

# Sincerity and authenticity



Sincerity & Authenticity Some Keep the Sabbath Going to Church Emily

Dickinson What is the difference between pneumatology and religiosity?

Emily Dickinson occupies a unique place in the realm of American poetry.

She lived during traditional times where society had clearly defined roles for men and women. She was the daughter of a staunch Christian and his rigid authority made her turn towards poetry as an outpouring for her suppressed feelings. "Some Keep the Sabbath Going to Church" is a critical look at the concept of going to church on Sundays. Emily Dickinson was against organized religion and instead looked to nature as her refuge from the religious hypocrisy which she encountered in her society.

Pneumatology and religiosity are the two concepts which Emily Dickinson sets out to unravel in this poem. She makes a clear delineation between the two and shuns the rigidity and traditional orthodoxy of the organized church in favor of the omnipresent ideal of God, who pervades all things.

Pneumatology is the combination of two Greek words-"pneuma," which means wind, breath or spirit (the Holy Spirit) and "logos" which means word, matter or thing. In Christian systematic theology pneumatology refers to a study of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Religiosity on the other hand, refers to the practices of one's religion within the prescribed manner dictated in religious texts.

"Some Keep the Sabbath Going to Church" is Emily Dickinson's gentle questioning of the time honored ritual of keeping the Sabbath, by going to church on Sundays. For Emily Dickinson, the Sabbath or rest day which should be spent in contemplation to God, does not necessitate a visit to the church, since, she keeps it by "staying at home". All the glories of God which religion expounds have been manifested to her in the beauty of

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nature, which is her church.

Emily Dickinson uses the instruments of the Church to show how the very same things can be found in Nature, only if we take time to perceive and understand them. Hence, to Emily the chorister's role (the lead singer in the church choir) is played to perfection by the bobolink, a small song-bird. The image of the bobolink can be understood better when we examine the physical characteristics of the bird. It is black on the underside and white on the back, which makes it stand out while singing in springtime. During winter it sheds its plumage and merges with the trees, just like the poet, who leads her life as a recluse, only coming-out rarely in public. The bobolink, which has already been addressed as the chorister, is given the second role of the sexton when Emily says - " And instead of tolling the bell for church, Our little sexton sings."

Emily Dickinson receives her sermons from Nature, which calls out to the believer in myriad hues of the world around us. She perceives them in the singing of birds, the light of dawn, the bounty of fruits, and for her " God preaches, --a noted clergyman, and the sermon is never long:" For Emily, Nature's sermon is concise and forceful, something to be enjoyed, rather than endured like that of the pompous clergyman.

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