. 106), the data suggest that between 1905 and 1920 nonagricultural work decreased from 57.2 to 50.6 hours. In manufacturing, during the same period, the workweek decreased from 54.5 hours to 48.1 hours. The first two decades of the twentieth century were thus the “most productive period of shorter hours agitation in United States history” (Roediger & Foner, 1989, p. 177).

The five-day week and two-day weekend were thus in part byproducts of shorter hours. Labor leaders, however, were generally indifferent to how those hours were organized, and in any case were not the earliest advocates of the five-day week. As with the half-holiday, advocacy for the five-and-two rhythm was grounded on a distinction between rest and recreation, and promoted primarily by those with religious interests. This time, however, the impetus came from Jews rather than Christians.

The movement for the five-day week picked up in the 1920s in New York City, especially in the garment industry. The Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America resolved to pursue the five-day week in 1920, and unions began calling strikes between 1920 and 1927 (Hunnicut, 1988, p. 71). This was not a coincidence. At the time, one in three city residents, and an even higher percentage of garment industry workers, was Jewish. Indeed, the earliest champion of the five-day week was Rabbi Bernard Drachman, president of the Orthodox Jewish Sabbath Alliance.

Drachman advocated for the five-day week as early as 1910, no less than sixteen years before the American Federation of Labor (AFL) took up the cause (Hunnicut, 1979). His rationale was simple. When it came to Sabbath-keeping, Jews in America faced a dilemma. They desired to observe the Sabbath on Saturday but lived in a nation with deeply Protestant rhythms and laws. Although some Reform Jews adopted Sunday as their Sabbath for practical reasons, Orthodox Jews did not. The problem was not just that Orthodox Jews sought Saturday off from work, but they also sought the freedom to open their shops and return to work on Sunday – an approach that ran into strong resistance from Protestants. Drachman articulated the five-day week as a way through this impasse. Realizing the “practical difficulties” of extending different communities of faith the liberty to rest and worship on different days of the week, Drachman (1915/1979) said:

I wish to put before you a proposal, based upon a practical consideration of the question. . . : the proposal of a weekly Holy day and Holiday, that is to say that there should be two days of rest weekly. This solution of the problem would, I believe, cope with all the difficulties, which are so keenly felt by all those interested in the question of Sabbath observance. (p. 223)

Although his proposal for two full days off from work was innovative, Drachman's distinction between holy day and holiday was essentially the same as that made by Protestant Sabbatarians before him.

By the 1920s, supporters of the five-day week included organized labor; Orthodox, Reform, and Conservative rabbis; Seventh Day Adventists, who also wished to worship on Saturday; Catholics, who had less attachment to the work ethic than most Protestants, as well as stronger sympathies for ethnic immigrants and the working class; and even a few business leaders, most notably Henry Ford. Curiously, Protestant Sabbatarians – those who led the charge for the Saturday half-holiday – seemed ambivalent. The New York Sabbath Committee (1915), though it published Drachman's (1915) proposal for the five-day week both in its bulletin and as an offprint, prefaced the article with three questions:

First, since neither the Divine law nor human necessity requires more than one weekly rest day, would not two be resisted as excessive? second, since it is difficult to protect one, how could we hope to protect two? third, what kind of a Sabbath would either have, while the other enjoyed a hilarious holiday? (p. 8)

Other explanations for Protestant ambivalence to the five-day week are also possible. Sabbatarianism was on the decline in the early twentieth century, in part because it was a victim of its own success. In the nineteenth century, Sabbatarians forged successful alliances with workers because they shared a common interest in abolishing Sunday work. Although Sabbatarians' interest in Sunday as *Sabbath rest* was narrower than labor's interest in Sunday as *rest and recreation*, political expediency united them in the cause of the civil Sabbath. Opposition to Sunday labor, however, increased the possible uses of Sunday leisure, and once Sunday leisure largely was secured, the interests of workers and reformers diverged. Taking Chicago as an example, whereas the Chicago Sabbatarian Association had partnered with labor unions in the 1880s to oppose Sunday trains, the Association alienated workers by opposing Sunday opening of the Columbian Exposition in 1893, which featured the world's first Ferris wheel among other amusements (McCrossen, 2000; Mirola, 1999). In response to the argument that one person's Sunday amusement meant another's Sunday labor, the AFL and Knights of Labor

responded that Sunday labor was not itself a problem, so long as all workers received at least one day off per week. Simply put, workers who once supported blue laws now opposed them. By the 1920s, Protestant Sabbatarians were almost certainly ambivalent about the five-day week in part because the movement's most vocal advocates – Jews, Adventists, and organized labor – tended also to be the most vocal critics of blue laws.

Arguably, Sabbatarians were victims of their own success in a deeper sense as well. Not only did Sabbatarian opposition to Sunday labor open the door to Sunday leisure, but the commercial amusement revolution in turn sanctioned pleasure seeking, which most Sabbatarians despised even more than Sunday labor. For most of the nineteenth century, Sabbatarianism thrived in part because it fit with the Victorian ethos: it “symbolized the injunctions to duty and self-discipline, the obligations of careful, watchful control of self and time that were at the heart of the Protestant Reformation” (Rodgers, 1978, p. 107). By the end of the century, however, the gospel of work competed with the “gospel of play” (p. 108), the “gospel of recreation” (Spencer, 1883) the “gospel of relaxation” (James, 1899) and the “gospel of consumption” (Hunnicut, 1988). As scarcity gave way to abundance, economist Simon Patten (1907–1968) argued in his bestseller that self-discipline and self-denial must give way to an economy based upon consumption and the pursuit of pleasure. Cultural historians describe this transformation of sensibilities as a transition not only from production to consumption, but also from providence to progress (Lasch, 1991), character to personality (Susman, 1979), and salvation to self-realization (Lears, 1983). Whereas the older idea of providence suggested “moral wisdom lay in the limitation rather than in the multiplication of needs and desires,” Lasch (1991) wrote, “The modern conception of progress depends on a positive assessment of the proliferation of wants” (p. 45). Needless to say, such cultural developments were anathema to religious moralists for whom work and productivity remained the core of the moral life.

As Sabbatarians ambivalent about the five-day week appear to have sensed, the gospel of consumption posed a threat to the Victorian values they espoused. Take, for example, the role of Ford Motor Company, which gave the five-day week a tremendous boost by transitioning workers to a five-day schedule in 1926. Ostensibly, the new policy was a boon to Sabbath observance. “The five-day week,” said Ford (“Ford Adjusting Pay to Five-Day Week,” 1926):

provides the opportunity for physical recreation on the sixth day and leaves the seventh day free for moral and religious observation. It helps restore

the Sabbath to its former high place. . . . The five-day week by giving people the sixth day for physical recreation and the seventh for religious observance will go far toward bringing Christianity nearer to the people. (p. 24)

In contrast to most Sabbatarians, however, Ford had little fear of the new leisure or of affluence. Whereas to Drachman and other leading Jewish Sabbatarians, the weekly holiday was for *culture*, to Ford it was for *consumption*. “This is not philanthropy,” a company spokesperson said of the new policy (“Ford Raises Pay of Men to Meet the 5-Day Week,” 1926). “It is simply good business. More leisure gives more people more time to spend on automobiles, and the more leisure there is to spend in riding the more cars will be needed in which to ride” (p. 1). Whereas Drachman’s ideal of a weekly holiday for culture attempted to reinforce Sabbatarian sensibilities regarding self-denial and self-improvement, Ford’s ethic of consumption competed with them. And in practice, the democratization of motorcar excursions meant that Sunday excursions increasingly competed with Sunday worship. Ford may have been the first person to refer to Saturday and Sunday as a “two day holiday” (as quoted in Crowther, 1926, n.p.), a formulation that would have been anathema to Christian and Jewish Sabbatarians alike.

Through the 1920s, the fate of the five-day movement remained uncertain. The trend toward shorter hours slowed, and resistance to the idea among industrialists remained. As late as 1929, less than 3 percent of workers in manufacturing enjoyed the five-day week (National Industrial Conference Board, 1929). In the 1930s, however, the Depression and the New Deal accomplished what the religious-labor coalition alone could not. Up against overproduction and unemployment, industrialists increasingly saw the logic of, or at least lost the ability to resist, a shorter workweek. When the Fair Labor and Standards Act (FLSA) capped the workweek for those involved in interstate commerce at 40 hours beginning in 1940, the act was largely symbolic. Not only did the act not apply to most workers, but given that average weekly hours had already fallen to below 35 (Hunnicut, 1988, p. 1), the act was largely ratifying a change that had already come to pass. Nevertheless, the legislation gave significant symbolic sanction to the 40-hour week and, indirectly, to the five-day week. Despite its limited scope, we might say that the FLSA, like the Saturday half-holiday law, was “declaratory of public desire.” Indeed, scholars and pundits already had begun pondering the “problem of leisure” (Keynes, 1963; Lippmann, 1930).

## Conclusion

Conventional wisdom suggests that Sabbatarians failed in their goal to secure a quiet and noncommercial Sunday for rest and worship. Moreover, many histories of recreation in America unfold according to a narrative by which workers and immigrants gradually secured the right to recreate from middle class Protestant reformers who attempted to restrict worker choices and exercise “social control” over workers’ free time.<sup>3</sup> In one influential account, America learned to play precisely by outgrowing the old “puritanic prejudice” against play, a process that rendered Sabbatarianism “inevitably foredoomed” (Dulles, 1965, pp. 101, 208).

To be sure, workers and Protestant Sabbatarians often clashed over Sunday. When it came to Saturday, however, there was much more consensus. In fact, though organized labor led the movement for shorter hours in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, clergy and lay religious leaders led the movement for clustering hours off on Saturday. Following the Puritans, who were the earliest advocates of designated days of recreation, nineteenth-century Protestant Sabbatarians and twentieth-century Jewish Sabbatarians were the earliest advocates of the Saturday half- and full-holiday, respectively. Simply put, it took the interests of religion to translate shorter hours into fewer days (Roediger & Foner, 1989, p. 237). That Sabbatarians led the way to successfully securing a weekly holiday, resulting in what we now know as the modern weekend, challenges received notions regarding the relationship of recreation and religion, as well as our usual juxtaposition of religious reformers as either reactionary or progressive, theocratic or socialist.

In maintaining a distinction between rest and recreation, Sabbatarians became visionary innovators of modern leisure time. What they did not envision, however, is the extent to which their advocacy of a weekly holiday would defeat their primary purpose of protecting a weekly holy day. In opening up time that leisure entrepreneurs filled with commercial entertainments, Sabbatarians unwittingly contributed to commercialization and even consumerism – the proliferation of wants that they so abhorred. Daniel Rodgers (1978) argued that the work ethic, by contributing to industrialization, which in turn devoured middle-class assumptions about the moral preeminence of work, contained the seeds of its own destruction. So too with Sabbatarianism; Saturday as a weekly holi-

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3 The critical literature on the social control thesis is substantial (Banner, 1973; Jones, 1977; Kohl, 1985; Muraskin, 1976). Most cultural historians now take cultural transmission to be a two-way process rather than a “trickle-down” process.

day “destabilized” Sunday as a designated day of rest (McCrossen, 2000, p. 150). That Sabbatarianism as an organized movement finally fizzled at the same time the weekend arrived further suggests that Sabbatarians were victims of their own success.

Although Sabbatarians could not have foreseen that a weekly holiday would cannibalize the weekly holy day they treasured, the recent resurgence of interest in the Sabbath suggests that they may have been on to something in their distinction between rest and recreation. At issue in the debate is nothing less than the nature of freedom. To Sabbatarians, the freedom to recreate noisily on any day of the week results in less, not more, of other cultural goods, such as the ability to rest, worship, and enjoy quiet contemplation. In this view, constraints enable freedom. Judith Shulevitz (“Bring Back the Sabbath,” 2003), a Jewish writer with progressive sensibilities, agrees with the Puritans on this matter. To Shulevitz, the Sabbath stands athwart the treadmill of producing and consuming, including most of our recreational and leisure activities, which fail “to reproduce the benefits of the Sabbath.” Observing that even our weekends are hectic and therefore stressful, another secular Jew (Kaiser, 2010) asks, “Does society need a mandatory time-out?” And in yet another lament over the ways in which active and commercial recreation often mitigate against true leisure, Rybczynski (1991) provocatively asks: “have we become enslaved by the weekend?” (p. 17). If recent trends are any indication, Sabbatarians may yet serve as a resource for those concerned with consumer capitalism’s colonization of time and the discontents of ceaseless striving.

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