

## THE SABBATH ON A ROUND WORLD

*Charles L. Taylor*

The *Tenyo Maru* was one of the largest and finest passenger vessels that plied the waters of the Pacific, and the responsibilities of the captain were tremendous in both their number and their weight. There was not an hour of the day or of the night when he was not under the burden of his vessel's care. Nevertheless, captain Mann was able to interest himself in the needs of his passengers and crew.

The presence on the vessel of four ministers of the gospel, each of a different faith, and of other passengers who were keenly interested in theological matters, had placed spiritual and Biblical subjects at the head of topics for conversation. The question of the true position of the seventh-day Sabbath and of the sacredness of Sunday had been closely discussed, until on a certain day one of the ministers issued a challenge, and promised to show just what was the truth of the matter, and to prove that the keeping of the seventh-day Sabbath was not meant for Christians in this modern world.

Human nature enjoys a fray; and as the word was passed around among the passengers that the Rev. A. J. Spaulding intended to take the theological warpath, a buzz of excitement was at once created.

Captain Mann wore a smiling face and maintained a strictly neutral air, but inwardly he was sharing the spirit of intensity which seemed to have taken possession of many of the Passengers.

When the appointed time came, there was no lack in interest or attendance. Mr. Spaulding found it harder than he had anticipated to make his points convincing. In the midst of an uncomfortable silence, a question was asked.

“Dr. Spaulding, may I ask if you can give us a little light on the subject of the date line? Captain Mann informs me that we are nearing the day line, and that from today we must drop a day or two from our reckoning. Tomorrow therefore, instead of having a Tuesday we shall have a Wednesday. What effect, as you understand it, does this change have upon the matter of a definite day of the week as Sabbath?”

The questioner was a San Francisco merchant, a man who often made the transpacific trip, and who therefore was fully informed regarding the problem of the day line.

Mr. Spaulding quickly brightened at the mention of the day line, and smilingly consented to give his opinion.

“I am glad, sir, to have you introduce this question; and I will venture a brief statement in answer.

“I suppose all or nearly all are aware that in crossing the Pacific ocean east or west, a day must be added or dropped. Going west, we are obliged to skip a day; and going east, to repeat a day. For instance, tonight we shall retire during the hours of Monday, and tomorrow morning we shall wake up to find that we are passing through the hours of Wednesday. We shall have no Tuesday at all.

“Now, suppose I am a Sabbatarian, and ardently believe in the absolute sacredness of Saturday. I am going to China. I reach the day line Friday evening, and begin to keep my Sabbath. Then I retire with a worshipful spirit, anticipating the joys of the holy time for the

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morrow. I sleep, I wake. It is morning. But, lo, instead of it being Saturday, my good captain tells me it is Sunday!

“Then I become excited and confused. The thing bewilders me. I thought my theory correct, but find it is incorrect. The fourth commandment, I discover doesn’t fit in a big round world. My Sabbath slipped away from me without even so much as a farewell. If I keep any day at all, I have to keep Sunday.

“I think you will all agree with me that, if I am ordinarily intelligent, I will come to the conclusion that God never meant that seventh day for me, at least while crossing the Pacific; for when I tried to keep it, I couldn’t. But if I cannot keep it while journeying, I ought not to try to keep it at any time. And so, as a sensible man, I will say to myself, ‘Spaulding, don’t be foolish. Don’t burden yourself down with impossible dogmas. Be free. Keep away from Jewish ceremonies.’

“I need say no more. The point is self evident. The day line forbids the keeping of definite days.”

“ May I ask a question?” said Mr. Severance, the merchant.

“Certainly if it is pertinent, and I doubt not it will be.” replied the minister.

“I observe Sunday and live in San Francisco. Do you believe I really can keep Sunday in that city?”

“Yes, because in San Francisco the days come to you regularly, and you are without question.”

“Would it be possible to have my Sunday in Peking?”

“Certainly,” was Mr. Spaulding answer, “and for the same reason.”

“Another question: Is Sunday at Peking the same day that is known in San Francisco?”

“Without doubt, for the day travels around the earth.”

“Now Mr. Spaulding, you have said just what I wanted. You say the day travels. It must then have some place at which it begins its journey, and likewise some place where it ends its journey. What place is that? To be sure, you must say the day line. And all days begin and end at the same place, one day following another in exact order. In that case, can there be any valid reason for actual confusion, or for supposing that we cannot keep count of the days? If you are willing to yield the floor for a time, I should like to call for a few words from our captain.”

“Captain Mann! Captain Mann!” came the call from all directions. All eyes were turned to him. Would he agree with Mr. Spaulding?

“This is Mr. Spaulding’s hour,” the captain began, “ and with his permission, I will consent to make a few observations regarding the day line.”

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Mr. Spaulding smiled rather faintly, and in a somewhat hesitating manner seemed to give consent. The entire situation had proved a great disappointment to him; and now he was really obliged to give place, without having made any substantial gain.

As Captain Mann arose, a happy thought seemed to strike him, and he smilingly suggested a round table or question box, that all might have opportunity to bring out any phase of the question not clear to them. The question box idea prevailed.

“Before the questions are proposed,” the captain said, “allow me this brief word: the day line is one of the very simple problems of life, so simple in fact, that I have often explained it without difficulty to children. Instead of being a matter for confusing minds and causing a loss in the count of the days, it is the one thing that prevents any and all disturbances in our reckoning. It is a great, wonderful world regulator, preserving to all nations of the earth the identity of our days.”

“Do you mean to say, captain, that the fact that the world is a globe makes no difference?” asked a lady missionary.

“That is the thought, madam. It matters not whether one is at the poles or the equator, whether traveling by sea or by land, whether going east or going west, the day is an absolute fixed quantity of time, and may be scientifically and accurately known at any place on earth’s surface.”

“Well, I have heard it said, over and over again,” stated a simple but well meaning man seated near the captain, “that time is really lost or gained—that going in one direction, you lose; while in the other you gain. How could preachers say that if it isn’t so?”

“I am sure I cannot answer your query as to why preachers have taught you what you say they have taught regarding the day line. But let me say to you and to all, that there is no such thing as gaining or losing time. The expression is unscientific, and indicates something only apparent, not real.

“Let me illustrate: two men—twins—start from New York to make the journey around the world. One goes eastward, the other westward. they finally come together again in New York, after a lapse of several months; but he who went westward finds himself exactly the same age as his brother who traveled the opposite direction. They compare figures and find that it took each of them the same number of days, hours and minutes to make the trip, though one added a day and one dropped a day.

“Now if it is actually true that one gained and the other lost a day then there must have been two days difference in their ages at the journey’s end. And if they had repeated the process a sufficient number of times there would have come a time when one would have been old enough to be the other’s father.

“You all see how ludicrous the matter appears when analysed but a little. The truth is, the whole question is not one of gaining or losing time, but of computation.

“I carry with me,” said the captain, “an extract from an article on the day line which I read many years ago, and which, with your permission, I will read. It states the whole proposition more clearly than any word of mine could possibly do. Here it is:—

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“The revolutions of the earth itself, as measured at fixed localities, are what measure and number the days not the revolutions that may be indicated in the diary of a traveler. A person traveling east or west around the world puts himself at variance with the numerical order of its revolutions as compared with any fixed point; and that variance must be corrected, and that is all the question there is involved in keeping a definite and identical day on a round earth. Attending to this one point a person need never lose a definite day.

“To illustrate: let us suppose a man to start from some point which we call A, and travel eastward. Suppose he is able to make a circuit of the earth, and come back to his starting-point in just ten days. Every day of course, he is carried around by the revolution of the earth. But traveling, as he is, *with* the earth, from west to east, he each day gains upon it one-tenth of its circumference; and in ten days, he would gain ten tenths, or a whole circumference. Thus when he arrives at A, he finds that those who have remained there have marked ten revolutions, and have had ten days of time. But the earth has taken him around as many times as it has them; and in addition to that he has passed around once himself, which is the same as another revolution for him, making eleven, and giving him, according to his calendar, as he has kept it from day to day, eleven days instead of ten. What shall he do with that extra day? Drop it out of count. Why? Because he knows that the earth itself has made but ten revolutions marked at A; and the revolutions of the earth abstractly considered, and not the times he may go around it, mark the days, and he must make his count correspond to that of the earth wherever he is. If the person goes around the earth westward, this process is simply reversed.

“A common illustration, which may be observed almost any day, may serve to make it a little clearer to the minds of some. Suppose a freight train a quarter of a mile in length starts and moves along slowly the distance of its own length, or quarter of a mile, bringing the rear of the train, when it stops, to the same place where the engine had stood when it started. Suppose now that a brakeman started from the rear of the train, when the train started, and walked along on the cars toward the front, his rate of motion being the same as that of the train itself. When the train stops he has reached the head of the train, so that although the train has carried him quarter of a mile, he has walked another quarter, and so is, in space, half a mile from where he started.

“But suppose another brakeman, when the train begins to move, starts from the head of the train, and walks toward the rear at the same rate of motion. When the train stops, he has reached the rear. But his motion, being opposite to that of the train, has just balanced, or cancelled, for him the motion of the train; so he finds himself, in space, or compared with the surrounding objects, just where he was when the train started. Thus brakeman No. 1 walks a quarter of a mile, doubles the movement of the train, and finds himself at last half a mile from the place where he started; and brakeman No. 2 also walks a quarter of a mile, but his motion cancels the movement of the train, and he finds himself just where he was in the beginning. On the same principle it is that one going around the earth eastward adds a day to his reckoning, while one going around westward loses a day out of his.”

**Mr. Severance, the merchant now asked the privilege of supplementing Captain Mann’s extract by one which he had preserved. He read as follows:—**

“The reason for this [the adding or dropping of a day at the day line] will be apparent upon a little careful thought; for it is always sunset at some point on the earth, and always sunrise, and

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noon, and midnight, at other points at the same time. Let us imagine that we could travel around the earth as rapidly as the earth revolves upon its axis, and we start out from London, or from any other place, at sunrise on Tuesday morning, and travel west. It would remain sunrise of the same day with us all the time. Yet when we came to the starting place, we should have to call it the next day; for those who remained there would have had noon, sunset, midnight, and now would have their second morning, which would be Wednesday.

“Therefore we must change our reckoning, so that at this instant, in any place east of London, we would call it Tuesday morning; but at any point west of that line it would be Wednesday. That would be the place where the day would change. But for convenience, men have chosen a line that passed through no habitable country, and have fixed that line as a place where the day would change. We may believe, too, that this is the line on which the Maker designed that the new day should begin. Now, it makes no difference at what time we cross that line either way; we must recognize that there is one day on one side of it and another day on the other side. The line chosen is the 180th meridian of longitude from Greenwich.”

“To my mind, as we just read in your hearing, the Most High, who controlled the peopling of the earth, Himself, providentially arranged that the beginning and end of days, the particular point at which men would mark and number the earth’s revolutions, should be in the Pacific.”