

The Sabbath and The Lord's Day



Shaun Willcock

First published in 2008 for Bible Based Ministries

by New Voices Publishing

Cape Town, South Africa

www.newvoices.co.za



Distributed by:

Contending for the Faith Ministries

42055 Crestland Drive

Lancaster, CA 93536

United States of America

IMPORTANT NOTICE:

The author has no objection whatsoever to anyone reproducing this book in printed form for *free* distribution, provided it is reproduced in *full*, including the cover, without being altered or edited in any way. His desire is for this book to be as widely distributed as possible. However, anyone wanting to print the book for *sale*, must obtain permission from the author.

ABOUT THE SOURCES REFERRED TO IN THIS BOOK:

In writing this book, factual information was compiled from a number of sources, which are referred to in this book for documentation purposes. However, reference to a particular source does not by any means necessarily imply agreement with the doctrinal position of the author, nor with every statement in the work referred to.

First Edition published in April 2008

ISBN 978-1-920094-58-4

Cover sunrise image courtesy of <http://bestdownload-3d-screensavers.com/>

CONTENTS

Introduction	5
Part One: The Sabbath and The Lord's Day – <i>Shaun Willcock</i>	13
1. The Two Most Important "Christian Sabbath" Proof-Texts	14
2. Brief Historical Background	15
3. The "Christian Sabbath" Argument	17
4. Adam and the Moral Law	18
5. The Sabbath Commandment Was Not a Creation Ordinance and Not Part of the Moral Law	21
6. No One Between Adam and Moses Was Commanded to Keep a Sabbath	33
7. The Sabbath Was First Given to Israel (and Israel Only) After the Exodus	36
8. The Sabbath Was Given to Israel Only, for a Special Purpose and a Specific Time	41
9. The Sabbath (Being Part of the Ceremonial Law and the Sinaitic Covenant) Was Abrogated by the Lord Jesus Christ	50
10. The First Day of the Week (the Lord's Day) Is Not the "Christian Sabbath"	54
11. Conclusion	86
Part Two: Historical Survey – <i>Shaun Willcock</i>	88
1. The So-Called "Early Church Fathers"	88
2. Constantine and Sunday Legislation	89
3. The So-Called "Catholic Church" and its "Sunday Sabbath" Doctrine Throughout the Middle Ages	90
4. The German Reformers' Rejection of the "Christian Sabbath" Doctrine	97
5. The Swiss Reformers' Rejection of the "Christian Sabbath" Doctrine	99
6. A Change Takes Place	104
7. The Early English Reformers' Rejection of the "Christian Sabbath" Doctrine	106
8. The "Christian Sabbath" Doctrine in England	107
9. The "Christian Sabbath" Doctrine in Scotland	130

10. The “Christian Sabbath” Doctrine in Plymouth Colony	131
11. The “Christian Sabbath” Doctrine in the Massachusetts Bay Colony	133
12. The “Christian Sabbath” Doctrine in New Haven Colony	136
13. The “Christian Sabbath” Doctrine in the Colony of Connecticut	137
14. The “Christian Sabbath” Doctrine in the Colony of New Netherlands	138
15. The “Christian Sabbath” Doctrine in Virginia and Pennsylvania	139
16. Things Were (Somewhat) Better in Rhode Island	139
17. The “Christian Sabbath” Doctrine in Eighteenth Century England	140
18. Conclusion	141
Part Three: Works by Other Authors	144
1. The First Day Not Divinely Appointed as a Sabbath – <i>William Tyndale</i>	147
2. The Sabbath Abrogated; The First Day is Not a Sabbath – <i>John Frith</i>	149
3. Questions About the Nature and Perpetuity of the Seventh-Day Sabbath– <i>John Bunyan</i>	151
4. Of the Circumstances of Public Worship, as to Place and Time– <i>John Gill</i>	181
5. No Change of the Sabbath from the Seventh to the First Day– <i>Isaac Backus</i>	200
6. Extracts From an Essay on the Sabbath– <i>John Leland</i>	201
7. The Sabbath– <i>William Gadsby</i>	205
8. What is Truth?– <i>Gilbert Beebe</i>	207
9. The Sabbath Days– <i>Gilbert Beebe</i>	213
10. Sabbath Breakers– <i>Gilbert Beebe</i>	222
11. The Christian Sabbath– <i>Gilbert Beebe</i>	226

INTRODUCTION

The doctrine of the “Christian Sabbath” is held by many who refer to themselves as “Reformed” believers. The term “Reformed” is often applied to those who hold to the glorious scriptural doctrines of sovereign grace. On these precious doctrines, we stand shoulder to shoulder with all true Christians who call themselves “Reformed”. We are 100% in agreement with them at this point. In fact, in *many* matters, what is often termed “Reformed doctrine” is very soundly *biblical*.

However, although we understand why many use the term “Reformed”, it is far from ideal, and it would be better if it was not used to refer to those who hold to the doctrines of grace. Firstly, because historically it was given to Protestants who sought to “reform” the Papal system. That iniquitous system did not need to be reformed, but only rejected for the false religion it was and still is; and furthermore, it cannot be reformed anyway because it is not a true church – it is a false religion. And no false religion can be reformed. One does not attempt to reform Hinduism, for example, in order to make it “Christian”; and no more can one reform Roman Catholicism. The Scriptures speak of a *transformation within*, not a reformation without, as the Spirit of God works in regeneration. Secondly, because lost sinners do not need to be reformed either: they need to be *transformed* and renewed. Christ did not commission His disciples to reform anything. Thirdly, what is called “Reformed theology” is historically *more* than the doctrines of grace. The term “Reformed” is synonymous with the term “Calvinist” in its broad sense; and much within what is known as “Calvinism” is not biblical: for example, the union of Church and State, infant “baptism” (this one not of course held by those called “Reformed Baptists” but certainly by all the rest who call themselves “Reformed”), etc.

We believe it is far better, and far more accurate biblically, for Christians to refer to themselves (for example) as sovereign grace believers, rather than as “Reformed” believers. We should not be “reforming” anything,

nor are we “Reformed” Romanists!

But be that as it may, unfortunately this word “Reformed” has been adopted by many who hold to the doctrines of sovereign grace. And this being so, it is ironic that so many of those who call themselves “Reformed” Christians are “Sunday Sabbatarians”, and yet “Sunday Sabbatarianism” was *not* the doctrine of the Reformers!

Yes! The Reformers, so highly esteemed by most within the “Reformed” camp today, were *not* Sabbatarians. And thus many “Reformed” people pick and choose which doctrines of Calvin, Luther, etc., they are willing to hold, while rejecting many others; and yet they become so angry that there are sovereign grace Christians today who reject the idea of “Christian Sabbatarianism”!

Calvin, in fact, in his famous *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, labelled as “*false prophets*” those who in times past taught that although the ceremonial part of the fourth commandment has been abrogated, the moral part (according to them) still remains! This is *precisely* the argument used by “Sunday Sabbatarians” today! And thus, although Calvin was referring to the times before his own, he would surely have to apply his condemnatory words to such people today as well, if he lived now. Here are his very words: “Thus vanish all the dreams of false prophets, who in past ages have infected the people with a Jewish notion, affirming that nothing but the ceremonial part of this [fourth] commandment, which, according to them, is the appointment of the seventh day, has been abrogated, but that the moral part of it, that is, the observance of one day in seven, still remains.”¹

Thus the very man who is so revered by so many “Sunday Sabbatarians” today, branded them as “false prophets”! *We* certainly would not brand “Sunday Sabbatarians” as false prophets for holding their particular view of the Lord’s day, for many have been, and are, true Christians, although in error on this point; but this does show how inconsistent today’s “Sunday Sabbatarians” are, who label as “Antinomian” those of us, today, who reject the idea of a “Christian Sabbath”, while simultaneously hailing John Calvin as their hero of the faith – when *he*, not us, viewed them in such poor light!

¹ *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, by John Calvin, Vol. 1, Book 2, chap.8.

The fact is, Calvin believed that the fourth commandment of the decalogue was a temporary law, and was only for the Jews under the Old Covenant. “By consulting *Calvin’s Institutes* (Book 2, Ch.8), it will be seen that his views of Sabbath-observance are substantially those of Luther.... he remarks upon Col.2:16: (‘Let no man, therefore, judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of a holy-day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath-days.’) ‘Such a distinction (of days) suited the Jews, to observe sacredly the appointed days, by separating them from other days. Among Christians, such a distinction has ceased. But, somebody will say that we still retain some observance of days. I answer, that we by no means observe them, as if there were any religion in holy-days, or as if it were not right to labour on them; but the regard is paid to polity and good order, not to the days.’”²

And what do many “Reformed” people do with these facts? Only a few have been prepared to actually criticise Calvin, their great hero of the faith, for rejecting the “Christian Sabbath” notion. Most, however, say nothing in criticism of his “Antinomian” (from their perspective!) views. Some “Reformed” people, however, have actually attempted to re-write history! One such man was A.A. Hodge. Please read the following quotation from him very carefully:

“The whole historical Christian world, Catholic and evangelical, has always been agreed as to the truth of the following propositions:

1. The institution of the Sabbath rests upon the physical, moral and religious nature of man...
2. ...God instituted the Sabbath at the creation of man... and imposed its observance as a universal and perpetual moral obligation upon the race.
3. After the resurrection of Christ, instead of abrogating an old and introducing a new institution, God, through his inspired agents, perpetuated the Sabbath, re-imposing it upon Christians with increased obligations...

“This statement of the historical faith of the whole church contradicts

² *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, by Robert L. Dabney, pg.372. Banner of Truth Trust.

the following false view of small and transient parties:

1. That the Sabbath was simply a Jewish institution, temporary in its adaptation and design...
2. That the Lord's Day is a new Christian institution established by the apostles and binding on Christians.

"The object of this tract is simply to state the grounds upon which the faith of the universal church rests when, while recognizing the fourth commandment as an integral part of the supreme, universal and unalterable moral law..."³

Leaving aside the fact that Hodge so incorrectly refers to the Roman Catholic religion as part of the "Christian world", this quotation is simply full of historical inaccuracy. He sought to convince his readers that "the whole historical Christian world", "the universal church", "has always been agreed" that the observance of the Sabbath is an eternal moral obligation, and that only "small and transient parties" have ever opposed it. No doubt he succeeded in convincing many; but it is a distortion of the truth. Consider, again very carefully, the following, written by Robert L. Dabney. This man, although a convinced "Sunday Sabbatarian", was honest with the truth:

"There is, perhaps, no subject of Christian practice on which there is, among *sincere* Christians, more practical diversity and laxity of conscience than the duty of Sabbath observance. We find that, in theory, almost all Protestants *now* profess the views once peculiar to Presbyterians and other Puritans...

"[It is an]... historical *fact*, of which many sincere Christians are not aware, that the communions founded at the Reformation, were *widely and avowedly divided in opinion* as to the perpetuity of the Sabbath obligation. A number of the Reformation churches, including some of the purest, professed that they saw no obligation in the Scriptures to any peculiar Sabbath observance...

"It may be stated then, in general terms, that since the primitive times of Christianity, two diverse opinions have prevailed in the Christian world. The first is that adopted by the Romish, Lutheran, and most of

³ *The Day Changed and the Sabbath Preserved*, by A.A. Hodge, pg.14. Reprinted in *The Banner of Truth* magazine, December 1978.

the continental communions in Europe, including, it must be confessed, those founded by Calvin. The second opinion is that embodied in the Westminster symbols, and, to the honor of Presbyterianism be it said, first avowed in modern times, even among Protestants, by that part in England...”⁴

Again, leaving aside the fact that Dabney incorrectly refers to the Romish institution as being part of the “Christian world”, he *admits* that it is an historical *fact* that the “Reformed” denominations held to widely divergent views regarding the Sabbath. There is no escaping this historical fact. Many “Reformed” people today are of the opinion that the Christian Church has *always*, through the ages, believed that the Sabbath commandment was part of the eternal moral law of God, but this is simply not the case at all.

Now, for our part, we care not a whit about human opinions; but we bring these things to the attention of the reader, to show firstly, that those “Reformed” people, today, who claim that “Christian Sabbatarianism” has always been the position of “the universal Church”, are either ignorant of history on this matter, or in some cases are deliberately seeking to mislead; and secondly, to show that if *we*, who today reject the notion of the “Christian Sabbath”, are to be branded as “Antinomians”(literally, “against law”, i.e. against the law of God) by “Sunday Sabbatarians”, then they must be consistent and brand their great heroes, Calvin, Luther, and others, as Antinomians as well!

While this book was being written, we were asked – even begged – by some Reformed Baptist brethren, on a number of occasions, not to publish it. One pastor said that its publication would unsettle certain members of his flock who were not well-grounded in the “Christian Sabbath” position. But our reply was that it was then his duty, as their pastor, if he truly believed the “Christian Sabbath” position to be the true one, to see to it that they *were* well-grounded in what he believed to be the truth, instead of coming to us and asking us not to publish the book. These brethren were more than willing for any number of books

⁴ *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, by Robert L. Dabney, Banner of Truth, and quoted in *Sound of Grace*, March 2004, Vol.10, No.5. Grace Bible Fellowship, Frederick, Maryland, USA.

favouring the “Christian Sabbath” position to be published and widely circulated; but were asking us to desist from writing and publishing this one. The correct Christian response, to a book written by a brother in Christ with which one disagrees, is to counter his teaching from the Scriptures, if possible. What they were asking of us was essentially to exercise self-censorship, and not to teach what we firmly believe to be the biblical truth, merely because *they* felt it was unscriptural. We are well aware of the importance of protecting the flock from false doctrine; but we live in a world that is awash in literature, teachings, etc., which are unscriptural, and it is the sacred duty of every minister of the Word to teach the Word, and to teach it so thoroughly that the members of his flock are well-grounded in the truth. Then they will not be led astray by false doctrine when they hear it. If a man believes that the doctrine of another man is false, then he must demonstrate this from the Scriptures of truth.

It was also suggested to us that the reason we had fewer members in our church than another pastor (whose doctrine was almost identical to ours in most other matters) had in his, was because we were “profaning the Lord’s day” whereas he was not. But we replied that this was an absurd argument, for there are many reasons why some churches are larger than others; and the pastor of a church larger than his could then argue that even though his “kept the Sabbath” it was under the Lord’s displeasure for some other reason; and the pastor of a church with a still larger membership could in turn argue in the same manner; and so on. And if we are going to play the numbers game, then we should all become Papists, because they have the largest “church” of all.

Actually, this argument has been very common to “Sunday Sabbatarians” through the ages. Various Puritans, for example, listed many examples of “Sabbath-breakers” suffering calamities, and attributed these to their “Sabbath-breaking.” But this was extremely selective reporting. It ignored the evidence showing that many “*Sunday Sabbatarians*” suffered calamities as well – just as all men do! When professing Christians drowned, for example, as they were out boating on the Lord’s day, this was cited by one Puritan as an example of the Lord chastising them for desecrating the “Sabbath”; but of course, professing Christians drowned while boating on other days as well, even though they were “Sabbatarians”. “This selectivity in reporting is the most obvious fallacy

in the older ‘Sabbath apologetic,’ if one might use this phrase. By it we mean the argument that those who observe the Lord’s Day prosper, while those who desecrate it suffer accidents, ill health, financial reverses and other outward tokens of Heaven’s displeasure.”⁵

Dabney, a “Sunday Sabbatarian”, taught, as stated above, that “A number of the Reformation churches, *including some of the purest*, professed that they saw no obligation in the Scriptures to any peculiar Sabbath observance”; but today there are those within the “Reformed” camp who are prepared to write off those who reject the “Christian Sabbath” teaching, *regardless* of how sound they may be in other matters of doctrine and practice. In writing this book, we have used very forthright language at times; but we have also sought to write in a gracious spirit, for there are many true brethren in the Lord who are “Sunday Sabbatarians.” Sadly, we who do not hold the first day of the week to be a Sabbath have not always been accorded the same courtesy. How tragic that instead of brethren in the Lord discussing the issue with the Bible open before them, many “Sunday Sabbatarian” brethren brand those of us who reject the concept of a “Christian Sabbath” as “Antinomians”, lawless people who believe we can live as we please! This is a gross distortion of the truth. In rejecting the concept of a “Christian Sabbath”, we are not in any sense rejecting the fact that the moral law of God is eternal, binding on all men in all ages. With Paul, we affirm with all our hearts that “the law is good, if a man use it lawfully” (1 Tim. 1:8); and we “delight in the law of God after the inward man” (Rom. 7:22), for “the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good” (Rom. 7:12). It is thus a serious distortion of the truth to say that we are lawless, i.e. “Antinomians”, and those who brand us as such are not being honest.

We rejoice for the scriptural truths which many godly “Sunday Sabbatarians” taught in the past, and are teaching today – but that does not mean we must automatically accept their teachings on the so-called “Christian Sabbath”. We must “search the Scriptures daily, whether these things are so” (Acts 17:11), for a thing is not “so” merely because a man of God says it is, but only if the *Scriptures* say so. Having searched

⁵ *The Lord’s Day*, by Paul K. Jewett, pg.162. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1971.

the Scriptures, we find no grounds whatsoever for observing any day as a “Christian Sabbath”. Many faithful believers, past and present, have come to the same conclusion. We are not Antinomians, we love the law of Zion, for we love Zion’s King; but we will not be browbeaten into holding a position which, it is our firm conviction, has no scriptural support, merely because, in our day and age, this happens to be the view of the majority of English-speaking sovereign grace believers. Something is not true merely because a majority believes it to be true. The majority is not always right! If we hold to some doctrine merely because a majority believes it, then to be consistent we should all become Papists. What saith the Scripture? This is all that matters.

Shaun Willcock

PART ONE:

THE SABBATH AND THE LORD'S DAY

by Shaun Willcock

Are Christians commanded, in the Word of God, to keep the Sabbath? Is there such a thing as “the Christian Sabbath”?

There are very few subjects about which there is such controversy as this. Other than the doctrine of baptism, perhaps no issue in the Word of God has stirred up such controversy as the issue of whether or not there is such a thing as a “Christian Sabbath”.

In this study we will be referring to the “Christian Sabbath”, in inverted commas, because there is in fact no such thing as a “Christian Sabbath”. The only Sabbath that God ever appointed was the seventh day of the week, which we would call Saturday; and that was only appointed as part of the ceremonial law given to Moses. Thus, when the ceremonial law was abolished by Christ, the Sabbath was abolished as well. It was not changed from the seventh to the first day of the week, and then given to the Christian Church in this form. There is *no* commandment, anywhere in the Bible, to “remember the *first* day, to keep it holy.” *Believers in Christ are not bound to the Old Testament seventh-day Sabbath, but nor are they bound to any supposed first-day “Sabbath” either.* The fact is, *no day is a Sabbath for the Christian.*

But when it came to finding a suitable term to describe those who observe Sunday as a “Sabbath”, we were faced with a dilemma. On the one hand, as we intended to place the term “Christian Sabbath” in inverted commas, for the reasons just stated, it would make sense to do the same with the term “Christian Sabbatharians.” However, if we used inverted commas when referring to “Christian Sabbatharians”, this might give the impression that we believed all who hold to this doctrine are not true Christians – and we would *never* want to give such an impression! Many who hold to this doctrine have been, and are, true Christians. We count some of them amongst our dearest friends and brethren in Christ. On the other hand, if we did *not* place the words in inverted commas, it might give the impression, a) that *all* who hold to this doctrine are true Christians, and b) that even those who *are* true believers in Christ are

really observing a true Sabbath – which they are not.

Perhaps we could have used the expression “Lord’s day Sabbatarians”, but that seemed somewhat cumbersome.

All things considered, then, we have chosen to refer to those who claim that the first day of the week is the “Christian Sabbath”, as “Sunday Sabbatarians” (in inverted commas). In doing this, we trust that we will avoid giving the impression that we are claiming all who hold to this doctrine are not true Christians (although of course not all who hold to it have been, or are, truly converted); but at the same time we are also not giving the impression that Sunday, the first day of the week, really is a Sabbath, or that those who keep it are in fact Sabbath-keepers. The name “Sunday” is commonly used, in English, to refer to the first day of the week; and although Christians will often refer to it as the Lord’s day (and rightly so, for the Lord Christ rose from the dead on the first day), there is no harm in referring to it as Sunday as well – just as we would speak of Saturday, or Friday, or any other day of the week by their commonly accepted names.

We are also aware of the fact that many “Sunday Sabbatarians” prefer not to use the term “Christian Sabbath”, but rather the biblical term “the Lord’s day.” Nevertheless, whether they use the word “Sabbath” or not in reference to Sunday in their common speech, the fact remains that they believe the Lord’s day must be observed as a Sabbath; as is shown by their application of the fourth commandment of the decalogue to the Lord’s day. Therefore, we have no hesitation in calling them “Sunday Sabbatarians”.

The Two Most Important “Christian Sabbath” Proof-Texts

There are two portions of God’s Word to which “Sunday Sabbatarians” constantly refer in support of their belief that Christians are to observe a weekly Sabbath; and a proper understanding of both of them is essential to a proper understanding of this entire issue. The first is Gen.2:1-3, and the second is Exod.20:8-11.

At the end of the six days of creation, the Bible says, “And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day” (Gen.1:31). That is how the first chapter of the first book of the Bible ends. And then we read these

words, at the beginning of chapter 2:

“Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made” (Gen.2:1-3).

Then, when the Lord God gave the ten commandments (also known as the decalogue) to the children of Israel at Mount Sinai, the fourth of the ten commandments was about the Sabbath. It says:

“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, 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: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it” (Exod.20:8-11).

Brief Historical Background

Before going into what the Scriptures teach on this issue, a little historical background will be useful. This is greatly expanded in the next section of this book, entitled “Historical Survey”.

At the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century, the Reformers inevitably had to come to terms with this issue, and address it. And one thing is certain: they could not be called “Sunday Sabbatarians”! They took the position that they would use Sundays for holding services, although they rejected the notion that Sunday was a Sabbath.

Then later, when Puritanism began to exert a great influence in England and Scotland, the observance of Sunday, the first day of the week, as the “Christian Sabbath”, was taught and even enforced by law. Books were written by various Puritans, some of them quite bizarre as they attempted to justify Sabbath observance for New Testament Christians. Certainly, many Puritans were very godly men! But they, like all men, were fallible, and their teaching on the Sabbath was a teaching in which they greatly erred. The problem was that the Puritans had an *absolutely faulty understanding* of the relationship between Church and State. They believed that the State should be governed as Israel had been governed

in the Old Testament. They failed to see that under the New Testament, this had completely changed. The Lord had changed it! And, because of their faulty understanding of the relationship between Church and State, they tried to enforce the ten commandments by civil legislation, including of course the fourth of the ten – the Sabbath commandment. *Except* that they *changed* it (yes, *they* changed it, not the Lord, as shall be seen later) from the Jewish seventh day (what we call Saturday) to the first day of the week (what we call Sunday).

And because Puritanism had such an influence on Britain, and on the American colonies, and indeed on so much of the Western world, we have such confusion and unbiblical doctrine pertaining to the Sabbath. Why is it, for example, that in Western countries there was such strict legislation forbidding Sunday trading? It is true that such laws are increasingly being scrapped throughout the West today, but for a very long time indeed, these laws were strictly enforced in many places. And the fact that such legislation is being increasingly scrapped today is a source of great concern to many sincere Protestants, who hold to a “Christian Sabbath” position.

And that confusion regarding the relationship between Church and State – that belief that the *State* should *enforce* Christianity by law – that false notion that the State should be tied to the Church – is the very root of the problem here. Christianity is not to be enforced by law. Men, women and children should be won by the “foolishness of preaching”, and not by legislation. One cannot “make” a Christian by legislation at all.

Many godly men, who in other matters were very sound, very biblical, were in error on this matter. They kept Sunday as a “Christian Sabbath”. And many still do. What is so important to grasp is that, because the Puritans were so sound on what are called the doctrines of grace – man’s total depravity, God’s unconditional election, Christ’s limited atonement or particular redemption, irresistible grace, and the perseverance of the saints – it must not automatically be assumed that they were right on everything else! There are people today who virtually idolise the Puritans. Some people are always referring to them, as if they are the final authority in all biblical matters! This is a grave error. The thoughts of men are not to be our authority. Many of them were very godly men, and we have much cause to thank the Lord for their teachings. But we

are not interested in their *thoughts* or *opinions*. We are not interested in what Charles Spurgeon *thought* about it either – another godly man who has sadly been elevated to the position of “final authority” on all biblical matters, by many in our day. We want to know if what John Owen, or Charles Spurgeon, or Arthur Pink, or anyone else for that matter, taught on this or any other subject was biblical or not! The bottom line is, we want to know *what the Bible says!* If these men, or any others, have shown from the Scriptures that the Sabbath must be observed by New Testament Christians, then every single Christian is duty-bound to receive their teaching on this matter. But if not, then every single Christian is duty-bound to reject their teaching on this matter, regardless of how sound they may be on other matters.

The “Christian Sabbath” Argument

Why do so many sincere Christians believe that we are to observe Sunday, the first day of the week, as the “Christian Sabbath”? The argument runs something like this:

The Sabbath (they say) was a creation ordinance; meaning it was appointed by God right at the very beginning of the world. And therefore, so the argument goes, it is a perpetual moral law, that is to be observed in all ages, and by all mankind. By “moral law” (a term not found in the Bible, but if properly understood, an acceptable one, though not ideal) is meant *God’s standard of righteousness for mankind*: unalterable through all time, perpetually binding on all men in all ages. And as the Sabbath was appointed for man right at the very beginning of creation (they believe), it must be an eternal moral commandment. It was later included in the decalogue, or ten commandments, which (they argue) are *all* moral commandments. And although the *ceremonial* part of the law of Moses was abolished by Christ when He came and died, the *moral* part was not abolished, but continued.

They say that the Sabbath has, however, been changed from the seventh to the first day of the week; and that this change was made because Christ the Lord rose from the dead on the first day.

In order to discover the truth, we have to do two things. Firstly, we have to ascertain whether or not the Sabbath commandment is, indeed,

a perpetual moral commandment, binding on all men in all ages. If it is, then every Christian (in fact, every human being) is bound to observe it. But if not – if the Sabbath commandment was a *positive commandment* given to Israel, not a moral commandment given to all men (a “positive” commandment is not an eternal commandment, but a commandment given by the Lord for a specific period of time and to a specific people; baptism, for example, which is not an eternal moral law, but a positive one, is given only to New Testament believers and to no others), then we are under no obligation whatsoever to observe the Sabbath.

Secondly, if indeed the Sabbath commandment was *not* a moral commandment binding on all men in all ages, but rather a positive law, is the first day of the week, also called the Lord’s day, now a Sabbath by a *new* positive law? This was essentially the position of John Bunyan. Although Bunyan lived in the Puritan era, he actually rejected the Puritan notion that the fourth commandment was an eternal moral commandment; and he proved it with very sound biblical arguments. But he then stated that, although the seventh day Sabbath has been abolished, the *first* day of the week is, by *another* positive commandment, given to the Church to observe as the “Christian Sabbath”. If indeed this is the case – if the first day of the week is the “Christian Sabbath” by a positive commandment of the Lord, then Christians are bound to observe it. But if not, then we are under no obligation whatsoever to observe the Sabbath.

Adam and the Moral Law

We must begin at the very beginning: the creation, and especially the creation of Adam.

The *law of nature* was that law that was *natural* to Adam in his state of innocence; a law that was “built in” to Adam. A law that was *written on Adam’s heart at his creation*. Another term for it would be the *moral law*. Law that is unalterable and eternal, even though he fell and became a sinner, and even though all his descendants were and are sinful. As an example: “Thou shalt not kill” is a moral law: eternally binding; perpetual. It was (to use an old phrase) “concreated” with Adam. It was written on Adam’s heart at his creation; it has always been a sin to murder; and until the end of the world, it will always be a sin. As another example: the prohibition of idolatry is a moral law. It has always been a sin to commit

idolatry; and it always will be, for all men the world over. Even those who have never heard the name of Christ are guilty of this sin.

God's moral law was written on Adam's heart at his creation. And even after his fall, his descendants still retained at least *some* knowledge of it. This is seen from Rom.2:14,15: "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another". The Gentiles, the heathen, did not have the law as written by Moses; they did not have it in any written, codified form, as Israel had; and yet nevertheless, many of them do, *by nature*, the things contained in the law! In most heathen societies, it is wrong (for example) to murder, or to commit adultery, or to steal. They know these things are wrong, not because they have read about them in the Bible; they know such things are wrong even though they may never have seen a Bible. They know it is wrong in their *own consciences*. Certainly they often have a very warped understanding of these things; but even by nature they know that certain things are evil. "They show the work of the law written in their hearts": not perfectly, certainly; but Adam had the law written in his heart; and although he sinned, and all men sinned in him, they still show some of the law's work written in their hearts, though not with anything like the clarity that Adam saw it in his innocence. It is still there, but in a very warped and defaced sense. And their consciences bear witness, either accusing or excusing them: accusing them when they sin, and excusing them when they do not sin. Consciences can be seared (1 Tim.4:2); and the more a sin is committed, the less loudly a man's conscience accuses him; but even so, in the hearts even of unregenerate men, at least to some extent, they know what is right and wrong. Not perfectly by any means, but they have at least some idea. Even in utterly heathen societies, men know (for example) that murder is wrong, stealing is wrong, adultery is wrong, etc. Their consciences may be so seared that they may view stealing as wrong and yet permit it in certain circumstances; or they may view adultery as wrong and yet permit polygamy, or fornication before marriage, and yet still, deep down, they hold to some remnants of the truth of the sanctity of marriage.

But was the *Sabbath* commandment a law of nature? Was the commandment that man must rest one day in seven, a law of nature? Was it written on the heart of Adam from the very moment of his creation that he must rest one day in seven? Did he know this by the light of nature?

Although many would say that the answer to all these questions is Yes, the answer is in truth, No. The Sabbath commandment was *not* a law of nature. It was *not* written on the heart of Adam from the moment of his creation. For by the light of nature, a man can know and understand that there is a God; and most people do, and this is why Psa.14:1 says, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." Atheism is not natural to man. An utterly pagan person, by the light of nature, as he views the heavens and the earth, often knows that there is, there must be, a God – the light of nature reveals that much. And also, knowing that there is a God, he knows that this God must be worshipped – the light of nature reveals that much to him as well.

And therefore he *is* able to grasp that since God exists, and must be worshipped, man must set aside *time* in which to worship Him. This, too, the light of nature reveals to him. And throughout the world the heathen do this, setting aside time to worship what they conceive God to be, with all their pagan rites and ceremonies. Their worship is false, and their conception of God is false; but by the light of nature they understand that there is a God, and that they must worship, and that time must be set aside in which to worship.

But: can a man, by the law or light of nature, know *what* time, and *how much* time, must be set aside in which to worship God? As a man wakes up in the morning and walks out into the field, he can look up at the sun, and gaze around at the created things of this world, and he can know there is a God; but as he does that, is he able to say to himself, "I know I must give one day in seven to the worship of the God who created all this"? Can he know *that*, by the law of nature? No, he cannot. By the law of nature he can know there is a God, and that He must be worshipped; but by the law of nature he *cannot possibly* know *when* God is to be worshipped!

After all, one day appears no different from any other! How would you know, as you wake up on a particular morning, that that day is, say,

Thursday? Would you know it because there is something different about the day, from all others, that reveals it is Thursday? No. Would you know it because of some knowledge within you? No. Your calendar would tell you, but there is *nothing about the day itself* that would reveal it to be a Thursday, or for that matter any other day of the week.

How would you know, even, by the law or light of nature, that a week should consist of seven days? You would not. Who gave us the cycle of seven-day weeks? The Lord. Would men have known, then, that (at one time, and for a specific period of time) one day in seven was to be set aside for God, if God had not revealed it to them? No! They would not have known. Men would have just as easily settled on one day in ten, or one day in five, as one day in seven, if left to settle such a matter by themselves. There have, in fact, been people who have used ten-day cycles. There is simply no way, by the light of nature, that anyone could know how much time ought to be set aside for the worship of God. One day in seven? One day in twelve? One hour in a week? Three hours in a week? No man could ever possibly know such things, by the light of nature. One hour appears the same as the next, let alone one day.

The *only way* that man can know this, is if God *reveals* it to him, by a special revelation or a positive law.

The Sabbath Commandment Was Not a Creation Ordinance and Not Part of the Moral Law

Those who teach that the Sabbath commandment is an eternal *moral* law, for all men in all ages of the world, teach that one day in seven is to be a Sabbath – this (to them) is the moral law. They claim that the only thing that God had to reveal by special revelation, is precisely *which* day is to be the Sabbath. Adam, they assert, knew that one day in seven was to be a Sabbath.

But *how* would Adam have known this? How would he have known that one day in seven is to be set aside in which to worship God? Such knowledge was not “built in” to Adam. It has to be *divinely revealed* to man. It cannot be known naturally. But “Sunday Sabbatarians” disagree. They argue that Adam *knew*, by the light of nature, that one day in seven had to be set aside for worship, but God had to tell him that this was to be the seventh day. Their argument runs like this: “The

Sabbath was a creation ordinance (Gen.2). It was appointed at the time that Adam was created, and was thus 'built in' to Adam. It was therefore a perpetual moral law, instituted at creation for all men; for Adam was the representative of all men, and thus what he was to do, all men are to do. And Adam knew that one day in seven must be the day for worship; but he did not know precisely which day in seven was to be that day, and God therefore revealed it to him."

And *this* is why "Sunday Sabbatarians" feel justified in arguing that this day was changed from the *seventh* day to the *first* day, in the New Testament! They say that the moral aspect of the fourth commandment is simply that one day in seven must be set aside as a day of worship; but *which* day, precisely, is not made known by the moral law, but by a positive law. God could change the precise day (the positive aspect of the commandment) as it pleased Him, and in the New Testament He changed it from the seventh to the first day (so they argue). And thus, so they reason, the fourth commandment of the decalogue *is* being kept by New Testament Christians when they observe the *first* day of the week as the Sabbath; for even though the day has been changed, the moral aspect of "one day in seven" is being observed. For they are aware that Christians who do not observe any Sabbath point to Exod.20 and say, "But who gave you the authority to change the day from the seventh to the first?" And they answer by saying, "We can, because the *eternal moral* part of the fourth commandment is, 'one day in seven'; the *positive* part concerns *which* day precisely, and that can be altered by the Lord; and He has so altered it."

But when we actually *read* the words of the fourth commandment in Exod.20:8-11, does it in fact support this argument of the "Sunday Sabbatarians"? We contend, as have many others, that it does not. And this we will demonstrate in due course.

Did Adam really know, by the law of nature, that one day in seven must be kept holy unto the Lord? Never mind which day in the week – did he even know that one day in seven must be so kept? No! The light of nature is insufficient to reveal that! One day looks just like another. How could Adam have known this? If God had wanted him to observe a Sabbath, He would have had to *tell* him so!

It must even be asked whether Adam, in his innocence, *needed* a day of rest or not. Surely he did not! The work the Lord God gave him to do in the garden of Eden was not exhausting work. He only had to work “in the sweat of his brow” *after* he sinned and was driven out of Eden (Gen. 3:17-19). Prior to the fall, his work was easy, it was a delight, the ground had not as yet been cursed so it did not as yet bring forth thorns and thistles, he did not as yet struggle against the elements. He did not grow weary, and thus he did not need a day of rest from his physical toil. Just as we will not need such a day in heaven, so Adam did not need it in his sinlessness. In heaven, we will not toil for six days and grow fatigued as a result, so that we need to rest for a day, and nor did Adam in Eden.

But would Adam not have needed one day in seven for *worship*? Only if the Lord God told him so; and there is nothing in all of Scripture to indicate that He did.

What about the argument that the Sabbath was a creation ordinance? That it was set up from the very beginning of creation, and being given to Adam at creation, it is therefore a perpetual moral law?

“Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day [note that! the seventh, not the first, day] God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day [the seventh, again] from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day [yet again], and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made” (Gen.2:1-3).

There are two vital points to be understood here.

The first is this: *on what day was Adam created?* The sixth day (Gen.1:26-31); the final day on which God created anything. And on what day did God rest? The seventh day. The Sabbath rest was *not*, then, a law of nature, *concreated* with Adam! It came *after* him! To keep one day in seven holy unto the Lord was *not* a law written on Adam’s heart at his creation! For he was created on the sixth day, not the seventh. It was not a law *natural* to him. *Everything* that Adam needed was finished on the sixth day. This extremely important point has been too often ignored by “Sunday Sabbatarians.”

Adam was created on the sixth day; and we are told in Gen.2:1 that

all of creation was *finished* on the sixth day, *before* God rested on the seventh day. It was not a law of nature written on Adam's heart, for if it was, then he would have been bound to keep it *even before* God sanctified it. He would have been bound to do by nature what he could not do as yet, for when he was created it was not as yet sanctified! That is absurd. As God breathed the breath of life into Adam and he became a living soul, he had *no knowledge* of keeping one day in seven holy to the Lord. He could not have known it by the light of nature, a fact which is proved by two other things:

Firstly: if to keep a Sabbath was a law of nature, then according to God's Word the consciences of Adam's fallen posterity would convict them of breaking it. This is seen from Rom.2:14,15, considered earlier, which says that even the unconverted Gentiles show the work of the law written on their hearts! Even though all men are fallen creatures, they still retain some knowledge of the moral law of God, and their consciences often condemn them when they break that law – never even having heard the Gospel. They commit adultery, and their consciences condemn them; they commit murder, and their consciences condemn them; they steal from their neighbour, and they are condemned in their own consciences. In the Bible we have the moral law written; but to an extent even the heathen who have no Bible still retain some knowledge of what is right and wrong – the moral law of God – in their consciences.

Even heathen philosophers recognised this fact in the past. For example, Plato, the heathen Greek philosopher, wrote of that which he called "that unwritten law", the law of nature, which men had. He wrote of that "unwritten law" by which men knew that it was not right to go to marketplace naked. Who told men that? They did not find it in the Scriptures, for they had not read the Scriptures. And he wrote that there was an "unwritten law" which men had, that men must not clothe themselves as women. Throughout history that has been known and accepted, even by very base men, as something abominable. And yet they had never read it in the Scriptures of God.

Of course, heathens *sin* against the law of nature. But some remains of it are still there in their hearts, and their consciences, if not completely seared, do at times condemn them for the breach of it. But here is the relevance of all this to the present subject: we do *not* find sinful, fallen men, condemned by their consciences for breaking the Sabbath! The

heathens are not eaten up with guilt over Sabbath-breaking, although they are often guilt-ridden over murder, stealing, adultery, lying, coveting, etc.

And secondly, the fact that Adam could not have known of a Sabbath by the law of nature is also proved by the following: if indeed it was a perpetual moral law, it would be *re-inscribed* on the hearts of God's elect at their regeneration! And very clearly too. "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people" (Heb.8:10). This verse shows us what takes place when the Lord brings about the regeneration of a sinner. When God gives a man a new heart, He *writes* His laws on that man's heart! Yes, as seen from Rom.2, even the heathen have some knowledge of God's law; but it is not *engraved* on their hearts. Yet every single regenerated man or woman has the law of God written on their hearts, and inscribed on their minds! And yet – when God regenerates His elect, writing His laws on their minds and in their hearts, so that they are convicted of their sins and they cry out to Him in repentance, the Sabbath is not a law He writes on their hearts!

We would ask our "Sunday Sabbatarian" friends to be brutally honest with themselves when answering this question: which of you was truly convicted of Sabbath-breaking at your regeneration and conversion? This is a very important question to consider. You might have been convicted of all kinds of sins of which you were guilty, and cried out to the Lord in repentance; but was Sabbath-breaking one of them?

We are well aware that the godly John Bunyan wrote that when God showed him his sins, he saw that he was guilty of Sabbath-breaking. But it must be remembered that Bunyan lived in England at a time when the influence of Puritanism was very strong, and men were preaching about what they *called* Sabbath-breaking, such as working on Sunday, etc.; and Bunyan, like all the men of his day, had heard such preaching many times, and had lived and breathed in that atmosphere his whole life; so that when he was truly converted, he felt very guilty about "Sabbath-breaking". Living at that time and in that place, in that atmosphere, he felt guilty of this. But we would confidently assert that those who

have *not* lived under that influence, do *not* get convicted of “Sabbath-breaking” when they are converted. If a missionary was to take the Gospel to a tribe somewhere who had never heard of the Sabbath, and if in his preaching he never mentioned the Sabbath, then when any were converted, “Sabbath-breaking” would not be a sin that they would come under conviction of breaking. They would not be consumed with guilt for “defiling the Lord’s holy day”. They would certainly see themselves as dreadful sinners, and many of their sins would stare them in the face, and they would cry out in repentance, being so ashamed of them; but “Sabbath-breaking” would not be one of them!

Furthermore, if, when God writes His laws in the hearts of His people at regeneration, He includes the Sabbath law among them, *why is there such confusion among Christians about it?* In Heb.8:10 the Lord says He will *write* His laws on their hearts! Now if we have those laws written on our heart, and our brother in Christ also has those laws written on his heart, and yet he seeks to keep the Sabbath, why do we not seek to keep it, and yet he does? *Why* is there this confusion about the Sabbath – why has there been such confusion about it for centuries – if God has written, on his heart *and* ours, that the Sabbath must be kept? No Christian doubts (for example) that idolatry is a sin, or adultery, or covetousness; but breaking the so-called “Christian Sabbath”? If indeed it was so clearly written on the hearts of all true Christians, there would not be such confusion about it! For if it is even, to some extent, in the *heathen*, who retain some remnants of the moral law (as “Sunday Sabbatarians” must assert, for they hold it to be an eternal moral law), then certainly when one becomes a *Christian*, and the Lord writes His laws on the heart, they would know it.

The attempt to convince men to view the Sabbath as a perpetual moral law will always be an uphill struggle, as long as the world lasts; for the truth is – it is *not* an eternal moral law. Well-meaning Christians have attempted to teach a *positive* law given to Israel as if it was a *moral* law given to all men in all ages; and the regenerated heart *struggles* to accept it as moral. And there is a simple explanation for this: it is not a moral law.

As a new convert, we had no conviction about keeping any kind of Sabbath. We felt that there was no such thing for New Testament

believers. But then, as time went by and we heard conflicting viewpoints on this issue, we became confused; and there came a time as a result when we felt we ought to attempt to keep the Sabbath; so we stopped going to shops on Sundays, etc., and our confusion deepened and we came under much bondage. And then again we came to the conclusion that this was unnecessary, and left off attempting to “observe” it. But the struggle continued intermittently for a long time. Why? And it was not an experience unique to us; many, many believers have experienced precisely the same sense of confusion, and uncertainty, and guilt as well, and they have struggled and wrestled with this issue. For a time they feel that they must “keep the Sabbath”, because they learn of all the Christians who have done so in the past, or because they read books or hear sermons in which they are exhorted to “obey the fourth commandment”. And so they struggle along and they try, and yet in their hearts they have a sense that there is something wrong; that this is not a part of New Testament worship or Christian service. The “Christian Sabbath” teaching does not find a place of rest in their hearts. It does not sit comfortably with them. It feels like an intruder there.

And the plain reason for this ongoing struggle is simply this: the Sabbath commandment is not a moral commandment, it was a positive commandment given only to the nation of Israel for a specific period of time and for a very specific purpose.

It is very significant, also, that so many sincere pastors within the “Sunday Sabbatarian” camp often spend more time teaching their flocks about the “Christian Sabbath” than about what they would call the “other moral commandments” (in truth, the other commandments of the decalogue *are* moral, whereas the Sabbath commandment is not). It is almost as if they are trying to convince themselves, at times, that the Sabbath commandment is an eternal moral law and must be kept by New Testament believers!

The first point, then, regarding the argument that the Sabbath was a creation ordinance, is this: Adam was made on the sixth day, and God rested on the seventh day, and thus the Sabbath law was not a law of nature, concreated with Adam. And the heathen are not convicted in their consciences for breaking it, nor is it reinscribed at regeneration on

the hearts of God's people; showing that it was not part of God's eternal moral law.

The second point to be made, regarding the argument that the Sabbath was a creation ordinance, instituted for man at creation, is this: *at no time* in Gen.2:1-3 is *man* commanded to keep the Sabbath! The word itself does not appear there. The Hebrew root word does, but not the actual word, "Sabbath". And at no time is man even *mentioned* in this passage, let alone commanded to keep a Sabbath! The focus is entirely on *God*: on the seventh day *God* ended his work – *He* rested on the seventh day – *God* blessed and sanctified the seventh day – in it *He* rested. The passage is all about God; it is not about man at all.

In fact, we can go further: nowhere in the whole book of *Genesis* is it stated that man must keep a Sabbath! And this fact is something very important, no matter how much "Sunday Sabbatarians" attempt to gloss over it.

Gen.2:3 says that God "sanctified" the seventh day. This means He *set it apart*. But – and this is so important – He *did not immediately give it to man to keep*. This vital point is missed, or ignored, by "Sunday Sabbatarians." In claiming that it is a creation ordinance, they read Gen.2:1-3 and they say to themselves, "Well, there it is! Adam has just been created. It's right here – God gave it to Adam." But the passage does not say so!

Gen.2:1-3 is an account of what *God* did; it says nothing whatsoever about what *man* should do. It does not tell *man* to sanctify the day; it tells us that *God* did. This is what the words of those three verses actually say. And the vital significance of this cannot be emphasised enough.

God certainly did sanctify the seventh day – set it apart for a holy use – but *for a later period*! Not for that immediate period of time. Not for men from Adam onwards, throughout all ages, but only for the *Israelites* from the time of Moses, which was over 2000 years later. From Adam to Moses, no man kept a Sabbath. It was not imposed on men during that long period of time. And furthermore, it was only given to the Israelites themselves from the time of Moses to the time of the Lord Jesus Christ! – not afterwards.

It was thus for a very limited period that God sanctified the seventh

day.

And this was not the only time the Lord God did something like this. The Bible contains other examples of the Lord sanctifying something or someone for a later period of time.

Take, for example, the land of Canaan. The Lord God set apart the land of Canaan for the children of Israel *long before* they actually took possession of it. In Gen.15:7 the Lord said to Abram: “I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it.” And v.18 says, “In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land”. The Lord told Abram that He had set this land apart for him and for his seed. Abram did not actually possess it; not did Isaac; nor did Jacob. But *centuries later*, the children of Israel, the descendants of Abram, took possession of the land of Canaan. The Lord set it apart for them, long before He actually allowed them to possess it. As it says in Deut 32:8: “When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.” When the Lord predestined where the nations of the earth would settle and dwell at any given point in history, He set aside for the nation of Israel the place which He would eventually give to them. They did not own it immediately, but it was set apart (sanctified) for them at a later stage.

Take, as another example, the prophet Jeremiah. “Then the word of the Lord came unto me,” said Jeremiah, “saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations” (Jer.1:4,5). Jeremiah was sanctified – set apart unto God – before he was even born! This occurred in eternity, in fact. It was only after he had grown to manhood that he began to prophesy. But he had been sanctified by the Lord before he had an existence. And the same thing is true of all the prophets, and indeed of all the people of God.

Take, as yet another example of this truth, Paul the apostle. He wrote, “But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen” (Gal.1:15,16). God separated Paul to be His,

from his mother's womb – even though he was only converted to Christ many years later, as an adult! Paul's words, that God separated him from his mother's womb, refer in fact to divine, eternal predestination: that God, from all eternity, predestinated, and thus separated, Paul for these very purposes. In saying that God separated him from the womb, his meaning was that God separated him from before he was born, from before he even had an existence – from eternity. For in the womb, Paul had as yet done neither good nor evil, and yet he was separated unto God; showing that in truth, the separation was from an earlier period (eternity). Just as the words, "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev.13:8), actually mean from *before* the foundation of the world (compare with Jn.17:24; Eph.1:4; 1 Pet.1:20), rather than from the moment of the world's foundation, which occurred in time; so likewise, "from my mother's womb" actually means from *before* my mother's womb. And the same thing can be said of all of God's elect: they were set apart from before the foundation of the world, and in due time called, justified, etc.

And a final example: that of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He was set apart to be the Saviour, Mediator, etc., *long before* He came into the world in the flesh – in fact, from *eternity*. In Jn.10:36, Jesus said: "Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?" God the Father sanctified, or separated, or set apart, the Son to His office as Mediator, etc. And this He did from eternity! – from before the foundation of the world, as various other Scriptures show. In Rev.13:8 Christ is spoken of as "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." God the Son was not *literally* slain in eternity, but only in time, some 4000 years after the world began; but God the Father had set Him apart for that in eternity. In Isa.49:1 the Lord Christ says in prophecy, "The Lord hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name." The Father called Him to His office as Mediator, and to be the Saviour, not only from the womb of His mother Mary, but from even earlier than that: from the womb of His divine purposes and decrees, before the world began; the womb of eternity; being from eternity sanctified, or set apart, predestinated for His great work.

And thus it is very plain, from all these examples, that God sets apart,

or sanctifies, things and persons for a later time. And this is precisely what He did when He sanctified the seventh day, in Gen.2:1-3. He sanctified it – but for later. And this shall be seen with proof upon proof as we proceed.

Another extremely important point must be made with regards to what the Lord God did in Gen.2, and what He later did when He gave the Israelites the Sabbath. If the Sabbath was given to man at creation, as “Sunday Sabbatarians” claim, then the seventh day which the Israelites were later told to keep (in Exod.20:8-11) would have had to have been the *same* day as in Gen.2, if indeed men had been keeping the seventh-day Sabbath ever since the time of Adam. If men had been observing the Sabbath since Adam, they would have done so in regular weekly cycles of seven days until the time of Moses, and therefore Moses would have simply continued with that pattern.

However: the seventh day in Gen.2 *could not* have been the same as the seventh-day Sabbath given to Israel in Exod.20! For Exod.20:9,10 says that the Israelites were to keep the Sabbath after six days of *labour*: meaning, the labour of *men*. The seventh day in Gen.2, however, was after six days of work by *God*. God, not man! But the fourth commandment of the decalogue specifically says that the Israelites must rest after *their* six days of labour, not God’s.

In fact, that seventh day in Gen.2 – the day on which God rested after His six days of creation – was either Adam’s *first* day after his creation (for he had been created on the sixth day), or his *second* day if we take the day of his creation as his first day! Either way, that seventh day was not Adam’s seventh day. Adam had not even laboured yet! – and thus that seventh day could not have been a rest from labour for him! The fourth commandment of the decalogue is very specific: it states that there must be six days’ labour, followed by one day of rest. And yet if the fourth commandment is a perpetual moral law, as “Sunday Sabbatarians” insist it is, and all men from the beginning of the world must work six days and rest one, then there can be no other conclusion we can arrive at but this: *Adam sinned*. For he had just been created, and already he was resting, before he had done any labour whatsoever; and thus was breaking this commandment.

He would have rested before he worked! This was sinful, *if* the Sabbath commandment was a perpetual moral law. And yet when did Adam sin? Not when he failed to “observe the Sabbath”, but when he ate the forbidden fruit. *This* was his sin, not Sabbath-breaking.

The truth is, that seventh day was God's day of rest (cessation from work) after His work of creation; it was not a day of rest to Adam. It was in fact Adam's first day after the day of his creation, or his second day if one counts the day of his creation as his first day.

And all of this means, of course, that *Adam's* seventh day would have been the day we call Thursday, or the day we call Friday, depending on whether we take his first day as the day of his creation, or the day after the day of his creation! Yet the Sabbath day was the day we call Saturday – not Thursday or Friday.

The evidence continues to stack up. Adam did not keep a Sabbath.

The Sabbath law was not a part of the law of nature. The Sabbath was not instituted at creation. It was not given to man at that time. It is therefore *not* an eternal moral law, which all men from Adam to the end of the world are commanded and bound to observe, and will be punished for breaking. Man, by the law of nature, knows that God must be worshipped; but God, by a *positive* law, must state *what* specific time must be set aside for worship, if He has so willed. And He did *not* do so until the time of Moses, and then the Sabbath was only in force until the time when the Lord Jesus Christ abolished it. Thus the Sabbath commandment was positive, not moral.

God did not even give to *Adam* a *positive* law about the Sabbath. It was indeed a positive law; but the Lord did not give it to Adam in any sense, not as a moral law and not even as a positive law. This is absolutely clear from reading the Genesis account of Adam: he was *never* commanded to keep a Sabbath! The *only* positive law Adam was ever given was concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the fruit of which he was not to eat (Gen.2:16,17).

But there is much more to prove that the Lord did not give the Sabbath commandment to Adam and to all his seed.

No One Between Adam and Moses Was Commanded to Keep a Sabbath

Furthermore: *no one*, between Adam and Moses, was *ever* commanded to keep a Sabbath! Not a single soul. There is no mention in Scripture, between Gen.2 and Exod.16, of anyone keeping a Sabbath, or being commanded to keep it. Not a single word. Only in Exod.16, for the very first time, were men told anything about it; and these were the Israelites only.

How then do “Sunday Sabbatarians” explain this? They attempt to find examples of Sabbath-keeping in Genesis, or rather what they consider to be hints of it, and use these to claim that men did indeed keep the Sabbath between Adam and Moses. Let us examine these.

Some appeal to Gen.4:3: “And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord.” Now regardless of how many times one reads this verse, it is simply impossible to find in it any reference whatsoever to a Sabbath. To use this verse to support Sabbath-keeping between Adam and Moses is really a desperate attempt to find proof for something, when there is none. The explanation given, by those “Sunday Sabbatarians” who appeal to this verse, is as follows: they argue that the Hebrew words which have been rendered here as, “in process of time”, can also be rendered as, “at the end of days.” And they claim that this means the end of the week; in other words, the seventh-day Sabbath. This, they assert, was the day on which they offered sacrifices to the Lord.

Note, however, that no number of days is given here. Even though the Hebrew can be rendered, also, as “at the end of days”, no number of days is given; and in fact, it is far more likely to be referring to the end of the *year* than the end of the week, for this would have been the harvest-time, when fruits were gathered, which is why Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord.

To try to make this verse teach that Sabbath-keeping was already being practised is absurd. It says nothing whatsoever about a Sabbath.

Some appeal to Gen.8:10-12: “And he stayed yet other seven days; and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark; and the dove came in to him in the evening; and, lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf pluckt off: so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth. And he

stayed yet other seven days; and sent forth the dove; which returned not again unto him any more.” They point to the seven-day cycle that Noah followed here; doubtless a weekly cycle. But what exactly does this portion of Scripture prove? It merely proves that Noah waited in seven-day cycles. It says absolutely nothing about a Sabbath. It does not even imply anything about a Sabbath. Finding a reference to the Sabbath in these verses is reading into them what is simply not there.

It is astounding that many godly men, sound in the faith and doctrine in many other matters, have resorted to such *weak* scriptural exegesis in this matter. Desperate to find some kind of “proof” that the Sabbath was observed in the centuries before Moses, they have to attempt to dig it out of passages of God’s Word which speak of seven-day cycles and “the process of time”, but actually say nothing at all about a Sabbath.

The plain truth of the matter is that apart from Gen.2:1-3, which speaks of God resting from His works on that seventh day but is not a commandment to men to observe a day of rest – it is merely stating that God sanctified it for a future time – there is not another mention of it until Exod.16: the time of Moses and the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. Righteous Abel did not observe a Sabbath. Enoch, who walked with God, did not observe a Sabbath. Noah, who found grace in the eyes of the Lord, did not keep a Sabbath. Abraham, the friend of God, did not keep it. Nor did Isaac. Nor did Jacob.

In Gen.26:5, the Lord says of Abraham that he “obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.” The Lord is very specific: Abraham kept His laws! He was obedient to the Lord! Abraham delighted in the laws, commandments, and statutes of the Lord, and kept them! And yet never once do we read of Abraham keeping a Sabbath, or being commanded to keep one. And never once do we read of any other man in the entire book of Genesis keeping a Sabbath either.

These were God’s elect! These men served the Lord with all their hearts! We find them building altars; we find them sacrificing to the Lord; we find them worshipping Him; but not a word do we find of them observing a Sabbath.

And (which is also very important) there are many instances recorded in Scripture, between Adam and Moses, of men transgressing the eternal

moral law of God! Consider the following:

In Gen.4:8, Cain murdered his brother Abel. Thus the moral law, expressed in Exod.20:13 as, “Thou shalt not kill,” was broken. In Gen.9:21,22, we read of the sins of drunkenness and nakedness. In Gen.13:13, we read of the sin of sodomy. In Gen.18:15, Sarah lied. Lying, too, is a transgression of the moral law. Gen.31:19 shows the sin of stealing, the transgression of the moral law expressed in Exod.20:15 as, “Thou shalt not steal.” And these are just some of the examples that could be given, of men and women transgressing God’s eternal, unalterable, righteous moral law. Yet, nowhere in all of Genesis is there any account, whatsoever, of any men breaking the Sabbath. Between Gen.2 and Exod.16 – silence.

Some have claimed that the “argument from silence” – that there was no mention of anyone keeping it before Exod.16, and therefore it was not kept – does not prove anything: they point to the fact that it was not mentioned again from Joshua to 2 Kings, yet this does not prove the Sabbath was not being observed during this time.

The difference, however, is this: we *know*, from Holy Scripture, that it *was* instituted for the period from Joshua to 2 Kings! But we have *nothing* in Holy Scripture to prove that men were to keep it from Gen.2 to Exod.16. *If* there were solid grounds, from anywhere in Scripture, to believe that men between Gen.2 and Exod.16 *were* in fact keeping the Sabbath, or even knew that they should – then yes, the “argument from silence” would be meaningless. But we have no such scriptural evidence. And this fact, when taken in conjunction with all the *other* solid biblical evidence, speaks loud and clear.

And it could not have been a commandment that was forgotten because men were so sinful! Some “Sunday Sabbatarians” have argued thus. They have claimed that the Sabbath commandment was for men since creation, but that it was lost – forgotten – until Moses reinstated it. And they point to Moses having lost the truth about circumcision, as evidence that he (and the rest of the Israelites) also lost the truth about Sabbath-keeping. But the men of those times did not forget about the sinfulness of stealing, murder, adultery, lying. IF the Sabbath was a moral law as they say, then like all moral laws it was written on the heart at regeneration; so *how could* it have been lost? Moses and others

were regenerated men. Yes, Moses neglected to circumcise his son; but circumcision was a positive commandment, not a moral one. Positive commandments are not written on the heart at regeneration, only moral ones are. Besides, very importantly, the incident with Moses actually works *against* the position of “Sunday Sabbatarians”; it does not support their contention. They focus on the fact that Moses neglected to circumcise his son, but fail to take sufficient notice of what the Lord sought to do to him as a result! For when Moses neglected to circumcise his son, the Bible says that the Lord sought to kill him (Exod.4:24-26). The command to circumcise was a positive law for the Israelites, not a moral law; and yet *even so*, the Lord viewed the neglect of this in such a serious light. Moses’ wife quickly circumcised their son, and Moses was not killed. Surely, then, the Lord would also have reminded Moses about the Sabbath, long before Exod. 16, as He did with circumcision, *if* it had been forgotten! Especially considering that “Sunday Sabbatarians” claim that Sabbath observance is part of the eternal moral law, whereas they know that circumcision was a positive law. It is no argument at all to claim that men simply forgot about Sabbath-keeping. Moses forgot about circumcision, and he was almost killed! If Israel had forgotten about the Sabbath, they would have been punished, and we would read about it in the Word of God. But we do not. Later, God did punish them for forgetting the Sabbath; but not at this time.

The Sabbath Was First Given to Israel (and Israel Only) After the Exodus

Beyond any doubt, the Sabbath was not given to Adam, nor to his posterity for many centuries, either by moral law, or by any positive law. It was not a creation ordinance.

To whom, then, was the Sabbath commandment given, and when? The Bible provides a very clear answer: it was given to the nation of Israel, at the time of Moses. This was the *first time* it was ever given to any men on earth, and as we shall see, it was *only* ever given to Israel, and *only* for a very specific period of time: from Moses to Christ.

Let us study this very carefully.

Exod.16:19-30 says: “And Moses said, Let no man leave of it [the

manna] till the morning. Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto Moses; but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and stank: and Moses was wroth with them. And they gathered it every morning, every man according to his eating: and when the sun waxed hot, it melted. And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man: and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. And he said unto them, This is that which the Lord hath said, To morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord: bake that which ye will bake to day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning. And they laid it up till the morning, as Moses bade: and it did not stink, neither was there any worm therein. And Moses said, Eat that to day; for to day is a sabbath unto the Lord: to day ye shall not find it in the field. Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the sabbath, in it there shall be none. And it came to pass, that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none. And the Lord said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws? See, for that the Lord hath given you the sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. So the people rested on the seventh day.”

This lengthy portion of God’s holy Word contains much to instruct us. This is the first time the Sabbath is made known to any people! From Gen.2 until this passage, there is not one word about it.

Those who claim that the Sabbath is moral law given at creation, argue that the entire passage shows that the Israelites knew about a Sabbath already, and Moses was not telling them something new; for in v.23 it says, “And he said unto them, This is that which the Lord *hath said* [past tense], To morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord”. They claim that he was thus telling them something they already knew about.

But this is not the case at all. Moses was telling them something very, very new to them! The Bible itself tells us that up to this point, they knew nothing about Sabbath-keeping. In Neh.9:13,14, in referring to this very event at the time of the Exodus, it is said of the Lord: “Thou camest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments: and madest known unto them thy holy sabbath, and commandedst them

precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant”.

Note the words: “*and madest known unto them thy holy sabbath*”! God made known His holy Sabbath *to Israel* at Mount Sinai! This means, *after* they had come out of Egypt, and were given the law at that mountain. If this passage in Nehemiah was the only one we had to go by, it could perhaps be argued that it simply meant the Lord made known His Sabbath to Israel in a new way; that He merely reminded them now of what they had once known, but forgotten (as is claimed by “Sunday Sabbatarians”); but when this passage is added to Exod.16:23 (“And he said unto them, This is that which the Lord hath said, To morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord”), *and* to the ones to follow, the weight of evidence then makes the meaning of these words clear: they reveal that the Sabbath was not known before Exod.16!

When Moses, then, said in Exod.16:23, “This is that which the Lord hath said”, he was not referring back to Gen.2:1-3, as “Sunday Sabbatarians” think; he was merely telling the Israelites what the Lord had said to *him* (Moses) – revealed to *him*! For the Lord always spoke to Moses first, and told him to tell the people the words of the Lord. So when the people came to Moses and told him that there was twice as much manna on the sixth day, he told them, “This is that which the Lord hath said – ‘Tomorrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord.’” He was not saying, “This is what the Lord said way back at the beginning, after the six days of creation”; he was saying in effect, “This is what the Lord has said *to me*! This is what the Lord has revealed *to me*, to be passed on to *you*!” And v.23 actually proves that Moses was *given* this revelation *for the first time*; and Neh.9:14 confirms it.

And there are at least four more proofs.

Firstly, the actions of the Israelites reveal that they had *no knowledge* of a Sabbath prior to the giving of the manna: “And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man: and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses” (Exod.16:22). *Why?* Why did they do this? If they had been keeping a Sabbath, or had knowledge of a Sabbath, why did they come to him and tell him about this strange thing – that when they collected manna on the sixth day, there was double that provided on any other day?

This is precisely why Moses replies, “This is that which the Lord hath said, To morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord” (v.23). It was brand new! If they had already been keeping a Sabbath, or if they had simply been *aware* of it even if they had not been keeping it, they would at least have understood; but they did not.

Secondly, the words of the Lord show that He *gave Israel* the Sabbath. Exod.16:29 says: “See, for that *the Lord hath given you* the sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.”

Thirdly, Ezek.20:10-12 adds *yet further* evidence: “Wherefore I caused them to go forth out of the land of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness. And I gave them my statutes, and shewed them my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them. Moreover also *I gave them my sabbaths*, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them.” These two texts, from Exod.16 and Ezek.20, are as plain as can be: the Lord *gave* the Sabbath to *Israel*.

“Sunday Sabbatarians” have argued that this does not mean it was not instituted before; and they point to Jn.7:22, which says that Moses gave them circumcision, but without intending to imply that it did not exist before. In the same way, they argue, Ezek.20:10-12 does not assert that the Sabbath did not exist before.

Perhaps, if the passage in Ezekiel stood on its own, this would be so; but it does not stand on its own. When put with Exod.16:29, as well as with all the other scriptural evidence given here, a weighty *body* of evidence is accumulated. In addition, we *know* that circumcision was before Moses, for the Bible tells us so; but the Bible does *not* tell us that the Sabbath was before him! In fact, quite the opposite: all the scriptural evidence shows us that no Sabbath was kept until after the Exodus.

Fourthly, when a man was caught breaking the Sabbath, the children of Israel *did not know what to do with him*; showing that they had no knowledge of a Sabbath prior to this! Num.15:32-36: “And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the sabbath day. And they that found him gathering sticks

brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation. And they put him in ward, because it was not declared what should be done to him. And the Lord said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp. And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died; as the Lord commanded Moses.” When they caught this man breaking the Sabbath by working – collecting sticks to make a fire – they did not know what to do with him! They had to put him in ward, and then go and enquire of the Lord. They knew he must not break the Sabbath, but they did not know what punishment to mete out to him. Yet *if* the Sabbath had been imposed on men from the time of *Adam*, many centuries before, the *punishment* for breaking it would certainly have been known to them! They would not have had to put him in ward and go and enquire of the Lord what to do with him. People would have broken the Sabbath millions of times since the beginning of the world! But the Israelites did *not* know what punishment he deserved!

When Adam was given that positive law, forbidding him to eat the fruit of one tree in the garden, he was at the very same time also told what the *penalty* would be for breaking it; and the penalty was death (Gen.2:16,17). God told him the law, and He told him the penalty for disobedience. And when Noah was told of the sin of murder (although of course it was known from the beginning of creation), the *penalty* was also given; which was capital punishment (Gen.9:5,6). And if the Sabbath was a moral law (as “Thou shalt not kill” most certainly is), the Israelites would have known what the penalty for Sabbath-breaking was.

The commandment regarding circumcision was not a moral commandment, but a positive one given only to the descendants of Abraham. And yet when circumcision was given by God to Abraham and his descendants, the *penalty* for not being circumcised was clearly spelled out (Gen.17:13,14). The law was given, and the penalty was given.

And yet in Num.15, the Israelites had no idea what to do with that Sabbath-breaker! This shows plainly that it was a *brand-new law* to them. God had given them the Sabbath commandment only as recently as Exod.16, and it was so new to them that when this matter arose they did not know how to respond to it.

Thus, these four proofs (set forth in Exod. 16:22; Exod. 16:29 with Ezek. 20:10-12; and Num. 15:32-36), added to Neh.9:14 and Exod.16:23, give us six solid proofs that the Sabbath was given to men, for the very first time, by God through Moses, and not before. And this is sufficient evidence! It is solid, infallible, scriptural evidence.

The Sabbath Was Given to Israel Only, for a Special Purpose and a Specific Time

Now we must study the Sabbath, as it was given to Israel at the time of the Exodus. It was given *only* to Israel; and as we are going to see, it was given for a *special* purpose, and for a *specific* time: from the time of Moses to the time of the Lord Jesus Christ, who then *abolished* it.

We must examine Exod.20:8-11; for here, soon after the Israelites first heard of it in Exod.16, it was included in what we call the decalogue, as the fourth of the ten commandments. “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, 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: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.”

The all-important question is this: are all ten commandments moral law?

If it can be shown that even one of them is not, then it is obvious that the ten commandments, *as a codified law*, are *not* the *sole* rule of life for believers in all ages, and that, *as* that body of codified law, they were *only* given to Israel.

Those within what is termed the “Reformed” camp say that the entire decalogue is moral law, permanent and binding throughout all ages on all men. But is this really the case? Can such an argument stand up to the light of Holy Scripture?

As shown above, the Sabbath commandment was *not* an eternal moral commandment. And that evidence alone is satisfactory; but from within the law given to Moses, itself, there is still more evidence that the

Sabbath commandment – the fourth of the ten commandments – was not moral law.

In Deut.5 there is a repetition of the ten commandments. But before the decalogue is repeated, there are these words: “And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them. The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day. The Lord talked with you face to face in the mount out of the midst of the fire, (I stood between the Lord and you at that time, to shew you the word of the Lord: for ye were afraid by reason of the fire, and went not up into the mount;) saying, I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage” (vv.1-6); and he then goes on to repeat the ten commandments. And in vv.12-15 the fourth commandment is again stated. It is very similar to the wording in Exod.20:8-11; but the words of v.15 are not found in Exod.20, and are very important to this study:

“And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day” (Deut.5:15).

There are a number of very important points to be made, from this portion of Holy Scripture.

In vv.2,3, Moses said: “The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord *made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us*, even us, who are all of us here alive this day.” The Lord did not make that covenant (which we call the Mosaic, or Sinaitic, covenant) with their fathers! – their ancestors! He made it *only* with Israel at Mount Horeb, after they had come out of Egypt. And what was the covenant He made with them? The main feature of it was the ten commandments. How do we know? We know, because Deut.4:13 says, “And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, even ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone.” And yet in 5:3, it says that this covenant was given *only* to Israel! And to no one before Israel.

The ten commandments were the main feature of a covenant made

only with Israel. Deut.5 says so; Deut.4:13 says so; and in actual fact, *so does Exod.20:1,2*. This is the very introduction to the ten commandments; and it says: "And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." This cannot be said of *anyone but Israel!* It cannot be said of any believer alive today, for we have never been in bondage in Egypt, and we have not been brought out of Egypt. Yes, there are typological lessons for us: the bondage of Israel in Egypt typified the bondage of God's people to sin. But God was most definitely speaking to *Israel* here: "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt". And He then proceeds to give them the covenant, the main feature of which was the ten commandments. And as no one but the Israelites were in bondage to Egypt, or brought out of it, that covenant was made with no others but them.

And in addition, Deut.5:15 also states very clearly that the Sabbath was only ever given to Israel. It says, "And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: *therefore* the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day." The word, "therefore", is very important here. It was *because* the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, that He *therefore* commanded Israel to keep the Sabbath day. Their *reason* for keeping it was their deliverance from Egypt! This is why it was given to them.

Thus we have at least three passages in the law of Moses that tell us plainly that the decalogue was the main feature of a covenant made only with Israel: Deut.5; Deut.4:13; and Exod.20:1,2. And Deut.5:15 tells us that the Sabbath was only given to Israel, *because* He brought them out of Egypt. And thus the Sabbath commandment was not a moral commandment, but a positive one. It applied only to one nation, for one particular period of time: the period of the Law, from Moses to the Lord Christ.

But there is still more proof.

The Sabbath was the *sign* of the covenant that the Lord made with *Israel only*. This is clear from Exod.31:12-17: "And the Lord spake

unto Moses, saying, 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 unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord: whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. 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 for ever: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.”

The Lord said, “*a sign between me and you throughout your generations*”, and, “*a sign between me and the children of Israel*”! Note: not a sign between Him and *all* men. For the Sabbath was a sign of the covenant made at Sinai between God and Israel.

This is also clear from Ezek.20:10-12: “Wherefore I caused them to go forth out of the land of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness. And I gave them my statutes, and shewed them my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them. Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them.” Again, this is very plain: the Sabbath was a sign between God and Israel: “*I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them*”.

And if the Sabbath was only a *sign* of the covenant, how long would it last? It would last only as long as the covenant itself lasted! When the Sinaitic covenant would be done away, the *sign* of that covenant would be done away as well. And the Lord Jesus Christ brought in a *new covenant*, with a *new sign* – the sign being the ordinance of the Lord’s supper! “This cup is the new testament in my blood,” Jesus told His disciples (Lk.22:20). And what happened to the old covenant? It was done away! This is stated categorically in Heb.8:7-13: the Lord, centuries before the time of Christ, had prophesied that He would make a new covenant, not according to the covenant which He made in the wilderness, at Sinai; and v.13 says, “In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.” The

old covenant, the covenant made with Israel at Sinai, was to vanish away, for the new covenant had come, and Christ had in fact abolished it; as we are told in 2 Cor.3:7-11. And Gal.3:19 says, "Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator." The law of Moses was added *till* Christ should come. And Gal.3:24,25 says, "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster." Christians are *new covenant* believers, not under the Sinaitic covenant. That old covenant has *no* binding covenantal authority over the new covenant Christian!

The covenant then being done away, certainly the *sign* of that covenant was done away as well! It is gone – it is abolished.

But does this mean that the ten commandments contain no eternal moral law? Certainly not! The ten commandments are *predominantly* eternal, unchanging moral law. But the fourth commandment is not. Thus the decalogue *contains* moral law, but *not only* moral law. The fourth commandment is a positive commandment. The only *moral* aspect of the fourth commandment is that *time* must be set aside in which to worship God. That is all.

Interestingly, "Sunday Sabbatarians" *also* teach that the ten commandments are not *solely* moral law; for they claim that the fourth commandment, although mostly moral, does contain a positive aspect: what is moral, they say, is that one day in seven must be a Sabbath, but what is positive is that this must be the seventh day. They claim that the day could be changed to the first day, because *that* part of the commandment was positive, not moral. So they, too, cannot claim that the *entire* decalogue is moral law!

We must return to the decalogue in Exod.20, to study the Sabbath commandment that was given to Israel.

Exod.20:11 says, "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it." This of course refers to Gen.2:2. There, God blessed and hallowed the seventh day. And

the fact that here in Exod.20:11 the Lord refers the Israelites back to Gen.2:2, is one of the main reasons why so many believe that the Sabbath commandment is an eternal moral commandment.

Certainly, Gen.2:2 is given as the *reason* that God blessed and hallowed the Sabbath day, in Exodus. But (and this is so important) it is *not* the reason God commanded Israel to *observe* it! It is the reason He blessed it, but not the reason He made them keep it. It is reading more into this verse than is actually there, to claim that Gen.2:2 is the reason He made Israel keep the Sabbath day. The verse does not say so! The reason why the Lord commanded Israel to keep it is given in Deut.5:15: it was *not* because the Lord *blessed* it in Gen.2:2, but *because God delivered them from Egypt*: “the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: *therefore* [for *this* reason!] the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.”

God *blessed* the seventh day because *He rested* on that day after creating the world; but He gave it to *Israel* because He took them out of Egypt. The Sabbath was given to Israel because of what God *did for them*. It was a positive law given from Moses to Christ. Not before Moses, and not after the coming of Christ, was it ever given to the people of God. It is not an eternal moral law, binding on every man, woman and child throughout all time.

But there is even more proof.

As seen previously, what are (theologically) called *moral* commandments are binding on all mankind, in all ages. It follows, then, that if the Sabbath commandment was a moral commandment, it would have been binding on *Gentiles* as well as Israelites, and would have been given to them no less than to the Israelites. But the fact is, it was *not* given to them! It was only ever given to Israel. If language has any meaning at all, there is no other way we can understand the words of Moses in Exod.16:29, when speaking to the children of Israel: “See, for that the Lord hath *given you* the sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days”; nor the words of Ezek.20:12, where the Lord says of Israel, “Moreover also I *gave them* my sabbaths, to be a *sign between me and them*”.

And this truth, that the Sabbath was never given to the Gentile

nations, but only to Israel, is very dramatically shown to us by an event that occurred at the time of Nehemiah. This man of God relates the following incident, in Neh.13:15-21:

“In those days saw I in Judah some treading wine presses on the sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath day: and I testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals. There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, which brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the sabbath unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem. Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the sabbath day? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the sabbath. And it came to pass, that when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the sabbath, I commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the sabbath: and some of my servants set I at the gates, that there should no burden be brought in on the sabbath day. So the merchants and sellers of all kind of ware lodged without Jerusalem once or twice. Then I testified against them, and said unto them, Why lodge ye about the wall? if ye do so again, I will lay hands on you. From that time forth came they no more on the sabbath.”

Please note very carefully: Nehemiah charged the *Jews* with profaning the Sabbath – not the Gentiles (the merchants of Tyre)! He made it very clear that the *Jews* were doing wrong, but he had nothing to say, by way of reproof or rebuke, to the Gentiles. And the reason was because they had nothing to do with the Sabbath. The Sabbath was given to the children of Israel, and to them only. The only reason he threatened the Gentiles who were outside the walls was because they were a temptation to the Jews. Never once did he accuse *them* of profaning the Sabbath.

“Sunday Sabbatarians” teach that the Sabbath law is an eternal moral law, binding on all men in all ages. They insist that the whole world was sinning against the Lord by not keeping the seventh-day Sabbath prior to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ; and they insist that the whole world is sinning against the Lord *now*, by not keeping what they call the “first-day Sabbath”, the “Christian Sabbath”, or Sunday, which (they believe) has been the Sabbath ever since the resurrection of the Lord Christ. This

belief is what caused the Puritans in the English parliament to enact “Sabbath” legislation, and to enforce “Sabbath” observance throughout the realm, upon the entire population. This belief is what caused many governments around the world, in times past, to legislate and enforce what they falsely thought was “Sabbath observance” upon the entire populations of their countries on Sundays, Christians as well as non-Christians. It is this belief which is behind the indignant remarks of even true brethren in the Lord, who are “Sunday Sabbatarians”, when they lament the fact that they see their neighbours going to work on a Sunday, or going fishing, or their children riding their bicycles in the streets – regardless of the fact that their neighbours may not even profess to be Christians, and may never have even *heard* of the concept of the first day of the week being a “Sabbath”! In fact, they may never have even properly heard of *Christ*! But if indeed (as they believe) the Sabbath is eternal moral law, then all the people of the world, who do not observe Sunday as a Sabbath, are sinning in this – even though they do not even know that Christ rose, or for that matter who He is!

“Sunday Sabbatarians” need to learn from Nehemiah. He was well aware that the Sabbath was not binding on the Gentiles, and he did not attempt to enforce it with them. He had nothing to say to the Gentiles about Sabbath observance. *He* knew it was not a law for all mankind, but rather a law for Israel only. He would have been amazed if he could have peeped down through the centuries, and observed *Gentile* nations enforcing the observance of what they called the “Sabbath” on entire populations of *Gentiles*, and moreover on a *different* day of the week, and claiming that they were obeying the Sabbath commandment in doing so!

A passage from Mark’s Gospel is used by “Sunday Sabbatarians” in an attempt to support their doctrine that the Sabbath was given to *all mankind*, and not just to the Jews. The passage is Mk.2:27,28: “And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.” Later we shall examine their contention, based on this passage, that the Lord Jesus changed the day from the seventh to the first day of the week, being Lord of the Sabbath; but for now our focus is on these words of the Lord: “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath”.

“Sunday Sabbatarians” argue that “the Sabbath was made for man” proves that it was given to all mankind at the beginning of the world, and not just to the Israelites after the Exodus. But this is not so; and John Gill ably demonstrates this in his comments on this verse, which are well worth quoting in full:

“By *man*, is not meant all mankind; for the sabbath was never appointed for all mankind, nor binding upon all; only the Jews, who are emphatically called *man*, or *men*; see Ezek. xxxiv. 30,31. upon which the Jewish writers remark,⁶ that ‘they are called *man*; but the idolatrous Gentiles, and nations of the world, are not called *men*,’ but dogs, beasts, etc. Our Lord may here be thought to speak in their language, as he does in Matt. xv. 26. see the note there. And that the observation of the seventh day, was only designed for the children of Israel, seems manifest from Exod. xxxi. 16,17. *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*; and not between him and the rest of the world: and in ver. 14. *ye shall keep the sabbath, for it is holy unto you*: on which the Jews⁷ make this remark, *to you, and not to the rest of the nations*: nor did they ever think that the Gentiles were obliged to observe their sabbath, only such who became proselytes to their religion; even those who were proselytes of righteousness: for a proselyte of the gate, was not bound to observe it; for so says⁸ Maimonides, ‘those who take upon them the seven commandments of Noah only, lo! they are as a proselyte of the gate, and they are free to do work on the sabbath-day for themselves, openly, as an Israelite on a common day.’ Yea, they not only say, they were not obliged to keep the sabbath, but that it was not lawful for them to observe it; and that it was even punishable with death for them to regard it; for so they say,⁹ ‘a Gentile that keeps the sabbath before he is circumcised, is guilty of death, because it is not commanded him.’ They judged them unworthy of having this precept enjoined them, as being not men, but beasts, and worse than they, and had not the privilege the ass has: hence

⁶ T. Bab. Bava Metzia, fol. 114.2. Zohar in Exod. fol. 35.4.

⁷ Zohar in Exod. fol. 26.4.

⁸ Hilchot Sabbat, c. 20. sect.14.

⁹ Debarim Rabba, sect. 1. fol. 234.4.

one of their commentators¹⁰ says, ‘concerning the rest of an ass, thou (O Israelite!) art commanded; but concerning the rest of a Gentile, thou art not commanded.’ *And not man for the sabbath*; who was in being long before that was appointed and enjoined.”

We must now go to the New Testament, to see the truth that the seventh-day Sabbath was abolished by the Lord Jesus Christ. And then we must examine what the New Testament has to say about the *first* day of the week.

The Sabbath (Being Part of the Ceremonial Law and the Sinaitic Covenant) Was Abrogated by the Lord Jesus Christ

The Sabbath was only given to Israel at the time of Moses; and it lasted until it was abrogated by the Lord Jesus Christ. It is important to examine the Scriptures which teach this.

Gal.3:19 says, “Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.” The entire law of Moses, as a codified law, was given only until Christ came. The Sabbath, as part of that old covenant, was imposed only until the time of Christ.

But let it be clearly understood: whatever was *moral* law, in the law of Moses, *continues*. For example, the commandment, “Thou shalt not kill,” is part of God’s eternal moral law; and even though the law of Moses, *as a codified law*, was abolished, whatever was moral in the law of Moses continues through all time! It was there before the law of Moses, and it is here for ever.

The Sabbath commandment, however, was not a moral law, but a positive one; so it was abrogated. Heb.8:6 says: “But now hath he [Christ] obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.” Better than the old covenant given at Sinai, as good as that one was! And the Sabbath was the *sign* of that old covenant. And now

¹⁰ Bartenora in Misn. Sabbat, c. 24. sect. 1.

that the old covenant is done away and the better covenant has come, the sign of the old covenant has been done away as well.

And nothing could be clearer than Col.2:13-17! “And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, *or of the sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.*”

Those who claim that the Sabbath law is an eternal moral law claim that the “Sabbath days” in v.16 are *not* the Sabbath days of the fourth commandment, but merely the other Sabbaths which Israel also observed. Commentaries by “Sunday Sabbatarians” say that this refers to all Sabbath days, *excluding* the weekly Sabbath. But that is *not* what the passage says!

“Sunday Sabbatarians” give as a reason the fact that here in Col.2:16 the term is “Sabbath days” – it is in the plural, and thus refers to the various other Sabbath days of the Jews, but not to the weekly Sabbath. But the truth is that the weekly Sabbath is definitely included in this passage. How do we know? We know, because in Scripture the singular *and* the plural are used interchangeably to refer to the weekly Sabbath! For example: Exod.31:13; Matt.12:5.

Thus, to claim that Col.2:16 refers to all other Sabbaths *except* the weekly Sabbath is to read more into the passage than is actually there!

And v.17 is extremely important here: of the Sabbath days along with all the other things mentioned in v.16, Paul writes, “which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.” The Sabbath days were *shadows* of future things! And they were *fulfilled in Christ*! He fulfilled what the Sabbaths typified. A shadow cannot also be the substance; the body. The Sabbath was a shadow.

And v.14 tells us that the Sabbath days were *blotted out* by our Lord Jesus Christ! They served a purpose till He came; and then He nailed them to His cross.

This text in Colossians is crystal-clear. There is no escaping it, and

no way to explain it away.

Yet further evidence that the Sabbath was abolished by Christ is this: the New Testament is *absolutely silent* about making the Sabbath binding on New Testament believers. There is no getting around this fact. There is not one place in the whole of the New Testament where believers are taught that it is a law for them. The other nine commandments of the decalogue are re-stated in the New Testament a number of times. This is because these nine are all eternal moral laws, and they were there before the ten commandments were codified, and they were there after the law of Moses was abrogated. *All nine* are re-stated. But the Sabbath? Not once.

Here are some examples: Acts 14:15 – the first of the ten commandments. 1 Jn.5:21 – the second commandment, forbidding idolatry. Eph.6:1 – the honouring of parents. And every single commandment in the decalogue, *except the fourth*, is found re-stated a number of times throughout the New Testament. The reason? All nine are moral; but not the Sabbath. It was not imposed on the Christian Church anywhere in the New Testament. Nor was any Christian ever chastised for breaking it.

Some might say this is merely an argument from silence. But the facts speak for themselves: long lists of sins are to be found in the New Testament. Gal.5:19-21 and Eph.3:25-4:5 are two examples. *All kinds* of sins are listed! But *never once* is Sabbath-breaking mentioned. This fact speaks volumes.

Again let this be properly understood: a *covenant* was made with Israel, which we call the Mosaic or Sinaitic covenant; and the Sabbath commandment was a part of it. This covenant consisted of both moral and ceremonial aspects. Both were binding on the Israelites, for they were under that covenant. But the Sinaitic covenant ended with the death of Christ, who fulfilled its requirements and brought in His *new* covenant. And it is this *new* covenant which Christians are under, being new covenant believers. That old covenant, made at Sinai, has *no* binding covenantal authority over new covenant believers!

The Sinaitic covenant, *as* a covenant, is not binding on Christians at all; but the *moral* aspects of that old covenant *are still* applicable to new covenant believers. *Not* because the moral aspects were part of that

covenant, but because the moral law is binding on all men in all ages.

This is why nine of the ten commandments of the decalogue are still binding – they are moral. The mistake many make is to think that those who reject the Sabbath commandment for new covenant believers have changed the ten commandments to nine. Not at all – the decalogue, as part of the Sinaitic covenant, *fell with* that covenant! We seek to keep nine of the ten, *not* because they were part of the decalogue in the law of Moses, but because they are eternal moral law and as such are found set forth in the Gospel of Jesus Christ! We, as new covenant believers, look to the *Gospel* for our law – and there we find *all* the eternal moral law stated, *including* the nine commandments which formed part of the decalogue for the Jews, and much more besides. Thus we are “*not without law to God*” (as we are accused of being by those who say we are Antinomians), “*but under the law to Christ*”, as Paul puts it in 1 Cor. 9:21. How possibly can those who are under the law to Christ be correctly branded as Antinomians – lawless people? New Testament Christians are to look to the law of God under the *new* covenant, mediated through *Christ*, and not to the law of God under the *old* covenant, mediated through *Moses*, for their binding authority. The moral law is the same, but the covenant is different. And the *new* covenant must be our starting point, not the old.

It is of course certainly true that the Lord Jesus Himself kept the Sabbath. But not only was the Lord living as a Jew under the law of Moses (Gal.4:4), but He also came to *perfectly keep* the whole law of Moses, including the ceremonial aspects; and this He did. And thus, in addition to all the other commandments in the law of Moses, the Lord Jesus perfectly kept the Sabbath – the only man who ever did.

And it is also certainly true that Paul and others went to the Jewish synagogues on the Sabbath days, as the book of Acts reveals. But why did they do that? They did it because that was the most effective way to reach Jews with the Gospel! Jewish people gathered in the synagogues on the Sabbath days; and Paul had been a Pharisee, and he had access into these synagogues, and was invited to preach there (Acts 13:14-16). It was a wonderful opportunity to preach Christ; “and Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them” there (Acts 17:1-3). He sought to preach “to

the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom.1:16). But the fact that Paul went to the synagogues on the Sabbath days does not in any sense make Sabbath observance binding on New Testament believers! Paul went there to *preach to the lost*, because this was when the Jews congregated.

One thing is for certain: Christians are *nowhere commanded* to observe a Sabbath. In fact, as has been shown, we are specifically taught that it has been abolished.

The First Day of the Week (the Lord's Day) Is Not the “Christian Sabbath”

And so to the final aspect of this study: the first day of the week. *Is the first day of the week the “Christian Sabbath”?*

“Sunday Sabbatarians” say yes, the first day of the week is the “Christian Sabbath.” And the reasons they give are these: firstly, the Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead on the first day of the week (Mk. 16:9); secondly, He met with His disciples on the first day of the week (Mk. 16:9,12,14); thirdly, the day of Pentecost was on the first day of the week, when the Holy Spirit was poured out (Acts 2:1 with Lev. 23:15,16); fourthly, the early Christians assembled together for worship on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor.16:1,2); fifthly, the first day of the week is called the Lord’s day (Rev.1:10); and sixthly, Hebrews 4 says it is the Christian Sabbath.

It must also be understood that for “Sunday Sabbatarians”, all of these supposed proofs are built upon the foundation of the fourth commandment in Exodus 20, and of Genesis 2. It is because they believe that the Sabbath law is an eternal moral law, that they claim the first day of the week is now the “Christian Sabbath.” They believe that God’s people through all ages have always had a Sabbath, one day in seven. And although they would not observe the Jewish seventh-day Sabbath, they believe that the day has been legitimately changed from the seventh day (what we call Saturday) to the first day of the week (what we call Sunday) in the New Testament, by the Lord Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath.

The question that has to be asked here is: how is this change leg-

itimate? And “Sunday Sabbatarians” point to Exodus 20:9,10 itself, and argue as follows: the *moral* aspect of the fourth commandment is that *one day in seven* must be observed; whereas the *positive* aspect of the fourth commandment is *which* day must be observed. For them, as long as one day in seven is observed, the Lord, being “Lord of the Sabbath” (Mk.2:27,28), can change the precise day from one day to another, if He so wills. And, they say, He has so willed.

Now certainly, the Lord has the right to do this, if He so chooses! He is sovereign. But again, more is being read into the fourth commandment than is actually there. It is a terrible exposition of the passage. That passage is a *unit*. It is incorrect to say that the moral aspect of the fourth commandment is that one day in seven must be observed, but precisely which day is the positive aspect, and it was the seventh day back then; but now when we Christians read the fourth commandment, we must read it as being the first day, not the seventh; yet we are still keeping the commandment because we are keeping one day in seven. This is *not* what the fourth commandment says at all! It very clearly, very plainly says that the *seventh* day is the Sabbath – not the first. And we cannot read this and then say, “Well, the moral part is not the “seventh day” part, but one day in seven.” *It plainly, irrefutably says the seventh day!*

“Sunday Sabbatarians” claim that they observe the fourth commandment of the decalogue. Yet they have: a) changed the *day*; b) changed the *manner* of observing it; and c) changed the *reason* for observing it! They accuse those Christians, who reject the fourth commandment as being binding on New Testament believers, of tampering with the law; and yet they, while *professing* to honour it, observe a different day, in a different way, and for a different reason! The fourth commandment is very express: the Jews strictly observed the *seventh* day as the Sabbath, because of their deliverance from Egypt; yet “Sunday Sabbatarians” observe the *first* day, without the restrictions of the seventh day Sabbath, and because Christ rose from the dead on that day! How then can they claim to be honouring the fourth commandment? “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy”: they are neither remembering it, nor keeping it holy as God enjoined. For the only Sabbath God ever gave was the Sabbath given to Israel; and the only way of keeping it holy, and the only purpose for it, was as laid down in the Old Testament.

Who are we to change the seventh day to the first day? If we could

find, in Holy Scripture, that the Lord Himself had changed it, that would be perfectly sufficient; but this cannot be found in His Word.

At this point, of course, "Sunday Sabbatarians" point to Mk.2:27,28: "And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath." Earlier, we examined v.27: "The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath"; but now we must examine v.28: "the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath." "Sunday Sabbatarians" point to this to show that the Lord Jesus could change the day from the seventh to the first day of the week, for He is the Lord of the Sabbath.

Certainly He *could* do so. But equally, being Lord of the Sabbath, He could *do away with it entirely!* As Lord of it, He could change it, but He could also abrogate it. Pay careful attention to John Gill's commentary on Matt. 12:8, the sister-passage to Mk.2:28: "For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day": "as he [Christ] was the institutor of the sabbath among the Jews, that being a ritual, *and of mere positive institution, could dispense with it, and even abrogate it at his pleasure.* The Jews so far agree to this, that he that commanded the law of the sabbath, could dispense with it; they say,¹¹ that 'the day on which Jericho was taken was the sabbath-day; and that though they slew and burnt on the sabbath-day, *he that commanded the observation of the sabbath, commanded the profanation of it.*' And since Christ is greater than the temple, and has all the perfections of the divine nature in him, is equal to the Father in power and glory; and even as mediator, has all power in heaven and earth given him; so as he is Lord of all other things, he is of the sabbath, and *has a power of dispensing with it, and even of abolishing it;* see Col. ii. 16,17. and since the Lord of the sabbath had a power of dispensing with it, and made use of it in the cases of David and his men, and of the priests in the temple formerly; the Pharisees ought not to think it strange, that the Son of man, who is equally Lord of the sabbath, dispensed with it in his disciples now" (italics added).

And even Matthew Henry, a firm "Sunday Sabbatarian", said in his commentary on this verse: "*The Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day,* v.8. That law, as all the rest, is put into the hand of Christ, *to be*

¹¹ R. David Kimchi in Josh. vi.11.

altered, enforced, or dispensed with, as he sees good” (italics added).

Thus the argument of “Sunday Sabbatarians” can equally be used to support a *non-Sabbatarian* position. And indeed we do so use it, for we have the evidence of the rest of God’s Word to support it: the Lord, being Lord of the Sabbath, abolished it.

Jesus *deliberately* healed people on the Sabbath day, on a number of occasions, to demonstrate this very point – that He was *Lord* of the Sabbath day. Just as the Old Testament priests could as it were “profane the Sabbath” (not truly, but in appearance) by working in the temple on that day (e.g. Num.28:9,10), and yet in reality were blameless because they were doing the Lord’s work (Matt.12:5), so Christ is the One “greater than the temple” (v.6), and therefore was absolutely free to do His work on that day as well. Just as the priests circumcised a baby boy if the eighth day (the day of circumcision) fell on a Sabbath day, so the great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, the antitype of all the priests of the Old Testament, could spiritually circumcise men’s hearts on that day, forgiving their sins and giving them spiritual rest, and healing their bodies as well (Jn.7:22,23). But this *incensed* the Pharisees, no doubt because they knew very well that He was asserting His right to work on that day precisely because He was asserting that He was the Messiah, the great High Priest, greater than the temple itself, and thus *greater than them*, making their priestly work redundant: “Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, *because* he keepeth not the sabbath day” (Jn.9:16). They were so filled with rage at the way Jesus demonstrated His absolute authority over the Sabbath, and freedom from it as the Lord of it, that they desired to kill Him for this very reason, as shown by Mk.3:1-6! They were all too aware that by His attitude towards the Sabbath, He was proclaiming Himself to be equal with God, for only God could be Lord of the Sabbath. The connection is clearly seen from Jn.5:18: “Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.” By His many healing miracles performed on the Sabbath day, He was, in fact, showing that *He Himself* was the antitypical Sabbath, the fulfilment of the Old Testament Sabbath rest.

“Sunday Sabbatarians” *must have* one day in seven as a Sabbath, *because* they believe that the fourth commandment is moral. So when they turn to the New Testament and find the first day of the week, not the seventh, being mentioned, they *have to* try to prove that the first day is now the new Sabbath day. They *must have* one day in seven as a Sabbath, and so they go to these lengths to try to prove it. But beyond all doubt the Sabbath commandment is not eternal moral law. It was given only to Israel under the law of Moses. Christ Jesus has abolished it.

Thus, when we approach the first day of the week, we do *not* have to view it as a Sabbath because of the fourth commandment. That commandment, being positive and not moral, has been done away. If, then, Sunday is the “Christian Sabbath”, we must expect to find the Lord clearly saying so *in the New Testament*, setting it out in another positive law, just as the Old Testament Sabbath was a positive law for that period of time.

On the other hand, if we do *not* find that the Lord set up the first day of the week as the New Testament Sabbath, then the plain fact of the matter is that Christians do not have a Sabbath to keep at all – neither Saturday nor Sunday.

And the fact is that nowhere whatsoever is a “Christian Sabbath” established. The New Testament is entirely silent about any such notion.

Let us establish what the New Testament *does* say. We will do so by examining the six reasons “Sunday Sabbatarians” give for believing that the first day of the week is the “Christian Sabbath”.

Firstly: “Sunday Sabbatarians” claim that the first day of the week is the “Christian Sabbath”, because Christ rose from the dead on this day.

Certainly, the Lord Jesus Christ did rise from the dead on the first day of the week! Mk.16:9 says, “Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week”. There can be no doubt about this. And it is precisely for this reason that we find the early Christians assembling together for worship on the first day of the week. But the fact that He rose from the dead on that day proves absolutely nothing about that day being converted into a “Christian Sabbath”! – a day of rest for Christians. It is simply an historical fact that is being set forth: Christ Jesus rose on the first day of

the week. It does *not* automatically follow that because the Lord rose from the dead on this day, it is now a day of rest for all Christians! The New Testament does not say this. It does not even *imply* it.

A very relevant point needs to be made here as well. On the seventh day, God rested. The sixth day was His final day of work. “Sunday Sabbatarians” tell us that because Christ rose on the first day, this is our new Sabbath day. But on the first day Christ *rose!* He completed His work on that day! He was thus *still working* on the first day of the week! God ended His work of creation on the sixth day, and *rested* on the seventh. But Christ did *not rest* on the first day – He rose! How then can the first day be the new Sabbath day? It was not a day of rest for the Lord.

Secondly: “Sunday Sabbatarians” claim that the first day of the week is the “Christian Sabbath”, because Christ Jesus met with His disciples on that day.

The Lord Jesus, after His resurrection, certainly did meet with His disciples on that day. He met with Mary Magdalene early that very day (Jn.20:1-18); and with “the other Mary” as well (Matt.28:9). And in Lk.24:13 it says, “And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus”; and of course, as we know, the Lord Jesus met with them on that road. And “that same day” means the first day of the week – the very same day on which He rose from the dead. And Lk.24:36 and Jn.20:19 show us that Jesus met with the disciples in Jerusalem, behind closed doors, that very same day: “the same day at evening, being the first day of the week”.

And from all these Scriptures, it is very evident that the Lord Jesus wanted them to take note of the first day of the week. Of that there can be no doubt. No other day is specifically named. But again: although He most definitely wanted His followers to take note of this day, and to assemble for worship on this day because He rose on this day *and* because He met with His disciples on this day, nothing is said about making it a *day of rest*; a Sabbath. One can only *read a “Sabbath” into* the Scriptures about the first day of the week, if one *already believes* that men in all ages must have a Sabbath. Considered on their own, these Scriptures say no such thing. It is impossible to find a Sabbath in any of

the references to the first day of the week.

At this point there are two Old Testament passages which need to be examined. The first is in Psalms 118:24: "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." This verse appears in the middle of various prophecies about Christ, as can be seen by reading vv.22-26. All of these verses find their fulfilment in the Lord Christ. And in the very midst of them all, there is this verse: "This is the day which the Lord hath made." And "Sunday Sabbatarians" point to this verse and say that it is speaking of the first day of the week – a special day; a *Sabbath*; a day to rejoice and be glad in.

But again, they are reading more into the passage than what is actually there. On the first day of the week the Lord Jesus rose from the dead; and *that* first day – that wonderful day in history when the Sun of Righteousness arose – was a day of *great rejoicing and gladness* for His disciples! As John 20:20 says, when the Lord appeared to them on that first day, the day of His resurrection: "Then were the disciples *glad*, when they saw the Lord." The prophecy in Psalms 118:24 was fulfilled!

But what does Psalms 118:24 teach *us*? It teaches us to *rejoice* in the commemoration of Christ's resurrection on the first day of the week, as we assemble together to worship Him, and to be *glad*! For Christ our Lord is indeed risen! And this is the very centre of our faith!

But nothing is said about it being a day of rest from labour. It is a day of rejoicing and gladness.

The second Old Testament passage that needs to be examined is Psalms 2:7: "I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." These were the words of God the Father to God the Son. And this verse is expounded and explained in the New Testament, in Acts 13:33: "God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." Paul clearly connects Psalms 2:7 to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. "This day" refers to the day of His resurrection. On that first day, God "begat" His Son *from the dead*.

And how wonderful this is! That day – what a day that was in the history of the world! There was never a day like it, and there never will be again. A work more pleasing to God than the creation of the universe

took place on that day, and was completed on that day, when God's Son rose victorious from the dead! Redemption is a greater work than creation. It has been correctly said that it cost more to redeem men than to create man. To create man took a word; to redeem men took blood. And that blood was the blood of God's only begotten Son.

O what a day that was! Greater than the creation of the world was that day. And truly then, that day on which the Lord Jesus rose was a day of rejoicing and gladness, when the angels of God sang the praises of the Lord as they must have never sung before. On that day God raised up His Son, "having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it" (Acts 2:24).

But – it was not to be a Sabbath! For, as will be seen when we come to Hebrews 4, a day of rest in the Old Testament was a *type of Christ*. And now that Christ the antitype has come, we do not need the type! To go back to keeping a Sabbath is to go back to a type, when the antitype – the fulfilment of the type – has come! It is to revert back to the types and shadows of the old covenant.

Thirdly: "Sunday Sabbatarians" claim that the first day of the week is the "Christian Sabbath", because the day of Pentecost was on the first day of the week.

Certainly it was! This is clear from Lev. 23:15,16. And yes, the Church was born on the day of Pentecost; for the Holy Spirit came down mightily on that day. And what a day that was! A hundred and twenty men and women were filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance: speaking languages which they knew not, but which were understood by their amazed hearers (Acts 2:1-11). It was a wonderful, special day, that first day of the week.

But again, are we to gather from this that we as Christians are to observe it as a Sabbath day, because this Jewish holy day was the day on which the Church was born? No. What it does give us is just another bit of evidence that the Holy Spirit placed His "stamp of approval", as it were, on the first day of the week as the day on which Christians are to assemble together. But that is all. No more can legitimately be claimed for this day than that.

Fourthly: “Sunday Sabbatarians” claim that the first day of the week is the “Christian Sabbath”, because the early Christians assembled together on that day.

They certainly did meet together on the first day of the week, for this purpose! Acts 20:7 says, “And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.” The verb for “coming together” is a technical term describing formal assembly for worship.¹² A structured Christian church service is being described. Furthermore, no other day is ever specifically mentioned in the New Testament, except the first day of the week. The early Christians also met together on other days as well; in fact, earlier in Acts we find that the brethren in the church at Jerusalem even met together every day of the week. But the names of those days are never mentioned. Only the first day is ever specifically mentioned. Quite plainly, the Lord did this for a definite reason: the Lord Jesus rose from the dead on that day.

And no other day of the week is more fitting for the local church to come together, to worship the Lord! No day is more appropriate, more suitable, than the first day. And this is why the Lord specifically points us to this day. On the first day, the Lord arose! On this day He triumphed over death! He “was raised again for our justification” – the justification of His elect – on the first day (Rom.4:25)! And by assembling together on the first day of the week, Christians commemorate His resurrection. There should be rejoicing and gladness in the heart of every believer! There are psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to be sung on that day. There is the Lord’s supper, or the breaking of bread, to be partaken of on that day, as Acts 20:7 shows. What better day could there be than this, to commemorate His death? There is the preaching of the Word to be heard on that day, as Acts 20:7 shows. No day is more fitting for the corporate worship of the Lord, and *this* is the day the Lord has appointed.

And the *context* of Acts 20:7 shows us that this was their *usual practice*. Every first day of the week, they came together for corporate worship. For the clear indication of the context is that Paul deliberately waited for that first day of the week to roll around, so as to be present at the service that was held on that day; as can be seen when v.6 is read

¹² *The Lord's Day*, pg.60.

with v.7: “And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days. And upon the first day of the week....” He waited seven days! And yet he was obviously in a hurry, because he left immediately after that service. As v.7 says, “Paul preached unto them, *ready to depart on the morrow*”. Yet he waited seven days. It is evident that he wanted to be there on that first day of the week, the Lord’s day as it is called in Rev. 1:10, for the church’s service. This shows our sacred responsibility towards the services of the local church which are held on the first day. We must do everything we can to be there.

But again it must be emphasised: not a word is said about it being a Sabbath. There is not a single word about the whole day being a day of rest, during which work was forbidden.

The phrase “the first day of the week” is literally, in Greek, “the one of the Sabbath”, i.e. “the day which is number one in the sequence of days determined by the Sabbath”.¹³ That is to say, the early Christians divided time into weekly cycles, with the first day of the week being the day following the seventh-day Jewish Sabbath. And this usage was common to Gentile Christians no less than Jews; in fact, both Acts 20:7 and 1 Cor.16:1,2, where the phrase occurs, refer to churches in the Gentile world, not in the land of the Jews. Now the significance of this is seen in the fact that the early Christians met on the day *following* the Sabbath – they did not meet *on* the Sabbath! The only day, they knew, which had ever been a Sabbath of the Lord, a day of rest from labour appointed by God, was the seventh day Jewish Sabbath.

“The expression translated ‘the first day of the week’ in Acts 20:7 and I Corinthians 16:2 literally reads ‘one of the Sabbath(s),’ and idiomatically means the day which is number one in the sequence of days after the seventh day Sabbath. It always refers idiomatically to the first day after the Sabbath and, therefore, is translated in our versions as ‘the first day of the week.’ POINT: This is why the first day of the week, namely, the Lord’s Day, should not be called ‘the Sabbath,’ even ‘the Christian

¹³ *The Lord's Day*, pg.75.

Sabbath.”¹⁴

In fact, we can be certain that this meeting was held in the *evening* of the first day of the week; i.e. what we would call Sunday evening: v.7 says that “Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight”; v.8 tells us that “there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together”; v.9 tells us that a young man fell into a deep sleep; and v.11 tells us that Paul preached “till break of day”. The question is: *why* was this an evening meeting? The explanation is very obvious: Sunday was not viewed or treated as a Sabbath! *It was a normal working day* for Christians of the first century, and the only time they could assemble was in the evening, after work. They did not have the luxury of being able to hold their services in the morning.

The vast majority of the early Christians were from the ranks of the poor (1 Cor.1:26-29), many were slaves, some even in Caesar's household itself (Phil.4:22), they were everywhere despised, and their heathen masters would not, for the most part (including Caesar!), have given them the day off on Sundays in order to indulge in the luxury of a “Sunday Sabbath.” It is all too easy for “Sunday Sabbatarians” in the West today to pontificate about the importance of observing the Lord's day as a “Sabbath”, but they are able to do so simply because of the Puritan Sabbatarian influence that is still felt in certain Western countries. The early Christians were not so favoured with such free time, and they held their services in the evenings. The New Testament clearly shows this, and history bears it out:

In 109 AD, Pliny the younger, governor of the province of Bithynia, in Asia Minor, told the Emperor Trajan in a letter that the Christians stopped assembling in the evenings at his command, for he was enforcing the emperor's edict against seditious assemblies.¹⁵ Were these true Christians, or not? We do not know. But if they were, they must have felt that it made sense to move the time of the services to the Lord's day mornings, to avoid persecution. The New Testament does

¹⁴ *The Christian Sabbath-Lord's Day Controversy*, by Gary D. Long, pg.26 (footnote). Sovereign Grace Ministries, 1980; printed and distributed by Grace Abounding Ministries, Inc., Sterling, Virginia, USA.

¹⁵ *The Lord's Day*, pg.69.

not command Christians to meet at a specific time of the day. A service should be held *sometime* on the Lord's day – this is clear from the New Testament; but exactly *when* on the Lord's day is not stated. And thus it would have made no sense for those believers to suffer persecution over a matter which was entirely indifferent. It is also “quite possible that this proscription applied widely in the Eastern part of the Empire”,¹⁶ and not just in Bithynia. Be that as it may, Pliny said in his letter that the Christians assembled together *before daybreak* on a fixed day. He did not name the day simply because he did not have a name for it: the name “Sunday” was not current at that time, and in all likelihood he would not have known the Christian name “the Lord's day”; but we can be sure that this was the fixed day he was referring to. It definitely was not the Jewish Sabbath, for he would have known that name, and the emperor would have too. But for our purposes here, what is very important is to note that the Christians met *before daybreak* on that day. Why before daybreak? Well, they had been meeting in the evenings – *after work*; and now they met in the mornings – *before work*! There is no other reason why they would have felt the need to meet before daybreak. This must have been very inconvenient for many of them, and yet they still did so. Clearly, the Lord's day was not a Sabbath! It was “non-negotiable” as the day of assembling for worship, but it was *not* a Sabbath!

And incidentally, this holds true regardless of whether these “Christians” described by Pliny were true believers or not, and regardless of whether their churches were true churches or false ones. Either way, there would have been no need to meet before daybreak, unless the first day of the week was not a Sabbath, a day of rest, but a working day for all.

Further historical documentation is found in the writings of Justin Martyr (mid-second century AD), Tertullian (second half of the second century), and others. Justin wrote that Christian services were held “on the day which is called the day of the sun [Sunday]”, and included the observance of the Lord's supper. He stated: “We hold our common assembly on the day of the sun, because it is the first day, on which God put to flight darkness and chaos and made the world, and on the same

¹⁶ *The Lord's Day*, pg.69.

day Jesus Christ our saviour rose from the dead”.¹⁷ He hinted that time for these services was limited, which indicates that they were held very early, probably before daybreak. Tertullian, on the other hand, states very explicitly that the bread and cup were partaken of “in assemblies before daybreak”.¹⁸ In addition, other sources state that even the ordinance of baptism was administered at the time of the cock’s crowing.¹⁹ Now it is very true that Tertullian, and other so-called “early church fathers”, were not true Christians at all, but heretics, so it is very likely that he was describing the assemblies of *false* “churches” rather than true ones; but again, regardless of whether these churches were true ones or false, these historical facts reveal to us that the Lord’s day was not a day off work, a day of rest from labour, a Sabbath! It was a normal working day, just as the New Testament indicates! And churches (whether true or false ones) were unable to hold their services in the daytime, but had to do so before daybreak, and thus before their members went to work.

Another passage relating to the first day of the week is 1 Cor.16:1,2: “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.” Again the first day is specifically mentioned; and this passage shows that this was the normal procedure in the churches of Christ: “as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye” in Corinth. Paul, by the authority which he had as an apostle of Christ, was giving a commandment throughout the churches. And Acts 2:42 shows that we are to continue in the apostolic doctrine. What they taught, we are to obey and practice.

This verse does not merely command the believer to set aside money every week to be given to the poor, but it commands this to be done on a specific *day* – the first day of the week. Why? Obviously to tie it to what always occurred on that specific day, namely, the assembling of the saints for worship. Here Paul commands that the money contributed for

¹⁷ *Documents of the Christian Church*, edited by Henry Bettenson, pg.67. Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK, second edition 1963.

¹⁸ *Documents of the Christian Church*, pg.76.

¹⁹ *The Lord's Day*, pg.71.

the support of poor believers is to be laid up on the first day of the week. *But* – not a word is said about it being a Sabbath, a day of rest during which work is forbidden.

It is worth pointing out, at this point, that the name “Sunday” was not given to what Jews and Christians called the first day of the week when the Church first began. Although the heathen had worshipped the sun since ancient times, in the early years of the Christian Church sun-worship was not associated with any particular day of the week by the heathen, and thus neither Christian nor heathen referred to that day as “Sunday.” When, at a later date, the days of the week were named, by the heathen, after the planets (and the sun was considered to be a planet), the heathen devoted the day on which Christians met and worshipped to the worship of the sun.

As seen above, Justin Martyr in the second century AD wrote that Christians worshipped on the day called (by the heathen) “the day of the sun”, or “Sunday.” And with the passing of time, as the names of the heathen “Planet Week” became firmly entrenched in the minds of the public, the name “Sunday” began to be increasingly used, even by Christians. Many words in various languages have heathen origins or connotations – in the New Testament certain Christians are mentioned who had heathen names, including Apollos (the name of the heathen sun-god!) and others – and Christians are not commanded to delete all such words from their vocabulary. “Sunday” was the name their society gave to the day on which they assembled for worship. But the problem was that with the passing of time, various “theologians” began to make a connection between Sunday – the day of the sun, and thus of light – and Christ the Light of the world. God created light on the first day of the week, and Christ the Light of the world rose on the first day, and so the association of the first day with light, both physical and spiritual, was made and maintained.²⁰ Yet they did not see that there was nothing biblical about this argument: the name “Sunday” was of heathen origin, not Christian, and had, moreover, been applied to the first day *after* the Christian era had commenced.

Fifthly: “Sunday Sabbatarians” claim that the first day of the week is

²⁰ *The Lord's Day*, pgs.114-5.

the “Christian Sabbath”, because it is called “the Lord’s day”, in Rev.1:10. This verse, penned by John the apostle, says, “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet”.

Some have suggested that the phrase “the Lord’s day” means “the day of the Lord”, the last day, the day of the second coming of Christ. But this is not so. The expression which the New Testament uses to translate the Old Testament expression, “the day of the Lord”, is not the one used by John here in Rev.1:10. Clearly, he was referring to something else. Also, John’s vision covers many centuries of historical time, beginning with events which came to pass “shortly” after he had the vision (Rev.1:1); it is not wholly about the future “day of the Lord”, but very much about other events which, although future to him, were still events which would occur long before the end of the world, and the “day of the Lord.” And furthermore, the book is about his vision regarding the things which he saw (in chapter 1), the things “which are” (described in chapters 2 and 3), and the things “which shall be hereafter” (in chapters 4 to 22) (see Rev.1:19). This being so, it makes no sense to understand Rev.1:10 as follows: “I was in the Spirit on the day of the Lord, the last day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet”, followed by his vision of the ascended Christ. That would mean he was in the Spirit on the (future) last day, and yet being given a vision of present things, as well as future events covering centuries of time, but almost all of them occurring *before* the last day.

No, the term “the Lord’s day” refers to a specific day of the week.

But how much has been read into this verse! Those of a “Sunday Sabbatarian” persuasion tell us this means that Christians are to be employed, for the entire duration of the Lord’s day, wholly in spiritual exercises: the worship of God, both public and private, spiritual conversation, the reading of Christian literature only, no secular work, no recreational activities. But let us look carefully at what the verse says; *and* what it does *not* say.

The only day which can be called “the Lord’s day” is the first day of the week. It cannot be the old Jewish seventh-day Sabbath, for that was abolished, and John was not observing that day so many years after the resurrection of the Lord (Revelation was written towards the close of the

first century AD). Here he was in exile on the isle of Patmos, alone; and yet he was “in the Spirit on the Lord’s day”.

The “Lord” in this verse is the Lord Jesus Christ. And why is the first day of the week called “the Lord’s day”? It is called this, because the Lord Jesus rose from the dead on this day! And also, because it is on this day that the churches are to assemble, to partake of “the Lord’s supper”, and to study His Word. But again, nowhere are we told, in Rev.1:10, that the Lord’s day is the new Sabbath!

John the apostle was “in the Spirit” on that day, when he was given the Revelation. But no more is said than that. Absolutely nothing. We cannot read any more into it than what the verse actually says. And it becomes evident, the more one looks at the words of the verse, that they do not say nearly as much as what “Sunday Sabbatarians” claim they do. “I was in the Spirit”, writes John. But we cannot be “in the Spirit” as John was that day; for John was an apostle, and a prophet, and he was given a vision. When he writes, “I was in the Spirit,” he means, in an extraordinary way, as prophets experienced; this is not what *all* Christians should experience, in fact it is not possible for Christians today to experience this, for the ministry of the prophet is no longer given. Look at Rev.4:2: John writes here, “And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.” It was a vision that John was having; this is what he meant when he said he was “in the spirit.” Again, look at Rev.17:3: “So he [an angel] carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast”. John was once again seeing these extraordinary things in a vision. Again, in Rev.21:10: “And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain”. John’s experience was very similar to that of Ezekiel the prophet, who wrote: “The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones” (Ezek.37:1). Ezekiel was not carried physically, but in a vision.

John Gill, in his commentary on Rev.1:10, wrote, “Now, though John was driven from the house and worship of God, and could not join with the saints in the public worship of that day; yet he was employed in spiritual contemplations and exercises, *and was under a more than ordinary influence of the spirit of God*; and his spirit or soul was wholly intent upon, and taken up with divine and spiritual things, *with visions*

and representations that were made unto his mind, which he perceived in his spirit, and not with the organs of his body; he was in an ecstasy of spirit, and knew not scarcely whether he was in the body or out of it" (italics added).

Matthew Poole, although a "Sunday Sabbatarian", stated the same thing in his commentary on this verse: "*I was in the Spirit*; not only in spiritual employment, suppose meditation and prayer, *but in an ecstasy*; my soul was (as it were) *separated from my body*, and *under the more than ordinary influence and communications* of the Spirit, as Acts x. 10; xi. 5; xvi. 9; xviii. 9."

Thus, the words, "in the Spirit", do not tell *us* anything about how the day should be observed; they only tell us that *John* was "in the Spirit" on that day. Certainly it is true that all Christians are to worship the Lord on the first day of the week. But that is not what "in the Spirit" in this verse means. It means that John was in an ecstasy of spirit, under an extraordinary influence of the Holy Spirit.

"Sunday Sabbatarians" argue that the term, "the Lord's day", shows that the entire day was a Sabbath. But it shows no such thing. It is not what the verse says. The words, "the Lord's day", do not say anything about the entire day being a day of rest from normal labour. It is really stretching it to claim that such doctrine can be found in this verse. It is like trying to squeeze water out of a stone. If there is no water there, then the stone will not give any, no matter what is done to it. It is the Lord's day simply because Christ Jesus rose on that day; and on that day, in order to remember His resurrection, Christians are to assemble to worship Him; but that is all we are to understand by the term, "Lord's day." The fact that it is His day simply means that it is the day on which He rose again. In like manner, our birthday is the day on which we were born. And every year, on the anniversary of our birth, we remember that we were born on that day. But in what other sense can the anniversary of our birth be said to be "our" day? In no other sense. It is merely the anniversary of the day we entered the world. And the Lord's day is the weekly remembrance of the day on which the Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead. He owns *every* day of the week.

Just as there is the "Lord's day", so there is the "Lord's supper"; and

between these two there is a definite connection. “Sunday Sabbatarians” argue thus: as the Lord’s supper means that the entire supper is to be devoted to the Lord, so the Lord’s day means that the entire day is to be devoted to the Lord. However, we can rather put it like this: as the Lord’s supper is for the commemoration of the Lord’s death, so the Lord’s day is for the commemoration of the Lord’s resurrection. This is why Acts 20:7 shows the disciples coming together on the Lord’s day to observe the Lord’s supper: the two go together. Paul called the ordinance commemorating the Lord’s death “the Lord’s supper” decades before John was given the Revelation, so the term “the Lord’s day” was in all likelihood derived from the term “the Lord’s supper”, specifically to designate the day on which believers assembled to partake of the Lord’s supper. After all, although the Lord Jesus first instituted the Lord’s supper on the night of His betrayal, which was *not* on the first day of the week, the early Christians did not observe the Lord’s supper on *that* day of the week, but on the *first* day. We observe the Lord’s supper to remember His death, and we do so on the Lord’s day, which is the day on which we remember His resurrection, thus uniting these two commemorations together.

On that first day of the week when He rose from the dead, the Lord Jesus met with two of His disciples on the road to Emmaus, and broke bread with them in the evening (Lk.24:29-31). Then, later that evening, He met with all the disciples, and ate a meal (Lk.24:41-43). Thus the Lord Jesus after His resurrection supped with His disciples, as a sign of fellowship with them. And so, all these things reveal to us exactly why the Lord’s day (the first day of the week) is the day for observing the Lord’s supper. Christians observe it on the Lord’s day, because Christ Himself rose from the dead, and fellowshiped with those first Christians, breaking bread with them, and eating and drinking with them, on that first Lord’s day. And so in the Lord’s supper, they enjoy spiritual fellowship with Him, with whom those first Christians had enjoyed both spiritual *and* physical fellowship on that first Lord’s day, the day of His resurrection. No time is more appropriate for observing the Lord’s supper than the Lord’s day.

To make the Lord’s day into a *Sabbath*, we would need more than merely the term, “Lord’s day.” And we simply do not have any more

than that. We do not see it being referred to as a Sabbath; we do not see the early Christians observing it as a Sabbath; and we do not have any instructions as to how we are to observe it as a Sabbath. Conclusion: it is not a Sabbath.

Sixthly: “Sunday Sabbatarians” claim that the first day of the week is the “Christian Sabbath”, because Hebrews 4:9,10 says so. These verses read as follows: “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.”

Is the “Sunday Sabbath” the subject of v.9? “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.” The Greek word at this point means, “There remaineth therefore a sabbath-keeping to the people of God.” It is actually the only place in the entire New Testament where that particular Greek word appears. “Sunday Sabbatarians” point to this verse and say that Christians also have a day of rest, then, as the Israelites once had the seventh day.

But this is not the meaning of the verse at all. This verse refers to a *rest of faith*. Consider the context! Verse 3 says, “For we which have believed do enter into rest”. This is *spiritual* rest! “We which have believed” – this is *faith*. By faith, we have entered into rest! What did Jesus say in Matt.11:28? “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you *rest*.” This is spiritual rest. It is not this day or that day in the week! It is *spiritual Sabbath-keeping*. By faith we enter into spiritual rest in Christ. And what is this rest? It is a rest from all our attempts at earning our own salvation by our own works. It is resting in what *Christ* has done for us, and no longer struggling vainly – labouring – to save ourselves. This is rest indeed! This is the *true* rest, to which the Old Testament Sabbath was pointing! The “shadow” of this true spiritual rest in Christ was the Old Testament Sabbath! And thus, the Lord Jesus Christ *Himself* is the Christian’s “Sabbath”! For by faith, every believer rests in Him!

Heb.4:3 in its entirety says, “For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.” This is a quotation from Psalms 95:11; and vv.10 and 11 of

that psalm say: “Forty years long was I grieved with this generation [the generation at the time of the Exodus from Egypt], and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways: unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.” The “rest” being spoken of in this psalm was not God’s rest after creation, but another rest; as Heb.4:4,5 says, “For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works. *And in this place again*, If they shall enter into my rest.” Here it is plainly shown that the “rest” of Psal.95:11 was not the rest of God after the creation of the world; it was something else. Nor was this the rest which the Israelites had when they came into the land of Canaan either; as Heb.4:8 says, “For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.” The name “Jesus” here does not refer to the Lord Jesus, but to *Joshua*, as the marginal note states; for “Jesus” is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew name “Joshua”, and the New Testament being written in Greek, the Greek name for Joshua was used here. The meaning is this: if Joshua, bringing the Israelites into Canaan, had given them the real rest, then the Lord would not afterwards have moved David, in Psal.95:11, to speak about another day still to come. David wrote long after the creation, and long after Joshua led Israel into Canaan. Thus he was writing about another rest altogether. Thus it was not the rest after creation, and it was not the rest of coming into the land of Canaan. What then was it?

It was a *spiritual* rest! Something which Joshua could not give them. “There *remaineth* therefore a rest to the people of God.” *This* is why a *spiritual* rest remains to God’s people. The “rest” for New Testament Christians is not a Sabbath day, but an eternal spiritual rest in Christ from trying to earn their salvation by their works. What then “remaineth”? After it is seen that those other “rests” are not the fulfilment of Psal.95:11, the only one remaining is an eternal spiritual rest! If it is not the one after creation; if it is not the one when they went into Canaan; and if it is not the seventh-day Sabbath – what is left? There remains *some* kind of rest for the people of God *now*, but it cannot be any of those – so what is it? It is spiritual rest in Christ.

The rest of God on the seventh day after He created the world *typified* this spiritual rest, as shall be seen from Heb.4:10. And the rest in the land of Canaan typified it as well, for when Israel got into Canaan, their

journeys were over.

Now to move on to Heb.4:10: “For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.” This is a very important verse to those who insist on a first-day “Sabbath.” “Sunday Sabbatarians” claim that “he”, in this verse, means Christ. They understand the verse to be saying, in effect: “For Christ, who has entered into His rest, has ceased from His own works, as God did from His.” And He did this, they say, on the *first* day of the week, when He rose from the dead, as God did from His works on the *seventh* day, when He had finished creating the world. Therefore, they conclude, the first day of the week is the new Sabbath.

But carefully read v.10! Does it really teach this? No, it does not.

Firstly, the Lord Jesus Christ had *not been mentioned* up until this point! He is not mentioned in the nine verses preceding this verse; and He is not mentioned afterwards until v.14. It is assuming way too much to claim that the word, “he”, refers to the Lord Christ all of a sudden. Secondly, the fact is that God finished working on the sixth day, and rested on the seventh; but Christ rose on the first day – which means that *He was still working* on the first day. The seventh-day Sabbath was the day on which God rested; but on the first day the Lord Jesus was still working! How then can the first day be the New Testament equivalent of the Old Testament Sabbath day, even according to this point alone? They are not the same. Thirdly, the context: v.9 is speaking of spiritual rest for God’s people; v.11, also, is speaking of “that rest” (“Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief”) – the rest of faith, spiritual rest in Christ; and thus v.10, right in the middle of these two verses, is not suddenly about *Christ* resting! What *is* it about? It is about *Christians* resting!

The verse means this: “For he (i.e. the person) that is entered into his (spiritual) rest (by faith, according to v.3), he also hath ceased from his own works (of trying to earn his salvation), as God did (cease) from his (works of creation).” The seventh day, the day after the six days of creation, typified spiritual “rest” after “work”. God worked first, then He rested; and men also “work” first, trying to earn their own salvation, but when God gives them new hearts, they “rest” in Christ and cease

from their works.

The Sabbath typified the Christian's spiritual rest. It was a type of the believer's resting from his works by faith in Christ. The Sabbath was a shadow; Christ is the substance (Col.2:14-17). *Christ Jesus Himself is the Christian's "Sabbath"*, for he rests by faith in Him! The seventh-day Sabbath pointed to the need to rest from one's own works by faith in Jesus Christ. This is why the penalty for Sabbath-breaking was so severe in the Old Testament: it was death. When a man was found gathering sticks on the Sabbath day, he was put to death (Num. 15:32-36). Reason: in gathering sticks when God had commanded rest, he was rebelliously declaring his own supposed self-righteousness and denying the sufficiency of God's grace. He was in effect saying, "I will add my own works to God's provision." This was promoting a "faith plus works" doctrine, abominable to the Lord.

Heb.4:9,10, then, is no basis for setting up Sunday as the "Christian Sabbath". And in fact, when one substitutes a supposed Sunday "Sabbath" for the Old Testament Saturday Sabbath, one loses the true meaning of both the Old Testament Sabbath and the eternal "Sabbath rest" in Christ which the Old Testament Sabbath typified! The "Christian Sabbath" doctrine, by placing such emphasis on an unbiblical alteration of the fourth commandment of the decalogue, which in itself was the now-abrogated sign of a now-abrogated covenant, can so easily result in the diminishing of the doctrine of the great work of Christ in giving *true spiritual* rest to His people. The Lord Jesus Christ is, Himself, the fulfilment of the Sabbath, and the constant emphasis of "Sunday Sabbatarians" on "keeping the Sabbath day" (as they believe) is nothing but a *detraction* from the true "Sabbath rest" in Christ Himself!

But there is still more to show that Christians, living under the new covenant, are not bound to keep the Sabbath commandment of the old covenant.

The fourth commandment is very specific: it speaks of six days' labour, *followed by* one day of rest. Labour must *precede* rest. God worked first, then He rested. And when He gave Israel the Sabbath commandment, He commanded them to work first for six days, and then to rest for one day. But if the *first* day of the week is the Christian's day

of rest, then the Christian must rest before he works! He must then *start* the week by *resting*. And this is what Adam would have done, if he had been given the Sabbath as “Sunday Sabbatarians” say he was: he would then have actually *begun* his life by *resting*, not working. And yet the Sabbath commandment is very clear: six days’ labour, followed by one day of rest. It was as much a part of the Sabbath commandment for men to *work* in six days, as to *rest* on the seventh day. The divine order, then, is completely turned around, when the first day of the week is made into a Sabbath! And this is not what the fourth commandment says. In fact, it would be a *breaking* of the fourth commandment, if indeed New Testament believers were to keep the first day as a day of rest.

And another thing, related to this last point: the spiritual application. Under the law, the Sabbath typified Gospel rest in Christ. The law’s purpose, like a schoolmaster, was to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith; but after faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster (Gal.3:24,25). A *first-day* Sabbath, however, would represent Christians as *first* enjoying Gospel rest in Christ, and *then* labouring under the law! This makes nonsense of the Sabbath type. It turns the entire teaching of the type on its head.

Also, it is impossible anyway for all nations to observe a Sabbath at the same time. The Sabbath commandment could be kept by Israel, living as they did in a particular geographical area. But the will of the Lord was that the Gospel of His Son would be preached throughout all nations of the world; and once this began to come to pass, it would be impossible for all believers everywhere to observe a Sabbath. When Christians in a particular country assemble to worship on the first day of the week, it may not be the first day of the week for Christians on the other side of the world. Believers around the world actually meet together at different times, but they are doing so on the first day of the week *in their societies*. If two Christians started out at the same point, and one of them went east and the other went west, when they met together on the other side of the world they would not be synchronised with regards to the first day of the week.

And another thing: *time*. Some, who hold that the Lord’s day is a

Sabbath, believe that it is a full day/night period of twenty-four hours; others believe that it need only be the daylight hours. But in some parts of the world, the people living there only have at times a few hours of daylight every day, making their “Sunday Sabbath”, if confined only to the hours of daylight, a much shorter Sabbath than that observed in other parts of the world; and at other times, they have only a few hours of darkness, or none at all, making their “Sabbath day” much, much longer than that observed by people in other parts of the world.

How precisely should the period of the “Sunday Sabbath” be calculated? From evening to evening? From morning to morning? From midnight to midnight? From morning to evening? The Jews kept their seventh-day Sabbath from evening to evening, which was the Jewish way of reckoning a day of twenty-four hours; but the Gentiles calculate the day as running from immediately after midnight to the next stroke of midnight. One thing is for certain: the New Testament does not answer this question for us. So what should guide “Sunday Sabbatarians” in settling this matter? They are unable to say, and so they resort to doing whatever they think is best. But of course, what one person thinks is best is not necessarily what another thinks is best. So there is much disagreement here. Some would say that the correct way of measuring the length of time of the “Sunday Sabbath” would be from evening to evening, as the Jews did; others, following the Gentile method, would say it runs from midnight to midnight; still others argue that it only needs to be observed during the “day” part of the twenty-four hour cycle (which means that some people would have an extremely short “Sabbath” at certain times of the year); etc. There is no consensus, because *the New Testament is silent*.

In addition: those Christians who insist on “Sabbath-keeping” never agree among themselves as to *how*, precisely, it should be kept. Sincere, godly men differ on how to keep the Lord’s day as a “Sabbath.” This is a fact which even they admit. They agree that what are termed works of necessity may be performed on the Lord’s day. They also agree that what are termed works of mercy may be performed (as when the Lord Jesus said that if a man’s sheep falls into a pit on the Sabbath day, it was understood by all that it could be lifted out; and therefore it was lawful to do well to men, too, on the Sabbath days: Matt.12:10-13).

And they agree that what are termed works of piety and charity may be performed: for example, preaching the Gospel, feeding the hungry, etc. But when it comes to *which* works are works of necessity, there is much disagreement. Some say, for example, that operating a petrol station on the Lord's day is acceptable as a work of necessity; others would disagree. Some have argued that it is unlawful for Christians to use public transport on a Sunday, whereas others say that there is nothing wrong with this, as it is a work of necessity. Some say there is no harm in kicking a soccer ball out on the lawn; others allow no more recreation than a short walk; others have not allowed even this. Some refuse to buy or read a Sunday newspaper; others argue that such newspapers are fine because they are printed late on Saturday.

It is very significant that there is no uncertainty among "Sunday Sabbatarians" about how the *other* commandments of the decalogue are to be observed! *Why* then all this confusion and disagreement over how to observe what they term the "Lord's day Sabbath"? There is only one reason: other than the period when Israel was under the law of Moses, there are no rules and regulations regarding the Sabbath. And "Sunday Sabbatarians" are well aware that the rules and regulations which were given to Israel under the law do not apply now, such as the prohibition on so much as gathering sticks for a fire on the Sabbath day, etc. They are therefore forced to lay down their own commandments regarding how this day should now be kept. But once this door is opened, there is utter confusion, because there is no scriptural authority for what they insist upon, nor any guidelines outside the law of Moses.

A favourite passage of God's Word for "Sunday Sabbatarians", when seeking to explain how the day should be kept, is Isa.58:13,14: "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD: and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it."

The entire chapter, however, can certainly be read as being an

exhortation of the prophet to the *Jews* under the *old* covenant; and this being so, we can read vv.13,14 as we would any other Old Testament passage where the Jews are exhorted regarding the Sabbath. This is how the Bible commentator, Matthew Poole (a “Sunday Sabbatarian” himself), understood it. Here are his comments on v.13: “*From the sabbath*; or for the sabbath’s sake, whether we understand it more largely, of the occasional sabbath in solemn humiliations or otherwise set apart for sacred services, which is called a sabbath, Lev. xvi. 31; xxiii. 32. Days of this nature were set apart before the captivity, chap. xxii. 12; Jer. xxxvi. 9, and also in the captivity, Zech. vii. 5. And thus it may be pertinent to the occasion of this discourse, ver.3. And further, though sabbath be here only mentioned, yet it may take in every institution of God that they were in a capacity of observing *during their captivity*; [italics added] thus I conceive it is understood chap. lvi. 1,2. Or whether we take it more particularly, for the weekly sabbath, such a carriage doth God expect as doth become it.”

And on v.14, Poole comments as follows, showing clearly that he understood this verse to be speaking of the Old Testament Sabbath, and of Old Testament times: “*I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth*; thou shalt be above the reach of danger, chap. xxxiii. 16. Or it may have respect to their being brought out of Babylon, which lay very low in respect of Judea, called the *earth*, as it is elsewhere, Luke xxiii. 44; and *high*, both in respect of the situation of it, as also its mountainousness. Or the expression may import the subduing of their enemies, as it is Deut. xxxiii. 29.... The sense is, they shall come out of Babylon, not sneakingly, as on foot, but triumphantly and gloriously, *riding*, as God brought Israel out of Egypt harnessed, in good order, and with a high hand; or, they shall ride to and fro in their chariots at their pleasure. *And feed thee with the heritage of Jacob*, i.e. thou shalt enjoy the good of the land of Canaan, which God had promised as a heritage of Jacob and his seed, Gen. xxxv. 12, and feed on the fruits of it.”

Now, whether one agrees with Poole’s exposition of it or not, the point is this: here was a man, a respected Bible commentator, and moreover a man who was himself a “Sunday Sabbatarian”, who applied the passage to the Jews under the old covenant. And he was not the only one. The Bible commentator, Matthew Henry, although (being a “Sunday Sabbatarian”) writing as part of his commentary on this passage

that “this law of the sabbath is still binding to us on our Lord’s day,” nevertheless states that this passage had to do with the *Jewish Sabbath*; for he writes: “Great stress was always laid upon the due observance of the sabbath day, and it was particularly required from the Jews when they were captives in Babylon, because by keeping that day, in honour of the Creator, they distinguished themselves from the worshippers of the gods that have not made the heavens and the earth. See *ch.* lvi. 1,2, where keeping the sabbath is joined, as here, with *keeping judgment and doing justice*. Some, indeed, understand this of the day of atonement, which they think is the fast spoken of in the former part of the chapter, and which is called a *sabbath of rest*, Lev. xxiii. 32. But, as the fasts before spoken of seem to be those that were occasional, so this sabbath is doubtless the weekly sabbath, that great sign between God and his professing people – his appointing it a sign of his favour to them and their observing it a sign of their obedience to him.”

But even if this chapter is taken to be about *Gospel* times, it must be borne in mind that here, as in many other parts of his prophecy, Isaiah wrote of aspects of New Testament worship and service *under the figures* of *Old Testament* worship and service. Isa.25:6 is just one example. Thus, when he writes in vv.13,14 of the Sabbath, the Lord’s holy day, we must understand that Isaiah is describing aspects of New Testament worship under the figures of the Old Testament. And the Sabbath being a type of Christ, what Isaiah is saying here is: Christians must turn away their feet from doing their own pleasure, for they are *in Christ*, their holy Sabbath; *He* must be their delight, and they must honour Him. They must not do their own ways, nor find their own pleasure, nor speak their own words; but take care to do the ways of the Lord, to find their pleasure in Him, and to speak of Him, and to Him.

In fact, if applied to Gospel times, this passage *must* be understood spiritually, as shown by v.14: Christians “ride on the high places of the earth” only spiritually; and they are fed with “the heritage of Jacob” only in a spiritual way.

The Lord’s day is not a Sabbath! If a man has to work on that day, he may work on that day. In the Western world, for a long time, Sunday has been a day off work; and this has made it very easy for Christians living

in Western, predominantly Protestant countries to attempt to observe Sunday as a “Sabbath.” But what about those Christians living in countries where Sunday was not, and is not, a day off work – a holiday?

It was not a day of rest, it was not a holiday, for those Christians living in the Roman Empire until the fourth century AD, when the Emperor Constantine made it a holiday. Yet we do not find that the early Christians refused to work on the first day of the week, as many modern Christians do in countries where legislation has upheld the “Sunday Sabbath” concept in the past. In such countries, we find Christians petitioning the government in protest because shops are increasingly being allowed to open on Sundays, etc. But we do not find that the early Christians ever did such a thing. They were a minority living in a pagan society that was utterly opposed to them, and to their doctrines and practices. And they did not, and indeed could not, petition the government of the day to make Sunday a day of rest by law! We do not find any commandment to Christians, living as they do in the midst of heathen cultures, to cease work on the first day of the week, and suffer whatever consequences their heathen masters cause them to suffer for refusing to work.

The “Sunday Sabbath” was enforced on England by law during the Puritan era. When the Puritans held the reins of government, it was very easy for them to legislate that the entire country would cease from labour on the “Sabbath day” (as they called it). And likewise, it was very easy for Protestants in other countries to make such rules, where Puritan Protestantism greatly influenced the governments of those countries in times gone by. But the plain fact of the matter is that the Word of God does not say this must be done. And what about those places in the world where Sunday is *not* a holiday? Why should a Christian man lose his job because he refuses to work on a Sunday, and his heathen employer fires him as a result? The Lord never gave His people such a commandment! He knew that they would be facing a hostile world, and living in heathen societies, where the very *name* of the Lord would be unknown, let alone any concept of a “Lord’s day/Sabbath”!

Increasingly, even in a land such as Britain, in which for centuries legislation has enforced Sunday as a virtual “Sabbath”, the tide has been turning. For example, according to a judgment issued in the Court of Appeal on the 25th July 2005, if an employer requires his employees to

work on Sundays, Christians who object to this must either comply with their employer's requirement or resign and seek employment elsewhere. The presiding judge said that the employers' convenience overrides the employees' conscience.²¹

Of course there was an outcry from those who support the "Sunday Sabbath" idea. Responding to the judgment, the barrister for the man who wanted his employer to allow him to have Sundays free said to the court: "The fourth commandment should now be rewritten along these lines – 'the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; and in it thou shalt not work... unless thy employer requires thee to work.'" But this is completely false! It perpetuates the whole notion that Britain is a "Christian country", some kind of theocracy; whereas in truth this is utterly foreign to the teaching of the New Testament. An entire country, consisting of both Christians and unbelievers, should not enforce such a doctrine upon all of society – this is an Old Testament mentality that has tragically gripped the minds of so many professing Christians. *Why should* an employer, who does not believe that Sunday is a "Sabbath", be forced by law to grant his employee the day off? An employer should be free to set his own rules for his own company or business! And if an employee does not like those rules, he does not have to take the job; he is free to look for work elsewhere. This is perfectly sensible. If, say, an employer offers a prospective employee a particular salary, he is free to accept it, or if he does not, to go and look for employment elsewhere; and so with this matter. The employer, after all, is the boss of his own business (or he should be!); and he should be free to say to any prospective employee, "These are the rules of my business. If you agree to them, you're hired; if not, you must seek for work elsewhere." This in fact is how it used to be, in a free market system, before unions and Socialism started interfering.

Besides, the barrister quoted above was assuming that it is a fact that Sunday is the "Sabbath"; yet his own words showed this is not the case, for he correctly quoted the fourth commandment as, "the *seventh* day is the Sabbath". Sunday is the first day of the week, not the seventh. Thus it is not the Sabbath.

²¹ *English Churchman*, No. 7668, 5th and 12th August 2005. Worthing, West Sussex, United Kingdom.

The chairman of the “Keep Sunday Special Campaign” in Britain said after the judgment, “Have we got to face a future as Sunday work spreads wider and wider when Christians will be forced to flee from job to job in pursuit of a place of employment?” Well, in the first place, if Christians stopped viewing Sunday as a “Christian Sabbath”, they would not face this problem at all. Certainly the *Word of God* does not command them to refuse to work on Sundays, or as a result of refusing to do so, to “flee from job to job in pursuit of a place of employment”! We do not read anywhere in the Scriptures of any Christian refusing to work on Sundays, and then being persecuted for it – and the New Testament was written at a time when *no* country had “Christian Sabbath” legislation in place! And in the second place, yes – Christians in those places where Sunday has been a legislated “day of rest” in the past *do* have to face a future in which Sunday work will “spread wider and wider”! That is the stark reality now, regardless of what one may think of it. Sunday will increasingly become a day of work in such places – just as it is, and has always been, in other places all around the world! As this becomes the reality for Christians in places which once made Sunday a “day of rest”, they will find themselves in precisely the same boat as their brethren in Christ in many other parts of the world, where there has been *no* tradition of “Sunday rest”. They will find themselves, in fact, in precisely the same boat as the early Christians. And they will then have two options: they will either have to re-examine their entire doctrine of the “Christian Sabbath” and realise that it has no scriptural foundation – or they will have to persist in claiming that Sunday is the “Christian Sabbath”, in which case they will be persecuted for it by losing their jobs, etc. They may of course claim that this is suffering for righteousness’ sake; but in doing so they will have no scriptural support whatsoever for such an assertion. For in the early Church, when Sunday was *not* a legislated “day of rest” and Christians faced a hostile world, there is not one example in all the New Testament of a Christian being persecuted for refusing to work on the first day of the week – nor one place where the Lord ever commanded that His servants suffer for such a reason.

Israel under the law was a theocracy; but the New Testament does not in any sense whatsoever support the notion that a country like Britain, or any other, is, or can possibly be, a “Christian country”, a “Christian

theocracy” along the lines of Israel of old. In Israel under the law of Moses, the Sabbath commandment *worked*, practically. By divine law, everything came to a halt on that day, and the whole nation had to rest. But Israel was a *theocracy*. It was God’s special nation. And this cannot be said of any earthly nation today. The *Church* is the “holy nation” today (1 Pet.2:9), and is found scattered throughout the nations of the world; and often exists under very hostile conditions, a persecuted minority, sheep in the midst of wolves. And “Sunday Sabbatarians” living in the safer, Western countries are in fact seeking to impose (at least to some extent) an Old Testament theocratic system on their countries, by campaigning for “Sunday Sabbath” legislation to be imposed upon the entire population, Christian and non-Christian. The question which must be answered is: *should* a government enforce the first table of the decalogue by law? Categorically, the answer is No. In matters pertaining to man’s relationship (or lack of one) to God, no government has any jurisdiction or authority. Then why should those who believe that the Lord’s day is a moral law, the New Testament fulfilment of the fourth commandment, expect the government to enforce the Lord’s day? This is a step towards the false concept of a “State Church”! And this is particularly troubling when it is supported by Baptists – those who proclaim the biblical doctrine of religious toleration, and of the separation of Church and State, and who profess to reject and to be opposed to the unbiblical “State Church” system; for their history, more than that of any others, teaches them what it means to live under any form of “State Church”, which always ends up persecuting those who disagree with it. The “Christian Sabbath” doctrine is a step on the way towards the “State Church” concept which Baptists (rightly) profess to reject. The tragedy here is that “Sunday Sabbatarian” Baptists, and others, who would vociferously say they are opposed to the false “Theonomy” and “Christian Reconstructionist” movement, are, at least to the extent that they want a “Sunday Sabbath” to be enforced by law, Theonomists and Reconstructionists themselves! For they rejoice when a government enforces Sunday legislation upon the entire population, Christian and non-Christian alike; and yet they profess to reject the entire notion that the State should enforce religious matters and observances. They cannot have their cake and eat it.

It is certainly true that for one’s physical health, and that of servants,

employees, and even beasts of burden, a day off in every week is a very good and beneficial thing; and certainly this principle can be gleaned from the seventh-day Sabbath of the Jews (Exod.23:12; Deut.5:14). But accepting this principle is not the same as adopting a Sabbath. Having time off from one's usual physical labour is beneficial to one's physical health; but observing a *Sabbath*, either in the Old Testament sense, or in the sense that "Sunday Sabbatarians" insist believers must observe the Lord's day, is to go way beyond what the Word of God commands New Testament believers. The entire doctrine of the "Christian Sabbath" is in fact nothing but a *tradition of men*, not the truth of God's Word.

How, then, should Christians spend their Sundays?

Priority must always be given to the services of the local church. The first day of the week is the Lord's day, on which believers commemorate the resurrection of their Lord and Saviour by assembling together to worship Him; and as far as possible nothing should be allowed to obstruct or interfere with this corporate worship. If the service is held in the morning, no other plans should be made for the morning, either before or after the service: the child of God should prepare his heart for worship before the service, and meditate upon what he has heard and learned after the service. And if the service is held in the evening, the afternoon should not be spent (as far as possible) in such activities as would tend to make the believer weary, so that he comes to the service unable to concentrate, tired, listless, yawning and bleary-eyed. He must make sure, as far as possible, that he is well rested before coming to worship, and in a spiritual frame of mind.

But if a man *has to* work on that day, he may do so. A self-employed man would, as a general rule, have no need to do so, but men who are employed by others may find that they have to work on Sundays, at times. Certainly they should do whatever they lawfully can to have their Sundays free, so as to be able to regularly attend the services of the church; but when this is absolutely impossible, they do not have to feel that they are sinning against the Lord because they have to go to work. The New Testament contains not a single example of a Christian refusing to work on the Lord's day and suffering the loss of his job as a result, nor any commandment that he must take such a stand.

Also: *after* the services are over, the Christian is free to indulge in

innocent, healthy recreation. Recreation is not a reason for being absent from the service; but once the service is over, he does not sin against his Lord if he goes for a walk, or visits family or friends, or plays an innocent game inside or outside, or goes for a swim, or any such thing. The New Testament contains not a single example of a Christian being censured for such a thing, nor any commandment forbidding him to do so.

Conclusion

1. The Sabbath was not a creation ordinance; and is not therefore a perpetual moral law, binding on all men in all ages.
2. It was therefore a positive law; but even so, it was not given to Adam; and no one between Adam and Moses ever kept it.
3. The first time the Sabbath was given to any men, was after the Exodus at the time of the giving of the manna; and it was only given to the children of Israel, and to no others, as the sign of the covenant made with Israel; which was done away when the covenant itself was done away, and the new covenant was brought in.
4. Neither Saturday, nor Sunday, nor any other day, is a Sabbath for the New Testament Christian. Sabbaths were shadows of things to come; but the body is of Christ. Believers rest by faith in Jesus Christ. *This* is the rest to the people of God: the rest of faith. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself is the Sabbath of His people, for they rest by faith in Him!
5. The first day of the week is the Lord's day; the day on which the Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead; and thus the day on which believers are to assemble together to commemorate His resurrection, to receive the ministry of the Word, to partake of the Lord's supper – in a word, to *worship* the Lord as He has commanded. But it is not a Sabbath to us at all.

“Come unto me,” said the Lord Jesus, “all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give *you rest*.” (Matt. 11:28). Christ Himself is the Christian's Sabbath, and we enter into this Sabbath by faith in Him. He is the only Sabbath the Christian has, and the only Sabbath he needs. The seventh-day Sabbath proclaimed the Gospel to the Israelites

as much as all the other ceremonial aspects of the law of Moses. But the Sabbath day was the shadow, Christ Jesus is the substance (Col. 2:16,17), and with the coming of the Saviour all the shadows gave way to the substance. In Him, and in Him alone, we find rest for our souls (Matt. 11:29). To replace the seventh day with the first day is to miss the point of the Sabbath type under the old covenant. And besides, if the day is changed, and the manner of keeping it is changed, and the purpose for which it is kept is changed, then it is no longer the Sabbath day anyway, and those who believe in observing it are not “remembering the Sabbath day to keep it holy” any more than we are, who believe it is abrogated, being fulfilled in Christ! We say it has gone; they say it remains, but they have so altered it that, for all practical purposes, they are not keeping the Sabbath (as given by the Lord to Israel) any more than we are.

Thus *neither side* observes the Sabbath as given to Israel (and no other Sabbath was ever given by the Lord to men). Yet one side accuses the other of being Antinomian for not observing what *it has decided* is the “Sabbath”, the Christian’s “day of rest” (for certainly the *Word of God* does not say any such thing).

In conclusion, a challenge must be issued to those of the “Christian Sabbath” persuasion:

Please consider, and consider very carefully, how the Word of God is being handled, when the claim is made to be honouring the fourth commandment, and yet, without any biblical warrant whatsoever, the day has been changed from what it was originally, the manner of observing the day has been changed from what it was originally, and the purpose for which the day is observed has been changed from what it was originally.

In all honesty, is this rightly dividing the Word of truth?

PART TWO: HISTORICAL SURVEY

by Shaun Willcock

The So-Called “Early Church Fathers”

The wrongly-named, so-called “apostolic Fathers” and “early Church Fathers”, who lived in the early centuries following the apostolic age, were often not true Christians at all. Nevertheless, their writings are valuable as historical records of the time in which they lived. And it is clear from their writings that in their time, the first day of the week was not in any sense regarded as a day of rest from secular labour. Even though many of them were heretical teachers, and thus some might argue that although *they* did not regard the day as a Sabbath, others did, there is nothing in the writings of that time which indicates that *anyone* was keeping the Lord’s day as a Sabbath, whether true Christian or false. “They give no evidence of regarding the Lord’s Day as the day in which Christians, like the Israelites of old, should refrain from all work of every sort.... The whole day, indeed, was given a special quality for the Christian: it was a day of joy. But this was not expressed by ceasing from all work after the analogy of the Jewish Sabbath.”²²

Tertullian, a man who taught much false doctrine, was apparently the first writer (about 200 AD) to mention cessation from work on Sunday. He wrote in regard to the first day of the week, “We also cease from all business in order not to give any room to the devil.” It appears, however, that this cessation from work was in order to assemble for worship, and not because the entire day was seen as a Sabbath.²³ Obviously, even true Christians who reject the idea of a “Christian Sabbath”, teach that those who are able to leave their labours on the Lord’s day in order to assemble for worship must do so. But this does not mean that they cannot work after the time of worship is over, nor does it mean that those who are unable to leave their labours on this day without losing their jobs must do so anyway, for fear of “breaking the Sabbath.” It is not a Sabbath, and they are not sinning against the Lord. Obviously it is very convenient

²² *The Lord’s Day*, pg.124.

²³ *The Lord’s Day*, pg.124.

for believers when Sunday is treated, by society, as a “day off”, and they are then free to assemble for worship at any time during the day; and also, of course, it may be comparatively easy for a self-employed man to simply shut down his business on the first day in order to assemble with the saints; but when Christian employees are faced with a choice of working, or refusing to work and facing dismissal, the New Testament nowhere commands them to lose their jobs rather than work on a Sunday, nor even so much as hints that they should. This is precisely why the early churches met in the evenings, after the day’s labour was done. And really, this is the solution for Christians living in a society where the first day of the week is not regarded as a “day off”: their services should be held in the evenings, as in the apostolic age.

Constantine and Sunday Legislation

The plain fact of the matter is that there was *no Sunday legislation* before the time of the Roman Emperor Constantine, in the fourth century AD. He was the one who made Sunday a holiday throughout the empire, and insisted on its observance. On the 7th March 321 AD, Constantine issued the following edict: “All judges, the inhabitants of cities and those concerned in the occupations of all trades shall rest on the honourable day of the sun. Peasants, however, shall be free and unhindered in the cultivation of the field, because it often happens that no other day is so fit for sowing corn or planting vines, lest the critical moment being let slip, men should lose the commodities granted them by the providence of heaven.”²⁴

This was definitely a mild form of “Christian Sabbatarianism” (the word “Christian” is used extremely loosely here, as there was nothing truly Christian about the emperor or the empire!), for some labour was permitted; but it was the start. The emperor issued this edict because he claimed to be a “Christian” himself. He most certainly was not, he was a heathen at heart who, although he favoured the false, so-called “Catholic Church”, was also very mindful of the heathen sun-worshippers in his empire, the cult of Mithras, who by this time worshipped the sun on the first day of the week; and in fact he was their *ex officio* leader.

²⁴ *The Lord's Day*, pg.125. The original edict is contained in the *Codex Justin*, lib. iii, tit. xii, 1.3.

This is why he referred to the day, in his edict, by the pagan name, “the honourable day of the sun”. He was, as a politician, using language which was sufficiently ambiguous to please both sides, the “Catholics” and the heathen.²⁵ And yet, although all of this is obvious enough, many Protestant “Sunday Sabbatarians” of the Puritan era in England, centuries later, were so smitten with the notion of a “Christian Sabbath” that, despite the plain evidence that Constantine was no true Christian, they spoke very highly both of him and his edict. “Daniel Cawdrey, one of the Westminster divines, thought so highly of this edict as to compare the Emperor to Moses, and to intimate that Constantine performed a part in reference to the Lord’s Day analogous to that of Moses in reference to the Sabbath!”²⁶

The So-Called “Catholic Church” and its “Sunday Sabbath” Doctrine Throughout the Middle Ages

From the time of Constantine, throughout the fourth and fifth centuries AD, various theologians of the false “Catholic Church”, such as Eusebius of Caesarea, and Augustine, proclaimed the doctrine that the Old Testament Sabbath laws should be applied to the Lord’s day. The idea of Sabbath rest, in particular, began to be emphasised. And by the end of the fifth century, “the Sabbath rest had been largely transferred to the Christian Lord’s Day.”²⁷ And this idea continued throughout the Middle Ages. Many taught that the Lord’s day had to be observed as the Sabbath because of the miracles performed on that day: the creation of light, the resurrection of Christ, even (as they supposed, with no scriptural support whatsoever) the conception and birth of Christ! And this means of proving that the Lord’s day is the “Christian Sabbath” was carried over into the Reformation and post-Reformation period.²⁸

“It was Augustine who laid the groundwork for the analogy between

²⁵ *The Lord's Day*, pgs.124-6.

²⁶ *Bampton Lectures on Sunday*, by James Augustus Hessey, Lectures for 1860, pg.59ff., as quoted in *The Lord's Day*, pg.126. (footnote).

²⁷ *The Lord's Day*, pg.127.

²⁸ *The English Sabbath: a Study of Doctrine and Discipline from the Reformation to the Civil War*, by Kenneth L. Parker, pgs.17,18. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988.

the Jewish Sabbath and the Lord's Day which has prevailed in Christian theology down to the present time."²⁹ Augustine made use of the decalogue to expound the meaning of the Lord's commandment to love the Lord with all one's being, and to love one's neighbour as oneself. Thus we find that Sabbatarian Protestants are holding to a doctrine for which the heretic Augustine laid the groundwork, not a doctrine taught in the New Testament. Sadly, of course, many Protestants have considered Augustine to be a great Christian man, and have followed him in various other matters as well, to the detriment of Protestantism.

Inevitably, casuistic legalism developed, "having everything in common with its Jewish archetype but the seventh day itself." Once Sunday became an officially-sanctioned day of rest from labour, "many people found themselves consigned to doing nothing for a goodly part of the Lord's Day, and, as we all know, idleness can be as inimical to the cultivation of the spirit as an overburden of work. The church, therefore [i.e. the so-called "Catholic Church"], not only increased its cultic activities, but also sought to give to the requirement of rest a religious earnestness and binding obligation, by appealing to the strict prohibition in the Old Testament of all labour on the Sabbath Day."³⁰ The Empire itself lent its support to the false "Church" in this, so that by the sixth century there were many temporal penalties attached to the "Church's" laws concerning the first day of the week. Thus the State was allied to the "Church", and enforced the "Church's" will. And this awful "State-Church" union was something the Protestant Reformers of the sixteenth century, and the Puritans after them, retained from Romanism, to the detriment of Protestantism.

In the sixth century a letter appeared, which is sometimes referred to as the "Epistle on Sunday." This letter claimed to have been written by Christ Himself, and to have fallen from heaven to teach "Christians" how to observe the Lord's day. It condemned "abuses" of this day, such as trading, travelling, recreation, etc., and threatened all kinds of temporal punishments on those who profaned it, as well as eternal damnation. Although various Papist leaders condemned the letter, including the

²⁹ *The Lord's Day*, pg.90.

³⁰ *The Lord's Day*, pg.131.

pope, Zachary, in the eighth century, copies continued to spread and circulate. Eustace, a Roman Catholic abbot in the thirteenth century used the letter to support his attempts to prevent any servile work being done on Sundays in England. Apparently he was very successful. In addition, various tales circulated in those times about God's displeasure being shown against "Sabbath-breakers": for example, blood flowing from loaves of bread when the dough had been kneaded on a Sunday, and other such "miraculous" signs.³¹

Tragically, the spirit behind these Papist frauds and tales flowed into English Protestantism, with various Puritan writers claiming that earthquakes, fires, famines, etc., were God's judgments upon "Sabbath-breakers."

As the years rolled on, more and more civil penalties were annexed to the "Catholic Church's" laws by the kings of Western Europe, for working on Sundays. For example, the first punishment a free man might incur for this "sin", would be the loss of his inheritance; but if he continued, he could be sold into slavery. As for a serf, he might at first be corporally punished, but if that did not make him see the "error" of his ways, he could lose his right hand as punishment.

The king of the Visigoths in 694 forbade his Jewish subjects from working on Sunday, thereby forcing them to observe a "Sabbath" on a day they did not regard (correctly) as the Sabbath day; and if any Jew dared to violate the king's commandment and work on a Sunday, he was to have his head shaved and to receive a hundred lashes. Three years later, in 697, the king of Kent, in England, decreed that any master who forced his servant to work on Sunday had to pay a fine, and the servant was to be liberated.³²

In 755 King Pepin forbade labour on Sunday. Likewise, in 789 the edict of Charlemagne forbade all labour on Sunday throughout the Empire, particularly farm labour, as being a violation of the Sabbath commandment in the decalogue.³³ And in 796 AD a synod convened by Paulinus of Aquileja declared that on Sundays it was necessary to rest

³¹ *The English Sabbath*, pgs.9-11.

³² *The Lord's Day*, pgs.132-3.

³³ *The Lord's Day*, pgs.90,91,135.

from physical labour.

The term “Christian Sabbath” itself was not used in the early centuries, and it is believed that it was probably used for the first time by Petrus Alphonus in the twelfth century.³⁴

Theodore Beza, Calvin’s successor at Geneva, was thus very correct when he preached as follows: “This [i.e. that the Lord’s day ought to be kept as a Sabbath] was neither commanded in the Apostles’ days, nor yet observed, until Christian Emperors [i.e. “Catholic” ones, not true Christians!] enjoined the same to the end that people might not be abstracted from holy meditations.”³⁵ “Sunday Sabbatarians” are thus following, not a doctrine taught in the New Testament, but one first taught by “Catholic” theologians, and then legislated by “Catholic” emperors.

It is incorrect to think, then, as many have done, that “Sunday Sabbatarianism” was an English Puritan innovation. It was observed by many in the centuries prior to the sixteenth century Protestant Reformation. “Complaints against the abuses of Sunday were an English concern throughout the Middle Ages, particularly in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.... Medieval sabbatarianism was promoted by preachers, incorporated into episcopal and secular discipline, and represented in popular art.”³⁶ These “Sunday Sabbatarians”, however, were of course Papists, including such well-known ones as Bernard of Clairvaux in the twelfth century.³⁷

Medieval councils and synods issued canons and statutes promoting “Sunday Sabbatarianism”, forbidding work and play on Sundays, etc. The Northumbrian Priests’ Law prescribed flogging for slaves and fines for freemen as penalties for “Sabbath-breaking.” In the thirteenth century, Popish priests were commanded to warn their flocks against the “sin” of going to market on Sundays, and excommunication was threatened for this “sin”. And English rulers from the seventh to the fifteenth centuries

³⁴ *The Lord’s Day*, pgs.136-7.

³⁵ *On the Song of Solomon*, by Theodore Beza, Homily 30, pg.247.

³⁶ *The English Sabbath*, pg.5.

³⁷ *The English Sabbath*, pgs.18,19.

enforced “Sabbath” legislation, in accordance with “Church” (Papist) teachings.³⁸

As Sabbatarian laws increased in Western Europe, exceptions to the rule increased as well, as Papist ecclesiastical leaders saw the need for them. In 1181, for example, the pope, Alexander III, authorised a bishop in Dalmatia to allow the people to fish for sardines on Sunday.³⁹ This habit of permitting exceptions to the rule of Sunday rest was continued by Protestant “Sunday Sabbatarians” of the Puritan era, and is practised by Protestant “Sunday Sabbatarians” to this day, who allow for all kinds of exceptions to the rule – but do not agree among themselves as to what the exceptions should be.

The Roman Catholic “saint”, Raymond of Pennafort, who died in 1275, became, thanks to a “manual” he wrote, “the great authority for medieval Sunday casuistry”.⁴⁰ Raymond permitted those whose work was considered “necessary” – such as erecting a church building, or ministering to the poor, or assisting in some spiritual service – to work on Sundays. He also permitted bakers to bake on Sundays so that the food was available on Mondays. Of course, what was conveniently forgotten in all this, by both Papist *and* later Protestant casuists, was that work such as baking was *not* permitted on the seventh-day Sabbath instituted by the Lord for Israel. Again it needs to be pointed out: one cannot claim to be keeping the Sabbath if one has changed not only the day, but the mode of keeping it.

From the fourth to the thirteenth centuries, the most common way of explaining the doctrine amongst Papist “Sunday Sabbatarians” was to argue that the Jewish Sabbath laws were still to be applied, and also that Sunday should be observed because of the miracles performed on that day. But in the thirteenth century, Roman Catholic scholastic theologians, led by Thomas Aquinas, introduced another explanation, which would greatly influence British Protestant theology as well, after the Reformation. Aquinas stated, in his *Summa Theologica*, the view of the fourth commandment of the decalogue which was to become the

³⁸ *The English Sabbath*, pgs.13,14.

³⁹ *The Lord's Day*, pg.133.

⁴⁰ *The Lord's Day*, pg.133.

predominant view amongst English Protestants after the Reformation. He stated: “the commandment to keep holy the sabbath is partly moral, partly ceremonial. It is moral in that man should set aside some time in his life for concentration upon the things of God.... But it is a ceremonial precept on the grounds that in this commandment a particular time is determined in order to signify creation.”⁴¹

Aquinas taught that the Sabbath precept was moral; but he also taught that the day had been changed from the Jewish Sabbath to Sunday, and that not all the Jewish Sabbath laws were still binding. In this, and in his distinction between the moral and ceremonial aspects of the Sabbath commandment, he was to be followed by almost all “Sunday Sabbatarian” writers – including the Protestant ones. He himself did not write about the *reasons* for changing the day from Saturday to Sunday, but other Papist theologians weighed in and did so. They claimed that Sunday observance was of divine institution.⁴² In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries various polemical works appeared, from Papist hands in England, claiming that the “Sunday Sabbath” had to be upheld, with men abstaining from work and play on that day, and lamenting the fact that so few observed the “Sabbath” correctly. Paintings were even produced during the medieval period, depicting Christ on the cross, with tools of trade and domestic work inflicting wounds on His body, thereby teaching the people that to work on Sundays was to greatly sin and to wound Christ.⁴³

From the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries ecclesiastical Sunday laws mushroomed. Moreover, because the Roman Catholic institution believed itself to be the one true Church, to which all people everywhere must belong, even if forced to belong to it at the point of a sword, even non-Papists were compelled to observe its Sunday laws. Aquinas taught that infidels (Jews and Muslims) were to be prevented from blaspheming the “Christian” (i.e. Roman Catholic) faith by dishonouring the Lord’s day. Many laws forbidding Jews and Muslims from working on Sundays were passed during this time, and both religious and political authorities

⁴¹ *Summa Theologica*, by Thomas Aquinas, pg.305. Blackfriars Edition, 1972.

⁴² *The English Sabbath*, pgs.17-21.

⁴³ *The English Sabbath*, pgs.11,12,22.

were threatened with excommunication if they did not enforce them.⁴⁴

Truly, then, “the rigorist polemics and regulations of the Elizabethan period were not new, but part of an identifiable social and religious pattern that had existed in England for centuries.”⁴⁵ “It is simply not possible to draw any fundamental theological distinction between the medieval and post-Reformation doctrines of the Sabbath. The moral obligation to keep the Sabbath was a concept as familiar to the fifteenth-century [Papist] Englishman as the seventeenth-century protestant.”⁴⁶ What this means is that the English Protestants after the Reformation were, in this matter of “Sunday Sabbath” legislation, merely continuing to apply a centuries-old *Roman Catholic* practice, based on *Roman Catholic* doctrine.

Lest any should deny this, Protestant “Sunday Sabbatarians” admitted it themselves. “Elizabethan and early Stuart sabbatarians recognized their continuity with these medieval [Papist] predecessors and did not hesitate to use medieval canons and statutes to support the doctrine they preached.” “The use made of these [medieval] regulations in the sabbatarian works of Nicholas Bownde, John Sprint, Robert Cleaver, and many others confirms the self-conscious incorporation of medieval precedents in works by Elizabethan and Stuart protestants to justify their position and prove the continuity of sabbatarian discipline.”⁴⁷

Roman Catholic casuistry (to be followed by Protestant casuistry) increasingly permitted various exceptions to the rule of Sunday rest. From the sixteenth century onwards, the Roman Catholic institution’s enforcement of “Sabbatical rest” on Sunday was not as rigorous as it had been (of course, *Protestant* “Sunday Sabbatarians” were eventually to make up for any lack on the Papists’ part!). Medicine could now be lawfully purchased on a Sunday, manuscripts could be transcribed, embroidering came to be permitted *provided* it was not one’s daily occupation, etc. A monk could now work at sculpting a piece of stone on a Sunday, although some Romish authorities felt that those who prepared the stone for sculpture were sinfully working, whereas those who

⁴⁴ *The Lord's Day*, pg.133.

⁴⁵ *The English Sabbath*, pg.14.

⁴⁶ *The English Sabbath*, pg.23.

⁴⁷ *The English Sabbath*, pg.15.

artistically sculpted the stone were not!⁴⁸ And so the casuistry continued. When once the Word of God is set aside (and Rome has always set God's Word aside), the field is wide open for any kind of human tradition to be set up as the "truth".

The German Reformers' Rejection of the "Christian Sabbath" Doctrine

The early sixteenth-century Protestant Reformers, in England no less than elsewhere in Europe, for the most part rejected the doctrine of the "Church" of Rome that Sunday was to be observed as the "Christian Sabbath." They taught that a morally binding "Christian Sabbath" was unscriptural. It was *only later* that some British Protestants began to teach that Sunday was to be observed as a Sabbath. In fact, the idea that Sunday – the first day of the week – should be observed as the "Christian Sabbath" was almost solely a British idea *among Protestants*. The continental Reformers, and the continental Reformed institutions, did not observe Sunday as a Sabbath, nor any other day for that matter. As far as they were concerned, the Sabbath was Jewish, and Jewish only.

Let us consider the German Reformation. A former associate of Martin Luther, Andrew Karlstadt, published the first Protestant treatise on the "Sunday Sabbath" in 1524, entitled *Von dem Sabbat und gebotten Feyertagen*. In this work, he sought to show the importance of a Sabbath, and he made use of many of the laws of Moses to do so. Also, certain Anabaptists of the time in Silesia and Moravia advocated a return to the Jewish Saturday Sabbath, as well as various other practices from the law of Moses.⁴⁹

But Luther was opposed to these teachings. In his commentaries, sermons, etc., he taught that observing a literal Sabbath was not applicable to "Christians", for it was not part of the law of nature; it was merely a shadow of the believer's eternal rest from sin, and that the believer should "rest" from sin each and every day. He also taught, however, that his followers should make use of the times appointed by the religious and

⁴⁸ *The Lord's Day*, pg.134.

⁴⁹ *The English Sabbath*, pg.24.

civil authorities for worship.⁵⁰

Luther's Larger Catechism stated that the Sabbath was an outward thing, just like the other ordinances of the Old Testament; and that the outward and carnal meaning of the Sabbath did not apply to "Christians". Here are the words of his catechism: "This precept [the Sabbath commandment of the decalogue], so far as its outward and carnal meaning is concerned, does not apply to us Christians. The Sabbath is an outward thing, like the other ordinances of the Old Testament, which were bound to certain modes and persons and times and places, but are now all of them made free by Christ."⁵¹ It went on to say that the working classes needed a day off from labour in the week; and moreover, that on such a day of rest there would be time for public worship. But any day would be suitable, for now no day was better than any other, and as men in previous times had settled upon the Lord's day, this harmless custom should be retained. Innovation at this point was not necessary.⁵²

Now read these words of Martin Luther in his Larger Catechism, and then ask yourself how it is possible that "Sunday Sabbatarians" can hold Luther up so highly, and yet disdain modern-day anti-Sabbatarian Christians, break off fellowship with them, and condemn them as Antinomians: "If anywhere the day is made holy for the mere day's sake, if anywhere anyone sets up its observance on a Jewish foundation, then I order you to work on it, to ride on it, to dance on it, to feast on it, to do anything that will remove this encroachment on Christian liberty."⁵³ Luther not only utterly rejected any notion of a "Christian Sabbath", but he was even prepared to allow worldly dancing on the Lord's day – something no *sound* Christian, seeking to be separate from the world, would allow on *any* day of the week – and yet Luther is held up by so many Protestants as a great Christian and teacher of the Word, while those today who reject the "Christian Sabbath" concept, *and* moreover who condemn the worldliness which Luther allowed, are dismissed as Antinomians, as sinners against the Lord! If that is not a double standard

⁵⁰ *The English Sabbath*, pg.25.

⁵¹ *The Lord's Day*, pg.102.

⁵² *Bampton Lectures on Sunday*, Lecture 6, pgs.167-8. See also *The Lord's Day*, pg.102.

⁵³ *The Lord's Day*, pg.102, quoting from Hessey, pgs.167-8, who was in turn quoting from Luther's Larger Catechism.

and utter hypocrisy, we do not know anything that is.

The Augsburg Confession of Faith is the standard Lutheran Confession. It was drawn up by Philip Melancthon, Luther's associate. It strongly condemns Sabbath-keeping, saying that it is not sinful to work on Sunday, and that Sabbath observance was a part of the law of Moses, and thus no longer necessary. It accepts Sunday as the day of worship, but that is all.⁵⁴

Luther himself wrote that there was no necessity for Sabbath or Sunday observance, for "holy days" were temporary things; and that if any man did observe it, it should be because of the need for rest, and for worship, and not because Moses commanded it.⁵⁵

As regards the ten commandments, Luther taught that they do not apply to Gentiles and Christians; that Christians do not need to go back to Moses, nor do they come under Moses' law, which was for the Jews only. The law of Moses stands as a unit, and if one of his commandments is accepted as being applicable today, then all of them are, including circumcision, washings, foods, etc. He stated that Moses can be taken as the teacher of Christians, but not as their lawgiver, except when he agrees with the New Testament and with the law of nature.⁵⁶

The Swiss Reformers' Rejection of the "Christian Sabbath" Doctrine

Let us now consider the Swiss Reformation. Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin both rejected the concept of a "Christian Sabbath". Zwingli taught that the Sabbath was part of the ceremonial law of Moses, and was therefore now abolished; and that men were free to work on the Lord's day after public worship, if necessity required. He went further, and taught that it was lawful, when necessity demanded, to transfer the worship and

⁵⁴ *Unaltered Augsburg Confession*, pgs.172-5. New York, 1850.

⁵⁵ *Life of Luther*, by Karl Ludwig Michelt, pg.271, Hazlitt's Translation, London, 1884. Also Luther's *Table Talk*, Bell's Translation, pg.357, London, 1652.

⁵⁶ *How to Make Use of Moses*, by Martin Luther, quoted by Hengstenberg, *The Lord's Day*, pg.61. Found in the Latin version of Luther's *Works*, 111, 68, Jena, 1603. See also *The Literature of the Sabbath Question*, by Robert Cox, Vol.1, pgs.383-4. Edinburgh, 1865.

rest of the Lord's day to another day.⁵⁷ And the Swiss confession of faith known as the Second Helvetic Confession taught essentially the same doctrine as the Lutheran Augsburg Confession on this matter.⁵⁸

As for John Calvin, he wrote at length on the Sabbath issue in his book, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, and elsewhere (for example, in his catechism and in his commentary on Genesis). He taught that the Sabbath was a shadow, and was abolished with all other figurative things at the advent of Christ. It was a figure of spiritual rest from sin in Christ every day of the week;⁵⁹ of ceasing from one's own works in trying to earn one's salvation. He taught that it was now customary to assemble on stated days for worship, and also to give labourers a day off from labour, for their well-being; and that this was very important, now no less than in Old Testament times. He wished that men would assemble on every day of the week, so as to remove all distinction of days entirely; but accepted that this was not possible. He taught that the Lord's day was not to be observed with scrupulous rigour, but only as a remedy necessary for preserving order in the Church, for a stated day for worship was necessary for everything to be done decently and in order. He did not view it as a Sabbath, however, and was even content to see churches observing other days instead of the first day, as days for worship.⁶⁰

We have heard some "Sunday Sabbatarians" argue, as did certain Puritans, that in spite of all the evidence to the contrary, Calvin, in fact (and other Reformers as well), *did* observe the Lord's day as a Sabbath. In this, however, they greatly err: Calvin and the others observed no such thing. It is true that Calvin taught as follows when preaching on the ten commandments: "It is for us to dedicate ourselves wholly to God, renouncing ourselves, our feelings, and all our affections; and then, since we have this external ordinance, to act as becomes us, that is, to lay aside our earthly affairs and occupations, so that we may be entirely free to meditate the works of God... and, above all, may apply ourselves to apprehend the grace which He daily offers us in His Gospel, and may be

⁵⁷ *On the Sabbath*, by Theophilus Brabourne, pg.277, London, 1630; *Bampton Lectures on Sunday*, pg.352, note 387.

⁵⁸ *The Lord's Day*, pg.104.

⁵⁹ *The Whole Doctrine of Calvin About the Sabbath and the Lord's Day*, edited by Robert Cox, pgs. 17,25-6,42,62,63,69-70. Edinburgh, 1860.

⁶⁰ *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, by John Calvin, Vol.1, Book 2, chap.8.

more and more conformed to it. And when we shall have employed the Sabbath in praising and magnifying the name of God, and meditating upon His works, we must, through the rest of the week, show we have profited thereby.”⁶¹ This was certainly inconsistent of Calvin; but as pointed out by one historian, these remarks on Sabbath observance “treat such observance as *expedient*, rather than *mandatory*. A day having been set aside *by custom* as an external ordinance, it should be used to inculcate self-denial, that God may reign in our lives. Though he [Calvin] says that the Sabbath should continue to the end of the world, insofar as men are enjoined to exercise themselves in divine worship, his thought seems to be that it is necessary to set aside *some* day for public worship for the well-being of the church and the establishing of true religion. *Neither he nor Luther looked upon the observance of the Lord’s Day as a moral imperative based on the fourth commandment*” (emphases added).⁶²

Calvin, in fact, labelled as “false prophets” those who taught that the ceremonial part of the fourth commandment (according to them, the appointment of the seventh day) had been abrogated, but that (according to them) the moral part (the observance of one day in seven) still remains! Here are his words: “...the false prophets, who in later times instilled Jewish ideas into the people, alleging that nothing was abrogated but what was ceremonial in the commandment... while the moral part remains, viz., the observance of one day in seven. But this is nothing else than to insult the Jews, by changing the day, and yet mentally attributing to it the same sanctity; thus retaining the same typical distinction of days as had place among the Jews.”⁶³ What is noteworthy about this is that Calvin, so greatly esteemed by so many “Sunday Sabbatarians”, condemned, in strong language, the *very doctrine* which they hold so dear! And yet do we hear them dismissing Calvin as an Antinomian, as they dismiss those who reject the “Christian Sabbath” doctrine today? Oh no.

He maintained that no day could be held as sacred under the New Testament. He taught that the Lord’s day was the Christian day of worship, Christ having risen on that day and having accomplished the

⁶¹ *The Lord’s Day*, pgs.105-6.

⁶² *The Lord’s Day*, pg.106.

⁶³ *The Whole Doctrine of Calvin About the Sabbath and the Lord’s Day*, pgs.83-4.

spiritual rest symbolised by the Jewish Sabbath; Christ had freed His people from bondage to the law, but there was need for a day on which to worship the Lord, for the sake of order and decency in the Church, and Sunday served this purpose (in this he was wrong, for it is not because of *custom* or *convenience*, but because of what is revealed in the *New Testament*, that we are to assemble on the first day). But he did *not* insist on the Lord's day being a Sabbath – a holy day on which no work could be done. He did not believe it was unlawful for men to work on the first day of the week, but felt that the Lord's day should only be used as a remedy necessary for preserving order in the Church, and as a day for public worship, and as an opportunity for labouring men to rest from their labours.⁶⁴ It was not a Sabbath.⁶⁵

“At Geneva a tradition exists,” wrote James Augustus Hessey in the nineteenth century, “that when John Knox visited Calvin on a Sunday, he found his austere coadjutor bowling on a green. At this day, and in that place, a Calvinist preacher, after his Sunday sermons, will take his seat at the card table.”⁶⁶ We do not by any means endorse card-playing, not on any day of the week whatsoever; but the playing of an innocent game on a Sunday is not in any sense sinful, so long as it does not interfere with the assembly of the saints.

Theodore Beza, Calvin's successor in Geneva, taught that the fourth commandment was abrogated as far as it was ceremonial, that this was “agreed upon among Christians”, and that men were free to labour on Sunday after public worship. He pointed out that the Roman Emperor Constantine, and then the ones that followed him, all claiming to be “Christians” (though of course they were not true children of God), turned the first day of the week into a Sabbath.⁶⁷

As far as the early continental Reformers were concerned, then, although a day for public worship was necessary, the precise day was a

⁶⁴ See Calvin's Commentary on Gal.4:10, and Col.2:16.

⁶⁵ See Calvin's Commentary on 1 Cor.16.

⁶⁶ *Bampton Lectures on Sunday*, pg.366, note 449. Hessey gives as authority for this statement, Disraeli, *Charles the First*, Vol. 2, pg.16; and Strypes, *Life of Bishop Aylmer*, c. xi.

⁶⁷ *On the Song of Solomon*, Homily 30.

matter of indifference; and in fact, they believed that any church, or “State Church”, had the authority to change the day, or abolish it altogether, as it saw fit. They even made it a civil matter, dependent upon the secular authorities for its continuance. In all of this, of course, they were in great error, but it certainly reveals that the Sabbatarian position of Protestants in Great Britain was *not* shared by the early Protestants on the continent of Europe. The following by James Augustus Hessey is a summary of the position of the continental Reformers on the Sabbath/Lord’s day issue:

“And so it was in reference to the Lord’s-day. With one blow, as it were, and with one consent, the Continental Reformers rejected the legal or Jewish title which had been set up for it, the more than Jewish ceremonies and restrictions by which, in theory at least, it had been encumbered; the army of holy days, of obligation by which it had been surrounded. But they did more. They left standing no sanction for the day itself, which could commend itself powerfully to men’s consciences. They did not perceive that, through the Apostles, it was of the Lord’s founding.”

Further: “We are now, I think, in a condition to sum up the views of the Continental Reformers of the sixteenth century on the subject before us. Sabbatarians, indeed, these eminent men were not. They are utterly opposed to the literal application of the fourth commandment to the circumstances of Christians. They scarcely touch upon that commandment, except to show that the Sabbath has passed away.... They feel it necessary to defend their practice on grounds, sometimes perhaps of apostolic example, (with the proviso, however, that such example is to be taken only for what it is worth,) but generally, of antiquity, of the church’s will, of the church’s wisdom, of considerations of expediency, of regard to the weaker brethren, and sometimes on lower grounds still. And neither the day itself, nor the interval at which it recurs, is of obligation. Our Lord’s resurrection is made a decent excuse for the day, rather than the original reason, or one of the original reasons for its institution.”⁶⁸

And Robert Cox states explicitly that Luther, Calvin, Melancthon, Beza, Bucer, Zwingli and others taught “expressly or in effect that the Sabbath was an exclusively Jewish institution, and was never meant for

⁶⁸ *Bampton Lectures on Sunday*, Lecture 6, pgs.165,166,172.

this more advanced age.”⁶⁹

Let it be stated as plainly as can be at this point: although the first day of the week *is* the day for worship, yet in the first place, we do *not agree* with the reasons why the early continental Reformers accepted the first day as the day for public worship. They did so, but not for sound biblical reasons, merely for expediency. In the second place, we are utterly opposed to a number of very serious doctrinal errors in the teachings of these Reformers on other matters, and we do not view them with the reverence and awe with which many Christians view them. We do not believe they deserve such esteem, for in some fundamental points of doctrine they taught nothing less than outright heresy. For these two reasons we have not included any of their writings on the Sabbath/Lord's day matter in the next section of this book.

Nevertheless, the purpose of this historical survey is to demonstrate that there have been large numbers of Protestants who have *not* held to the “Christian Sabbath” doctrine which became so widespread in Britain, and in the British colonies. And regardless of our own personal judgment of these men, the fact remains that they are highly esteemed by *many other* Christians, who are so quick to condemn *us* as Antinomians, Sabbath-breakers, etc. And again the point must be made: why the double standard? Why are *we* so harshly condemned, but not *they*? It can only be because modern-day Protestants are so reluctant to see their “Protestant idols” toppled off their pedestals, that they are willing to ignore the historical facts, directing their guns rather towards *modern-day* Protestants who reject the “Christian Sabbath” idea. We, after all, are viewed as a far easier target. It is far easier to criticise men today, than to criticise the virtually untouchable Protestant Reformers!

A Change Takes Place

With the passing of time, some of the continental Reformers adopted and proclaimed a somewhat different view of the “Christian Sabbath” than the earlier continental Reformers had done. And it was their view that greatly influenced the English Puritans in their teaching of the “Christian Sabbath”.

⁶⁹ *Sabbath Laws and Sabbath Duties*, by Robert Cox, pg.484. Edinburgh, 1853.

The Reformer Henry Bullinger, Zwingli's successor in Zurich, taught that the Sabbath was part of natural and divine law from the creation. He taught a spiritual and continual Sabbath, the believer's rest from sin; but he also taught that Sunday was to be the day of rest for the worship of God, with no secular work being done on the day, nor the pursuing of fleshly pleasures: the Sabbath commandment was ceremonial and abrogated as to the particular day, but moral and eternal as to resting from work one day in seven, and worshipping God. He did not claim that the choice of Sunday was a divine institution (in this of course he was in error), but that it was settled upon by the choice of the early Church.⁷⁰ And he charged the civil magistrate to enforce Sunday observance by law. Here are his words: "The peers of Israel, and all the people of God, did stone to death (as the Lord commanded them) the man that disobediently did gather sticks on the sabbath day. Why then should it not be lawful for a Christian Magistrate to punish by bodily imprisonment, by loss of goods, or by death, the despisers of religion, of the true and lawful worship done to God, and of the sabbath day?"⁷¹

Is this the true doctrine of Christ? Is this the spirit or teaching of the New Testament? By no means! This "State Church" heresy of Bullinger and so many other Reformers is merely the same "State Church" heresy of Roman Catholicism. And there is no denying the fact that their false understanding of the Sabbath fed this monstrous "State Church" concept of theirs. Men may say what they will in praise of these Reformers, but they are denying the obvious: to actually proclaim the death sentence (not to mention the other punishments) for "Sabbath-breaking", and to in any way attempt to reconcile this with the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the New Testament, reveals nothing less than a blindness to Gospel truth. If a professing Christian man, today, commanded that another professing Christian be put to death because he did not believe in a "Christian Sabbath", what would believers everywhere think of such a man? Would they hold him up as a model Christian, a dear brother in Christ, when he condemned another brother in Christ to death for this? Most certainly they would not! Why, then, do they speak so highly of men of past ages who professed Christ, and yet taught such things?

⁷⁰ *The English Sabbath*, pgs.29-31.

⁷¹ *Fiftie Godlie and Learned Sermons*, by Henry Bullinger, pgs.141,143. London, 1577.

The Early English Reformers' Rejection of the "Christian Sabbath" Doctrine

Let us now move on to a study of how the Sabbath/Lord's day issue was understood during and after the English Reformation. As is shown in another part of this book, the godly martyrs William Tyndale and John Frith did not believe that the first day of the week had been made the "Christian Sabbath" by divine institution. When the Papist, Sir Thomas More, wrote against Luther and Tyndale in his book, *Dialogue Concerning Heresies and Matters of Religion*, arguing that the "Church" (i.e. Rome) had the right to sanctify Sunday as the Sabbath rather than Saturday, Tyndale replied in a work entitled *Answer unto Sir Thomas More's Dialogue*, published in 1530. In this book, Tyndale taught that no holy day was necessary at all, if the people might be taught without it; and that if one felt a holy day was needed, this could be on a Monday or any other day of the week; or every tenth day; or there could be two per week, if this were expedient.⁷² The quotation from Tyndale is given later in this book.

Frith, for his part, said that the Sabbath was abrogated, and that it was not necessary to keep any day holy; but that Sunday was the day for the saints to assemble and hear the Word preached. He made it clear that it was not in any sense a Sabbath, and that there is no warrant from God's Word to make it so. He believed it was entirely acceptable for men to do secular work on Sundays after the services had ended.⁷³ The quotation from Frith is given later in this book.

Another Reformer of those times, Robert Barnes, was examined before five bishops in 1526. During this examination, he strongly defended the Christian's liberty to work on Sunday. He stated that the command to cease from work was given only to the Jews. Sadly, to defend his position, he quoted from such heretics as Augustine and Jerome, and even from Pope Gregory the Great (so-called), who had declared that men who taught that one had to cease all work on Sunday were the preachers of

⁷² *The Whole Works of W. Tyndall, John Frith, and Doctor Barnes*, pgs.274,287, London, 1573. Also *Works of the English Reformers*, William Tyndale and John Fryth, Vol.2, pg.101, London, 1831.

⁷³ *Declaration of Baptism*, by John Frith, pg.96. Also *The Whole Works of W. Tyndall, John Frith, and Doctor Barnes*, pg.96.

Antichrist.⁷⁴

Thomas Cranmer, who was burned to death in 1555, taught in his catechism that Christians are not bound to the Jewish Sabbath, but that the magistrates are free to appoint other days as Sabbath days.⁷⁵ In another work of his, Cranmer explained that the outward bodily rest from all labour on the Sabbath day was a ceremonial aspect of the law of the Sabbath, and was abolished by Christ; and the *spiritual* Sabbath – i.e. *inwardly* resting or ceasing from sin – is what men are bound to keep on all days of the week. And he used Col.2:16,17 to prove this. Sadly, he also referred for proof to such men as Augustine and Jerome.⁷⁶

It is evident, then, that some notable early English Reformers rejected the medieval Roman Catholic doctrine of the Sabbath. Later English Reformers came back to that doctrine, copying the “Christian Sabbath” positions of some of the later continental Reformers. The Puritans, many of whom were godly men, greatly erred in this matter. They were convinced that the Lord’s day was to be observed as the “Christian Sabbath”, and they insisted on referring to the day by this term, and not as “Sunday”, which to them smacked of heathenism. Tragically, “in its theocratic form it [i.e. this strict view of Lord’s day rest] threatened Protestantism with the same virus of Pharisaic casuistry that we have deplored in the medieval [i.e. Roman Catholic] Sunday.”⁷⁷ Yet to this day, “Sunday Sabbatarians” refuse to see or acknowledge this.

The “Christian Sabbath” Doctrine in England

In 1537 the *Bishops’ Book* was published. It separated the fourth commandment from the other nine in the decalogue, making the point that the Sabbath commandment was only for the Jews. It taught that what was binding on Christians was a *spiritual* rest from sin. It taught that on Sundays and “holy days”, which the “Church” had appointed, Christians

⁷⁴ *The English Sabbath*, pg.34.

⁷⁵ Catechism, pg.40, Oxford, 1829; also Cox, *Sabbath Literature*, and Hessey, *Bampton Lectures on Sunday*.

⁷⁶ *Miscellaneous Writings*, Confutation of Unwritten Verities, pgs.60-1. Cambridge, 1846.

⁷⁷ *The Lord’s Day*, pg.137.

were to assemble for the corporate worship of God; but it added that Christians were not to be superstitious about ceasing from necessary work on these days. This was, of course, inconsistent. On the one hand, this book taught that the Sabbath commandment was not a moral obligation; but on the other hand, it taught that Sundays and “holy days” were days of rest from all unnecessary labour, and that one offended God if one did not obey this.

In 1543 this book was revised. It was now published as *The Necessary Doctrine and Erudition of a Christian Man*. Although essentially the same as before, the exception was the explanation that Sunday had succeeded the Jewish Sabbath, unlike the “holy days”, which had been appointed by the “Church.” Thus a clear distinction was made between the Lord’s day and “holy days.”⁷⁸

In England during the reign of King Edward VI, it was enacted by parliament that “there should be some certain times and days appointed, wherein the Christians should cease from all kinds of labour, and apply themselves only and wholly unto the aforesaid holy works [worshipping God, hearing God’s Word, and partaking of “holy communion”], properly pertaining to true religion which works, as they may well be called God’s service, so the times especially appointed for the same, are called holy days.” And it was left up to the (Anglican) ministers of the churches to appoint these “holy days.” And the act went on: “Be it therefore enacted, etc., that all the days hereafter mentioned shall be kept, and commanded to be kept holy days, and none other; that is to say, all Sundays in the year, the feasts of the Circumcision of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the Epiphany, of the Purification, with all the rest now kept, and there named particularly, and that none other day shall be kept and commanded to be kept holy day, and to abstain from lawful bodily labour.” In a further clause in the act, labourers were permitted to labour during harvest time, or during any other time “when necessity shall so require.”⁷⁹

Thus was the first day of the week declared, by an act of the English parliament, to be a holy day, in which no labour, except that of necessity, was to be done. It was so legislated, along with various other so-called

⁷⁸ *The English Sabbath*, pgs.36-7.

⁷⁹ *History of the Sabbath*, by Peter Heylyn, part 2, chap.8, sec.2. London, 1636.

“holy days,” which were of no more divine authority than the so-called “Christian Sabbath.”

Edward VI commissioned a bishop named John Poyntet to produce a catechism; and in this catechism a “Sunday Sabbath” doctrine was set forth. It was taught that the “Sabbath day” (i.e. Sunday) was to be kept in a holy manner, as a day of rest and of service to God.⁸⁰

During this period, too, John Hooper, Anglican bishop of Worcester, wrote his *Declaration of the Ten Holy Commandments*, published in 1548. He taught that the fourth commandment contained moral and ceremonial aspects: the day itself was changed to Sunday, but the obligation to observe it as a Sabbath remained. Men, he taught, must rest from secular work and play on this day, and use the entire day for the worship and service of God. He rejected the notion that the “Church” had established Sunday, and stated that it was of divine institution.⁸¹

During the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, “Extreme sabbatarians were censured by both ‘puritan’ leaders and [Anglican] bishops.”⁸² Although the Lord’s day was called a “holy day”, and all English citizens were required by law to go to the services to hear the Word being preached, to pray, etc., yet they were permitted to work, after they had attended the service, during time of harvest, “with a safe and quiet conscience”; “and if for any scrupulosity or grudge of conscience, men should abstain from working on these days, that then they should grievously offend God.” And parliament at that time enacted that all within the queen’s dominions had to attend the services, on Sundays and on other “holy days” appointed by the “Church.”⁸³ Thus Sunday was classed with other so-called “holy days”, none of which had divine sanction. It was not strictly observed as a Sabbath. Sports and plays were indulged in during the evenings and afternoons.

In the late 1550s, the Geneva Bible was produced on the continent by English exiles who had fled England as a result of the persecution under the Papist Queen Mary. This very good translation, only superseded by

⁸⁰ *A Short Catechism*, by John Poyntet. London, 1553.

⁸¹ *The English Sabbath*, pgs.39,40.

⁸² *The English Sabbath*, pg.5.

⁸³ *History of the Sabbath*, part 2, chap.8, sec.4.

the even more accurate Authorised (King James) Version in 1611, was nevertheless filled with the marginal notes of the translators; many of which were very sound, but some of which were not. The translators used these notes to promote “Christian Sabbatarianism”, for example at such places as Exod.31:14, Deut.5:13, and Isa.56:2. Another version of the time, the Bishops’ Bible, taught the same thing in the marginal notes at Exod.20:8-11.

The Puritans of that period wanted the Lord’s day to be observed as the “Christian Sabbath”, and so they preached against plays being performed on Sundays. But ungodly plays should be abhorred at *all* times – not only on Sundays! Their sinfulness lies not in the fact that they are performed on Sundays, but that they are performed at all. Puritan influence in parliament caused a bill to be passed for a more strict observance of the “Christian Sabbath”; but Queen Elizabeth refused to pass it.⁸⁴

It was not only the Puritans of the Elizabethan period, however, who promoted the Sabbatarian doctrine. “Complaints against Sunday abuses and the promotion of this doctrine were not limited to ‘puritans’, but included [Anglican] archbishops Parker, Grindal, Whitgift, and Abbot, as well as Richard Hooker, John Cosin, and many other prominent Church leaders.”⁸⁵

In 1560 Richard Cox, Anglican bishop of Ely, published *Interpretations and Further Considerations of Certain Injunctions*, in which he stipulated that: “On Sunday there be no shops open, no artificers going about their affairs worldly; and that all fair and common marts falling upon Sunday, there be no shewing of any wares before the service be done.” Also in 1560, Thomas Becon published his New Catechism. Building on the works of Hooper and Bullinger on this subject, he claimed that the ceremonial aspect of the fourth commandment was external rest on the Jewish Sabbath, which was abrogated by Christ’s coming; but that Christians were morally bound to assemble for worship on days appointed by Christian rulers, and to cease from all servile labour except works of necessity.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ *History of the Puritans*, by Daniel Neal, Vol.1, pg.176. London, 1822.

⁸⁵ *The English Sabbath*, pg.5.

⁸⁶ *The English Sabbath*, pg.43.

Then in 1563 the Anglican institution approved the second *Book of Homilies*. In the homily entitled “Of the Place and Time of Prayer”, it was stated that “God hath given express charge to all men, that upon the sabbath-day, which is now our Sunday, they should cease from all weekly and work-day labour... and... give themselves wholly to heavenly exercises of God’s true religion and service.” And the fact that God rested after six days’ labour was used to support this teaching. It also stated that “God’s people hath always, in all ages, without any gainsaying, used to come together upon the Sunday, to celebrate and honour the Lord’s blessed name, and carefully to keep that day in holy rest and quietness.” This was only partly true, of course: it is historically inaccurate to claim that Christians everywhere, and in all ages, had observed Sunday as a Sabbath.

The homily called upon “violators” of the “Sunday Sabbath” to “repent and amend this grievous and dangerous wickedness”, and again emphasised (incorrectly) that this had been the practice since apostolic times.⁸⁷

The importance of this homily in influencing the public cannot be over-emphasised. It did more to impress upon the people the “Sunday Sabbath” view of the Lord’s day than any other publication at that time, for it was essentially official Anglican teaching. The *Book of Homilies* was read in parishes, and “thousands of Englishmen grew up and lived their lives with the weekly sound of its contents droning past their ears and occasionally impressing its teaching upon their minds.”⁸⁸

In 1563 as well, legislation was commended to parliament by the upper house of the (Anglican) Convocation which stated that those who held patents for Sunday fairs and markets should be required to change the dates, and any buyer or seller who broke this law was to forfeit half the goods, with three-time offenders being imprisoned for two weeks without bail. Fortunately this bill never passed parliament; but it was enthusiastically supported by Anglican bishop Grindal and Anglican archbishop Parker.⁸⁹ Here again we see yet another example of religious

⁸⁷ *The English Sabbath*, pgs.44-46.

⁸⁸ *Elizabeth and the English Reformation*, by William Haugaard, pg.276. Cambridge, 1968.

⁸⁹ *The English Sabbath*, pgs.60-1.

authorities seeking the support of the secular authorities to enforce their false doctrines and religious practices. This in itself is wickedness, even apart from the unjust nature of their cause in this particular case. It is the “State Church” mentality of Roman Catholicism, manifesting itself time and time again in so-called “Protestant” circles. It is the utterly unchristian notion that Christianity must be supported by the secular authority.

In addition to the *Homilies*, there was the *Catechism* of Alexander Nowell, endorsed by the Anglican institution in 1563 and published in 1570, the officially approved catechism for schools and parishes. This, too, stated that men were to treat Sunday as a day of rest.⁹⁰ Nowell, in his sermon at the opening of parliament in 1563, said, “the Lord’s day, which now is so diversely abused, is to be looked unto [by parliament]: for on that day, taverns, alehouses, and other unruly places be full, but the Lord’s house empty; which crime before this hath been punished with death [i.e. in Old Testament times]”; and he desired a law to be passed to rectify this.⁹¹ What unscriptural theology! First, he believed that it was the secular authorities’ duty to enforce “Sabbath-keeping”, something totally contrary to the New Testament, but an essential part of the diabolical “State Church” concept. Second, in his lament that church buildings were empty on the Lord’s day, whereas alehouses, etc., were full, there is a clear implication that people should be *forced* to attend services by legislation – again, a concept totally contrary to scriptural truth, for men are to be *persuaded*, by preaching attended by the power of the Holy Spirit, to repent and believe in Christ, and attend His worship, and not to be *forced* into church buildings by State legislation. *This is nothing less than Popery in a Protestant form.* Third, he appeared to imply that the death penalty for failure to attend a service would not be a bad thing. And fourth, he lamented the fact that “unruly places” were full on the Lord’s day, as if attending such places on the Lord’s day was somehow more sinful than attending them on any other day. Nothing is more calculated to create, in the minds of the public, the idea that Christianity is a “one day a week religion” than such nonsensical statements as this;

⁹⁰ *The English Sabbath*, pgs.46-7.

⁹¹ *A Catechism*, by Alexander Nowell, pg.226. Cambridge, 1853.

and yet we find “Christian Sabbath” proponents making such statements over and over again.

Nevertheless, and very significantly, there were many disputes, and much disagreement, over such things as the institution of Sunday as the Lord’s day; which activities were acceptable, and which were not, on the “Sabbath”; and what penalties could be meted out to “Sabbath-breakers.”⁹² This is significant because it again demonstrates that the Sabbath commandment was not a moral commandment, but rather a ceremonial one. After all, are there any disagreements over such moral commandments as “Thou shalt have no other gods before me”, or “Thou shalt not commit adultery”, or “Thou shalt not kill”? No. But when it comes to the fourth commandment of the decalogue, those who have taught that it is the “Christian Sabbath” have always been divided over how it should be observed, how “Sabbath-breakers” should be punished, etc. This speaks volumes to those willing to listen.

During the Elizabethan period, the writers of the time did not emphasise that Sunday was to be observed because it was a *divinely appointed* day; but they asserted that Christians were to observe it because the “*Church*” had appointed it as a memorial of the resurrection of Christ. This was good enough for them.⁹³ But of course this is simply *not* good enough for any Christian wanting to establish what *God’s Word* says. Appeals to ancient tradition do not satisfy the child of God who wants to obey his Lord, not the teachings of men.

Most Sabbatarian writers of the 1560s and 1570s condemned any form of trading on Sunday. Some, however, saw nothing wrong with markets and fairs, provided these were held after the services were over. Some also saw nothing wrong with certain sports and recreational activities on Sundays. Clearly, then, there was division over how the day should be spent. And the reason for this is simple: *the New Testament is silent*. They could not appeal to a single New Testament text to define what was permitted, and what was not, on Sundays. And many were clearly uncomfortable (as well they might be!) with appealing to Old Testament Sabbath passages.

⁹² *The English Sabbath*, pg.48.

⁹³ *The English Sabbath*, pgs.49-50.

As for condemning sinful amusements such as worldly plays and dancing, many of the Protestant preachers and writers of the period raised their voices and pens in angry indignation against these things being done on the so-called “Christian Sabbath”—but these things should be condemned as sinful on *any* day of the week! Richard Cox railed against fairs, visiting friends, feasting, dancing, lewd games, piping, etc., on Sundays.⁹⁴ But dancing and lewd games are sinful on *any* day of the week; and as for visiting friends on a Sunday, such an absurd prohibition cannot be supported even by the most imaginative twisting and distorting of Holy Scripture!

As for the penalties to be imposed on “Sabbath-breakers”, there was much disagreement – again for the same reason, that the New Testament is silent because the Lord’s day is not a Sabbath. But many of the writers and preachers of the period could not see this. Thomas Cartwright, for example, argued that the judicial laws of Moses, given by God to Israel, were binding on “Christian princes”. He, and others, argued that “Sabbath-breakers” (i.e. those who did not observe Sunday as a Sabbath) should suffer the *death penalty*. And Humphrey Roberts stated that “if one do steal, or commit murder, the laws of the Realm doth punish with death. But for Idolatry, swearing, and breaking of the Sabbath day, there is no punishment. And yet, the same God which said: Thou shalt not steal, said also... Thou shalt remember to keep holy the Sabbath day.”⁹⁵ This utterly unscriptural notion was later to greatly influence the laws of the New World colonies, as shall presently be seen. It is true that this view was opposed by many others at the time; but this simply serves to again illustrate the point that has been made before, that there was no unanimity on these matters. And again it must be stated: this was because this entire doctrine was a man-made one, without New Testament sanction or support.

Trying to enforce these absurd regulations was a monumental task. Anglican bishops made enquiries about Sunday church attendance, working on Sundays, playing on Sundays, etc.; and the churchwardens had to search out who was transgressing, and to submit reports to the bishops. In the 1560s a fine was imposed for non-attendance at the

⁹⁴ *The English Sabbath*, pg.62.

⁹⁵ *The English Sabbath*, pgs.57-8.

services. In the 1570s, churchwardens were actually commanded to leave the services themselves, and to hunt for any who might be absent from the services, and report them. Moreover, parish officials were themselves watched, to make certain they were carrying out this work diligently. It led to many abuses, with the system being used to settle old scores against one's enemies, reporting them for "crimes" they may not have committed.

This unscriptural, absurd, even wicked practice stemmed directly from the false concept of the "State Church": that every Englishman and Englishwoman (as far as the Anglican authorities were concerned) should really be forced to be a member of the so-called "Church of England." But of course this simply was not the reality: there were many Protestants in England who were not Anglicans, and there were Roman Catholics as well. They, very naturally, objected to this system, and did not attend Anglican places of worship.

"Sabbath" (i.e. Sunday) bills were read at parliament in 1571, 1572, 1576, and 1581, their main purpose being to put pressure on recusant Roman Catholics for failing to attend Anglican church services! They failed in the first three parliamentary sessions because Queen Elizabeth vetoed them, contrary to the wishes of both secular and "church" authorities. The 1571 bill stated that every man born and residing within the Realm was to attend the service on every festival day. Enforced attendance for every Englishman, regardless of their personal religious beliefs – and they called this Christianity! What a mockery of the true Gospel, and of the true method of preaching the Gospel!

Finally, in 1581, a bill on "Sabbath" attendance at "church" was passed into law, directed specifically at recusant Romanists. It was one thing to recognise the seditious works of Papists and to suppress their activities, for this was for the good of the Realm as the Papists were constantly working against the queen; but it was quite another thing to enforce attendance at Anglican places of worship, with penalties imposed for non-attendance. A government has the right and duty to suppress and punish all who seek to destroy it, but no right or duty whatsoever to enforce religious observance. This bill imposed a fine, on Romanists who failed to attend Anglican services, of twenty pounds for the first

month, forty pounds for the second, 100 pounds for the third, and the pains of praemunire for the fourth. The fine imposed on non-Romanists who failed to attend was ten pounds for the first month, twenty pounds for the second, and forty pounds for the third. Although Queen Elizabeth only allowed the bill to pass into law after the provisions had been somewhat moderated, they still remained very severe: a fine of twenty pounds for every month of absence from Anglican services for the first twelve months, and thereafter an additional fine of 200 pounds.⁹⁶

In 1572, Humphrey Roberts published his *Earnest Complaint of Divers Vain, Wicked and Abused Exercises, Practised on the Saboth Day*. In this, he insisted that “Sabbath-breakers” should be punished in some way; and he condemned the following pastimes on the Lord’s day: drinking, swearing, brawling, plays, bearbaiting, bullbaiting, dicing, bowling, ales, fencing, card-playing, and dancing. Pastimes which are sinful, are sinful on *any* day of the week, and should be condemned as such. They are not sinful because practised on the Lord’s day, but because practised *at all*. Here we have yet another example of how this misguided, unscriptural “Sunday Sabbath” doctrine led to a false doctrine of sin, and the promotion of a “Sunday Christian” mentality that persists in many “Reformed” circles to this very day.

Furthermore, when accidents happened to people on the Lord’s day who were playing sport or indulging in other pastimes, whether good or bad, “Sunday Sabbatarian” preachers were quick to view them as God’s judgments for “Sabbath-breaking.” If the same things happened to people on any other day of the week, they were not necessarily viewed as divine judgments, but if they occurred on a Sunday, they were.⁹⁷ Such pathetic doctrine, without any scriptural support whatsoever!

Although “Christian Sabbatarianism” was the authorised Anglican doctrine at this time, it was not without its opponents, and debates around the issue continued. Even amongst “Sunday Sabbatarians” within Anglicanism, debates swirled about the divine institution of Sunday, with some arguing that the “Church” was free to change the day as it pleased, and others insisting that the observance of Sunday was a divine

⁹⁶ *The English Sabbath*, pgs.78-9.

⁹⁷ *The English Sabbath*, pgs.86,88-9.

institution. Debate also swirled around the use of Sunday, with “Sunday Sabbatarians” disagreeing over how to measure the length of the Lord’s day, how strictly the “Sabbath rest” should be enforced, precisely which works were permitted and which were not, etc. These disagreements and differences are not at all surprising: where Scripture is silent, men can do nothing else but invent their own rules and regulations if they want to promote a particular teaching, and then of course one man’s rules and regulations will differ from another, for every man will do that which is right in his own eyes.

Interestingly, “While there were disputes over this rest, almost all sabbatarians recognized a degree of liberty. They agreed that Christians need not refrain from preparing food, kindling fires, or work in times of great necessity; for this strictness was regarded as superstitious.”⁹⁸ But these inconsistent “Sunday Sabbatarians” allowed far more liberty than the biblical Sabbath commandment allowed! For kindling fires, even for the purpose of preparing food on the Sabbath, was an activity expressly forbidden on the Sabbath. Thus in effect, for all their talk about “keeping the fourth commandment”, these “Sunday Sabbatarians” were *not* keeping it at all! The fourth commandment very precisely says “the *seventh day* is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God”, yet they had changed it to the *first* day; *and* furthermore, they did not observe it in the way prescribed in the law. Thus they had changed both the *day*, and the *manner of observing it*! And yet they spoke of “observing the Sabbath”! If the day is no longer the only Sabbath day God ever gave to any men, and the manner of observing it is no longer the only way of observing it which God ever commanded, then the only conclusion we can reach is that *it is not Sabbath observance*!

In 1589, certain Presbyterians in Cambridge wanted to implement the judicial laws of Moses, including the Old Testament punishment for “Sabbath-breaking”: death.

In 1595 a book was published by a Puritan named Nicholas Bownde, *The Doctrine of the Sabbath, plainly laid forth and soundly proven*. In this work, Bownde set forth the Puritan doctrine of Sunday. Although he spent much time arguing that the Sabbath should still be kept by

⁹⁸ *The English Sabbath*, pgs.107-8.

Christians, he then went on to state that the day had been changed to Sunday, giving, as his only scriptural support for this claim, Acts 20:7 and 1 Cor.16:1,2. Indeed, these two passages, along with Rev.1:10, are the *only ones* in the New Testament to which “Sunday Sabbatarians” have ever been able to point to justify their contention that the apostles observed the Lord’s day as a Sabbath. And yet there is not a word about the Sabbath in these three passages!

In 1603, James I of Scotland ascended the throne in England; and a thousand ecclesiastical ministers sent him a “Millenary Petition”, urging him to enforce better “Sabbath” observance. Accordingly the king issued the following proclamation in May 1603: “We are informed that there hath been heretofore great neglect in the kingdom of keeping the Sabbath day: For better observing of the same, and avoiding all impious prophanation, we do straightly charge and command, that no bear-baiting, Bull baiting, Enterludes, Common Plays, or other like disorders or unlawful Exercises or Pastimes, be frequented, kept, or used at any time, hereafter upon the Sabbath-day.” Not many days later, he commanded lieutenants and justices of the peace to prevent the “Sabbath” from being profaned by such things as “piping, dancing, bowling”, etc. And various Anglican bishops were very forward to enforce strict “Sabbath” observance at this time, as indeed they had been in the preceding years, and to threaten offenders with serious punishment.⁹⁹

In 1606, a bill on “Sabbath” observance provided for the punishment of abusers: violators were to be fined ten shillings, or be put in the stocks for three hours *on a Sunday*! So these ecclesiastical leaders, such sticklers for so-called “Sabbath-observance”, were willing to punish an offender *on* the very “Sabbath” they were so keen to keep from profanation! The bill, however, was not passed. King James was not as keen as the Anglican bishops to see such nonsense become law.

As an example of just how absurd the entire issue became, consider the following: in 1617 a Nicholas Ruddock and a Katheren Canker were convicted of conceiving a child after a dance held on a Sunday. Their punishment was to be “whipped through the high street of Glaston... until their bodies shall be both bloody and that there shall be during the time of

⁹⁹ *The English Sabbath*, pgs.116-121.

their whipping two fiddles playing before them in regard to make known their lewdness in begetting the said-base child upon the Sabbath day coming from dancing.”¹⁰⁰ Fornication is sinful on any day of the week, and lewd dancing too, but they were punished so severely because the child was conceived *on a Sunday*. In the minds of the judges, this fact greatly aggravated their sin.

In 1617, King James was travelling through Lancashire when he was presented with a petition by some people who said that they were prevented, by the county magistrates, from enjoying lawful recreations on Sundays. The king soon afterwards declared in a speech that lawful recreations could certainly be enjoyed on Sundays. Next, he had a book published, known as the *Book of Sports*, in which he stated that his subjects were free, after they had attended the service in the morning, to enjoy what he called “lawful recreations.” Some of these were certainly unlawful at *any* time for Christians, such as dancing, while others were perfectly innocent. But this caused a stir among many Puritans. Some Puritans saw nothing wrong with the use of recreations after the service on a Sunday, but others were appalled by the idea.¹⁰¹ And in a postscript to the book, James stated that all preachers were required to instruct the people concerning the lawfulness of recreations on Sundays; anyone refusing to prepare food on Sunday, or refusing to allow others to do so, was to be reported for this error. “This was the first blow, in effect, which had been given, in all his time, to the new *Lord’s-day* Sabbath, then so much applauded.”¹⁰² It was a royal blow to English “Sabbatarian” Puritanism.

Unfortunately, once this book was published, many “lewd fellows of the baser sort” (Acts 17:5) used it as an excuse to disrupt church services: for example, in one instance some played drums and fired guns right under the windows of a church building. There were cases in many parts of the country of services being disturbed by such hooligans. “Sunday Sabbatarians” might argue that this was the inevitable result of the king’s

¹⁰⁰ *The English Sabbath*, pg.183.

¹⁰¹ *The English Sabbath*, pgs.5,6.

¹⁰² *History of the Sabbath*, part 2, chap.8, sec.10. See also *The English Sabbath*, pgs.149-154.

lax approach to the “Sabbath”; but this is simply not true. The only way such a position can be maintained, is if one also maintains that it is the State’s duty to regulate “Sabbath” observance. But the idea that the State should in any way interfere in ecclesiastical affairs is completely unscriptural. The fact that those hooligans deliberately made such a racket outside a place where others were gathered for worship was grounds for dealing with them as disturbers of the public peace, certainly; but had nothing whatsoever to do with the king’s lax attitude to the so-called “Christian Sabbath.” Christianity does not need the protection of the State! Christians are to worship on the Lord’s day, but it is completely unscriptural to insist that legislation be passed to force *others* to attend services as well, *or* to insist that legislation be passed to force others to observe Sunday as certain Christians want it to be observed! This reveals a “Christian country” mentality that is utterly at variance with the New Testament. Unfortunately, it is a mentality that prevails to this day in certain parts of the Western world.

Many ecclesiastical leaders viewed King James as a promoter of wickedness for issuing this book: not only Puritans, but many non-Puritans as well. And although the king had decreed that his book was to be read during church services, many ministers simply refused to do so. In this of course they were right, as the work of a mere man is not appropriate for reading in services, even if he be a king, unless it be a sermon, an exposition of God’s Word, by a true man of God, which this book manifestly was not. The Anglican archbishop, Abbot, forbade the book from being read from the pulpit in his presence; furthermore, the king was persuaded by him to rescind this foolish order.¹⁰³

The king’s *Book of Sports* was vigorously opposed in parliament by ecclesiastical leaders and others. In the 1621 parliament a bill was delivered for the punishment of “Sabbath” abusers. The bill was passed, but King James refused to give his assent to it. In the 1624 parliament the bill was again passed, but again King James vetoed it, saying the bill was “but to give the Puritans their will, who think all consists in two sermons a day and will allow no recreation to poor men that labour hard

¹⁰³ *The English Sabbath*, pgs.158-160.

all the week long to ease themselves on the Sunday”.¹⁰⁴ The king and parliament were very wrong to assume that all men should be *compelled* to attend a service on Sunday; but the king was right in wanting to allow his subjects time for recreation on that day. We live in an age when men have a lot of recreation time, but this was not the case in the seventeenth century, indeed in all previous centuries. The labouring poor worked hard through the week, without intermission, and Sunday was their only day off. In saying this we are not for one moment advocating that Christians are free to ignore the assembling of the saints on the Lord’s day and spend the entire day in recreation! The true Christian, who loves his Lord and His worship, will always make it his absolute priority to obey the Scriptures and assemble with the Lord’s people on the first day of the week, to worship Him. If a professing Christian chooses rather to skip the services of the church so as to go and play sport, or indulge in some other recreation on that day, then he is sinning against the Lord, and such behaviour brings his very profession of faith into question. But on almost no occasion does a Christian service last for an entire day, and nor should it, as even such delightful service as the worship of the Lord would prove to be too wearying to the physical constitutions of men were it to extend to such a length on a regular basis; and thus, although the Christian delights to join with his brethren and worship the Lord on that day, he is free to use whatever part of the day is *not* employed in the worship of the Lord for other purposes. Besides, again, it is simply not the duty of the secular authorities to compel *anyone* to attend a service *at all!* Why should professing Christians be forced to attend a service? – if they truly love the Lord, they will attend because they want to, and because this is the will of the Lord. And why should those who are *not* professing Christians be forced to attend a service? This is “Church-State union” error at its worst: the idea that everyone residing within a particular country should be compelled to attend a church.

In the early 1600s, under the influence of John Traske, who had been ordained as an Anglican minister, *Saturday* “Sabbatarians” arose in England. They believed that the Sabbath was to be observed on Saturday, as the Jews of the Old Testament had done. Certainly he

¹⁰⁴ *The English Sabbath*, pgs.170-5.

and his followers held to some strange views, although in the matter of Sabbath observance they were at least far more consistent than any “Sunday Sabbatarian”, for the only day that has *ever* been a Sabbath ordained by God is the seventh day of the week. They erred in this matter in that they did not understand that Sabbath observance has been abolished for New Testament believers. But as has happened so often in history, “Sunday Sabbatarians” persecuted Traske for his views: he was imprisoned in 1615. When he was sentenced in 1618, he was punished “For writing presumptuous letters to the King, wherein he much slandered his Majesty, and for slandering the proceedings of the Lord Bishops in the high Commission, and for maintaining Jewish opinions.” Note that last one! Slandering the king certainly may have deserved punishment, but “maintaining Jewish opinions” (this would have included observing Saturday as a “Sabbath”)? His punishment was to be imprisoned for life, degraded from the Anglican ministry, fined a thousand pounds, publicly whipped, and to have one ear nailed to the pillory and his forehead burnt with the letter “J.” Such was the so-called “Christianity” of those “Sunday Sabbatarians” in positions of power in England at that time! Such was the mentality of those who criticised and punished Traske for “maintaining Jewish opinions”, and yet who maintained such opinions *themselves* by maintaining that England should be governed as a “theocracy” as Old Testament Israel had been, when Sabbath-breakers were punished and only one religion was allowed. In Old Testament Israel this was the will of God; in England in the seventeenth century of the Christian era this most certainly was not. And so we have the extraordinary situation of one set of Judaizing “Christians” persecuting another set of Judaizing “Christians”, all the while thinking this was God’s holy will.

Is it any wonder that under such torture and pressure Traske, a year and a half later, recanted his errors and published *A Treatise of Liberty from Judaism*, in which he taught that *Sunday* observance was now, by divine appointment, the way to fulfil the morality of the fourth commandment of the decalogue? Nothing like imprisonment, a fine, a whipping, an ear-nailing, and a forehead-branding to make one see the error of one’s ways! He was released from prison and was permitted to preach. His wife, however, remained committed to his previous opinions, and remained in prison until she died. So did one of his

followers, Returne Hebdon.¹⁰⁵

Protestant “Sunday Sabbatarians” always (rightly) exposed the fact that the Roman Catholic institution established doctrines without any scriptural support; and yet on the matter of “Sunday Sabbath” observance, these Protestants were guilty of doing precisely the same thing! – a glaring inconsistency which was gleefully pointed out by a Jesuit priest, John Falconer, in his *Briefe Refutation of John Traske’s Judaical and Novel Fancies*, published in 1618. He wrote of the Protestant William Crashawe that although he railed “against Catholikes for admitting traditions and pointes of faith not containd in Scripture, he supposeth without further proof, that Christ in conversation with his Apostles after his resurrection taught our keeping of the Sunday in place of the Sabaoth.” He also pointed out that Traske, correctly seeing this inconsistency, had accused his “Sunday Sabbatarian” opponents of fighting “against him with the Catholikes borrowed weapons”!¹⁰⁶ In this, it must be acknowledged, both Traske and the Jesuit were right. How tragic that a Jesuit priest could see what many Protestants were seemingly blind to – and still are. They fail to discern that in promoting a doctrine without any New Testament support, they play right into the hands of the Papists. How can they successfully condemn the Papist practice of establishing doctrines which have no scriptural support, when they are guilty of doing precisely the same thing? A discerning Papist will see right through such inconsistency, as this Jesuit did.

Equally tragic is when Protestants cite Roman Catholic authors in defence of their “Christian Sabbath” stance. And yet this is something which has been going on for centuries, and still is! We find Protestant authors citing such Papist “authorities” as Thomas Aquinas, for example,¹⁰⁷ among others. When Protestants have to resort to this tactic, it is solid evidence that they have no scriptural basis for their case.

¹⁰⁵ *The English Sabbath*, pgs.161-4.

¹⁰⁶ *A Briefe Refutation of John Traskes Judaical and Novel Fancies*, by John Falconer, pgs.11,12. Published in 1618.

¹⁰⁷ For example, *The Doctrine of the Sabbath*, by John Prideaux, pgs.12,19. London, 1634.

James' son, Charles I, came to power in 1625. At the 1625 parliament, the "Lord's day" bill which King James had vetoed in 1624 was again passed, and Charles assented to it, so that it finally became law. Then in 1626 a new bill was passed, and Charles assented to it at the next parliament. This act was for "the further Reformation of sundry Abuses committed on the Lord's Day", and forbade travelling on Sunday and various occupations, such as those of butchers, carriers, waggoners, cattle-drovers, etc. It is surprising that Charles assented to these bills, but he did so for political reasons. He was later to republish his father's declarations concerning lawful sports for Sundays. This so incensed the Puritan ministers that many refused to read these declarations from their pulpits as the king had decreed, and they were deposed.¹⁰⁸ They were persecuted by Anglican archbishop, William Laud, who played an important role in re-issuing the *Book of Sports*. Let us see what happened.

When, in 1633, the mayor of London forbade a poor woman from selling apples on the Lord's day, Laud insisted that she could continue to do so. He did this because he was incensed that the mayor had interfered in his (Laud's) jurisdiction.

Laud convinced Charles to re-issue the *Book of Sports*, which he did on 18 October 1633. In his preface, Charles stated that the people were free to make use of lawful recreations on Sundays, after the services were over. Bishops were ordered to make his publication known everywhere. Many ministers of a "Sabbatarian" persuasion were deeply offended by this, and refused to read it from the pulpit, and in fact preached against its contents. They faced two stark choices: they could go into exile, or stay and be persecuted for their stand. Some left the country; others stayed.¹⁰⁹

Anglican leaders suppressed those ministers who rejected the Book of Sports, and also stopped licensing books promoting the doctrine of a "Christian Sabbath."

Those ministers who refused to read the king's *Book of Sports* from their pulpits would have been correct in thus refusing, if they had done so for the biblical reason that no earthly king has the right to interfere in any

¹⁰⁸ *History of the Puritans*, Vol.1, pg.312.

¹⁰⁹ *The English Sabbath*, pgs.189-195.

church and command what should be preached or read from the pulpit. But sadly their reason for refusing was their “Lord’s Day/Christian Sabbath” theology. The tragedy and the irony of this is that the Puritan doctrine of the “Christian Sabbath” led to the persecution of those who refused to accept this doctrine, for when Puritans were in government they enforced “Sunday observance” by law, and punished those who (as they thought) “broke the Sabbath”; but now the *Puritans themselves* were being persecuted for refusing to accept the king’s legislation! The Puritans’ false view of Church and State led them to think that England was a “Christian nation” (no country on earth is), and that the doctrines and laws of Christianity (as they conceived of them) should be *enacted by law*, and *enforced* upon the entire populace. In this they greatly erred, demonstrating at this point an Old Testament mentality, not a New Testament understanding of either Church or State. For the Church is not all the people in a given country, and yet they wanted all citizens to be forced to behave as Christians.

One minister, Edward Williams, in the wake of these events, preached that “it were a most dreadful thing and near damnable, if not absolutely damnation to use any recreations on the Sabbath or Lord’s day.”¹¹⁰ A blatantly false, unscriptural statement! But a sentiment doubtless shared by others, and an extreme to which one can easily go when once scriptural truth and sound exegesis are set aside.

Various anti-“Sabbatarian” works appeared after the *Book of Sports* was re-issued: works by Peter Heylyn, Francis White, John Pocklington, David Primrose, Robert Sanderson, Christopher Dow, etc. Although often containing accurate and true statements, demonstrating that the Sabbath law was not moral but ceremonial, and thus no longer binding, these men were still Anglicans, committed to the doctrine of the “Church of England”, and usually in support of Laud, and thus their works were also full of unscriptural statements. Heylyn’s massive *History of the Sabbath*, published in 1636, was certainly the most influential.

In a work published in 1636 and entitled *A Divine Tragedy*, Anglican “Sunday Sabbatarian” Henry Burton listed 55 supposed examples of

¹¹⁰ *The English Sabbath*, pg.195.

God's judgments upon "Sabbath-breakers" since the *Book of Sports* had been re-issued. For example, fourteen young men played football on the ice of the River Trent on the Lord's day on the 25th January 1634, and were all drowned when the ice broke. This was taken as divine judgment upon them for "breaking the Sabbath." But this is simply ridiculous. Men have fallen through ice on all days of the week throughout history! When men have to resort to "evidence" such as this to prop up their doctrine, they are like drowning men clutching at straws. Yet the book was full of lame examples such as this one.

Burton accused Laud and his supporters of introducing novelties which showed them up as promoting a Popish plot against the "Church of England." In truth, history shows that Laud and others *were* seeking to promote Popery and overturn the Anglican institution, and their anti-"Sabbatarian" position was just one of their assaults upon Anglicanism; but in seeking to overturn Anglicanism, they were seeking to assault every possible aspect of it, whether scriptural or not. It would be a mistake to assume that merely because Laud and others were pushing a Popish agenda, *everything* on the other side was scriptural! Anglicanism has always been a terrible mixture of truth and error. Besides, even if the "Church of England" had jettisoned its "Christian Sabbath" teaching, this would not have strengthened the Papist position in the least. Neither Anglicanism, nor indeed Protestantism, would collapse if "Christian Sabbatarianism" were rejected. This is a terrible error made by many "Sunday Sabbatarians", who have assumed that biblical Christianity cannot exist unless the so-called "Christian Sabbath" is upheld. In fact, if all true Protestants would reject the "Christian Sabbath" error, they would more consistently be able to *oppose* Popery, for as pointed out previously, Papists can, and have, pointed to the "Christian Sabbath" doctrine and accused Protestants of inconsistency and hypocrisy in condemning the Papists' use of unscriptural teachings having no support except in human tradition, when they are guilty of the very same thing!

Burton, Prynne and one John Bastwick were arrested and charged with producing books which slandered the hierarchy. Laud used the opportunity to wreak vengeance on these enemies of his: Burton was deprived of his benefice, degraded from the ministry, fined 5000 pounds, set in a pillory, his ears were cut off, and he was imprisoned for life. The

other two were sentenced along similar lines.¹¹¹

While utterly condemning such shocking persecution of these men, it must not be forgotten, as shown over and over here, that “Sunday Sabbatarians”, when *they* held the reins of power, were often *as* forward to persecute those who rejected the idea of a “Christian Sabbath”, as these Papistical anti-“Sabbatarians” were to persecute *them*.

Burton was a hero to tens of thousands, who thronged him as he went to the pillory. Then in 1640, the House of Commons dropped the charges against him and he was freed. Again, on his homeward journey, large crowds thronged him and expressed their support. This was to a large extent because of the fear many had, with just reason, that Laud was seeking to take the country back to Popery. “While Laud had meant to make an example of Burton and his associates, they became instead symbols of resistance to Laudian innovations. The most obvious vindication of their struggle was their defence of the Sabbath – which became the standard of those who soon ruled the nation.”¹¹² Yes, and let it be added yet again: when *they* (the “Sunday Sabbatarians”) ruled the nation, they then persecuted the anti-“Sabbatarians”! As shall be seen below.

From 1641 onwards, when “Sunday Sabbatarians” were in power in England, a stricter observance of the Lord’s day as the “Christian Sabbath” was enforced. The House of Commons resolved, on 8 September 1641, that “the Lord’s day should be duly observed and sanctified; that all dancing, or other sports either before or after divine service be forborne and restrained; and that the preaching [of] God’s word be promoted in the afternoon.”¹¹³ Officers of the peace actually patrolled in the streets to make certain that everyone was attending religious services! Walking in the fields, or travelling, was not allowed. Thus again, “Sabbath-keeping” was enforced by law, as if England were the equivalent of Old Testament theocratic Israel. This was completely contrary to both the spirit and doctrine of the New Testament.

In 1642-3 the mayor of London was ordered to put into execution the

¹¹¹ *The English Sabbath*, pgs.206-210.

¹¹² *The English Sabbath*, pgs.213-4.

¹¹³ *History of the Puritans*, Vol.2, pg.419.

statutes for the observance of the Lord's day as a "Sabbath". This he accordingly did, commanding his aldermen to charge all church wardens and constables that "they do not permit or suffer any person or persons, in time of divine service, or at any time on the Lord's-day, to be tippling in any tavern, inn, tobacco shop, ale house or other victualing house whatsoever; nor suffer any fruiterers, or herb-women to stand with fruit, herbs or other victuals or wares in any streets, lanes or alleys, or any other ways to put things for sale at any time of that day, or in the evening of it; or any milk woman to cry milk; nor to suffer any persons to unlade any vessels of fruit or other goods, and carry them on shore; or to use any unlawful exercises or pastimes; and to give express charge to all inn keepers, taverns, cook shops, ale houses, etc., within their wards, not to entertain any guests to tipple, eat, drink or take tobacco in their houses on the Lord's-day, except inn-keepers, who may receive their ordinary guests, or travellers who come for the dispatch of their necessary business; and if any persons offend in the premises, they are to be brought before the Lord Mayor or one of his Majesty's justices of the peace to be punished as the law directs."¹¹⁴

Thus did "Sabbath-breaking" become an offence punishable by law; and thus did England attempt to return to a fallacious "Old Testament" theocracy in the name of New Testament Christianity! It was a fallacy, because *only* Israel was *ever* a true theocracy, and it was never of the Lord that any other nation should attempt to somehow re-create the situation that prevailed in Israel under the law of Moses. The very thought of the civil authorities punishing so-called "Sabbath-breakers" (who were not such at all, given that the Lord's day is not a Sabbath) is repugnant to the very doctrine and spirit of Christ and the apostles.

Not only that, but it did not seem to occur to these Judaizing Puritans that for a Christian "to be tippling in any tavern, inn, tobacco shop, ale house or other victualing house" was a sin on *any* day of the week, not only the Lord's day! They were horrified that men were doing these things on the Lord's day, but what about the rest of the week? Sin is sin, any time it is committed. And this has frequently been the rotten fruit of "Christian Sabbatarianism": it has the tendency to make men into "one day a week" Christians, who appear very pious on the first day but

¹¹⁴ *History of the Puritans*, Vol.1, pg.454.

who live worldly lives the rest of the week. Certainly there are many godly men of whom this cannot be said; but there is no denying that this doctrine leads to such practice, in the lives of a great many. Many “Sunday Sabbatarians” will refrain from watching ungodly movies on a Sunday, but happily indulge in them during the rest of the week. They will spend much time in reading the Bible on a Sunday, but readily devour ungodly novels during the rest of the week. They will watch their tongues, be careful how they behave towards their wives and children, and all kinds of other things, on Sunday, but let their guard down for the rest of the week.

On 5 May 1643, parliament issued an order that the *Book of Sports* was to be publicly burned by the hangman (an act displaying a closer conformity to Romanism than they would have admitted), and all copies had to be delivered to the authorities.

In April 1644, another Sunday enactment was made by the Puritan parliament. Once again, it was enacted that no one was permitted to sell any wares in the streets, or the goods would be forfeited. Any person travelling without cause would be fined ten shillings, and any person carrying a burden, or doing any worldly labour, would be fined five shillings. And any person attending or participating in any sports event, market, or dance, would be fined five shillings. And if any fine could not be levied, the offending party was to be placed in the stocks for three hours! Note that the “Sabbath” legislation was growing harsher. Such is the fruit of a “State Church” mentality: such a monstrosity always leads to persecution of those who differ with the religion enjoying State protection.

Ah, but the same parliament allowed private families to dress their meat for dinner, and allowed the selling of victuals in a moderate way in inns, etc., for those who could not otherwise be provided for; and allowed milk-women to cry aloud and sell their milk before nine in the morning, and after four in the afternoon!¹¹⁵ Once again we see that so-called “Sabbath legislation” was subject to the whims and fancies of the men legislating it – not to the teaching of the Word of God! It was (and is to this day) all arbitrary. God’s Word is not the guide.

¹¹⁵ *History of the Puritans*, Vol.1, pgs.499-500.

In 1650, the House of Commons enforced the strict observance of the Lord's day with yet further legislation. The fines were increased, and the time to be spent in the stocks was increased to six hours. And this time, any justice of the peace who was found to be negligent in making diligent search for offenders was to be fined himself!¹¹⁶

Then, in 1656, another piece of legislation came into being. The Sabbath was now "deemed to extend from twelve of the clock on Saturday night to twelve of the clock on Lord's-day night". In addition to the usual prohibitions, it was enacted that all persons not having a reasonable excuse had to resort to some chapel or church building or meeting of Christians "not differing in matters of faith from the public profession of the nation," or be fined.¹¹⁷

Thus did the Puritan parliament decide – with no scriptural warrant whatsoever – that the "Christian Sabbath" extended from midnight to midnight. The Old Testament Sabbath extended from sunset to sunset; why did they not follow that? At least that would have been, to that extent but no more, more biblical. But as with everything else regarding "Christian Sabbatarianism", this was an arbitrary decision of men, not a commandment of the Lord.

Many Puritans were godly men, diligent servants of the Lord, and some of them produced wonderful books which continue to minister to people even in our day, centuries later. But on this matter of the "Christian Sabbath", as well as on certain other matters, they were in error, plain and simple. And this error had many evil consequences, and still does to this day.

Still more detailed provisions were passed in 1657.

The "Christian Sabbath" Doctrine in Scotland

Scotland, like England during the Puritan period, was strictly committed to "Christian Sabbatarianism." "Meanwhile, in Scotland, the Sabbatarian doctrines had taken deep root, and were improved into an elaborate system.... In the year 1644, the Six Sessions ordained public intimation to

¹¹⁶ *History of the Puritans*, Vol.2, pg.118.

¹¹⁷ *History of the Puritans*, Vol.2, pg.166.

be made that ‘no person, man nor woman, shall be found vaging, walking, and going upon the streets upon the Lord’s-day after the afternoon’s sermon, keeping idle, and entertaining impertinent conferences.’ In the next year, the same court ordained that ‘the magistrates, attended by the ministers by course, shall go up and down the streets upon the Lord’s-day after the afternoon sermon, and cause take particular notice of such as shall be found forth of their houses vaging abroad upon the streets, and cause cite them before the Session to be rebuked and censured.’ And on 5 April 1658, this direction was issued: ‘The magistrate to cause some English soldiers go along the streets, and those outparts above written, both before sermon and after sermon, and lay hold upon both young and old whom they find out of their houses or out of the church.’”¹¹⁸

And this was viewed as New Testament Christianity? This was viewed as in accordance with the Gospel of Christ? Laying hold upon men and women and punishing them for failure to observe a man-made “Sabbath”? How utterly tragic that such a false doctrine ever obtained among people professing to be the New Testament children of God! How utterly contrary to the doctrine of Christ and His apostles in the Gospel! How completely at variance with the New Testament truth that men and women must be *persuaded* to embrace the truth by the preaching of it, and not *compelled* by force to either hear the Word preached, or to follow it! Let alone the fact that the doctrine of the “Christian Sabbath” cannot be supported by the New Testament at all.

The “Christian Sabbath” Doctrine in Plymouth Colony

Next, let us consider the situation as it existed in the New World. Puritanism was established in New England in the 1620s, by the pilgrims who journeyed across the ocean to America. And, as in the mother country, “Christian Sabbath” legislation was enacted there as well.

In 1639, a man named Web Adey was arraigned for *working in his garden* on a Sunday. And when he committed the same offence again, he was placed in the stocks and whipped at the post!¹¹⁹

In 1650, the general court of Plymouth Colony enacted the following:

¹¹⁸ *Bampton Lectures on Sunday*, Lecture 7, pgs.216-7.

¹¹⁹ *Plymouth Colony Records*, Vol.1, pgs.44,68,86,92.

“Further be it enacted, that whosoever shall profane the Lord’s-day by doing any servile work, or any such like abuse, shall forfeit for every such default ten shillings, or be whipped.”

The same harsh legislation, so contrary to the teachings of Christ and the apostles in the Gospel but based squarely upon the theocratic system of the nation of Israel under the law of Moses, was now being enacted in the New World: threats, fines, whippings. The root cause was the same: the false notion that Christians were to re-create that theocratic system, with State and Church united. The evil fruit of this error would be the same too. And this, in the very colony established by men fleeing the religious persecution they had endured at the hands of a “State Church” in the Old World! Human nature never learns.

In 1651, the following was enacted: “It is enacted by the court that whatsoever person or persons shall neglect the frequenting the public worship of God that is according to God, in the places where they live, or do assemble themselves upon any pretence whatsoever, contrary to God and the allowance of the government, tending to the subversion of religion and churches, or palpable profanation of God’s holy ordinances, being duly convicted, viz., every one that is a master or dame of a family, or any other person at their own disposing, to pay ten shillings for every such default.”¹²⁰

The true faith of Christ has never needed the assistance of the State to enforce the worship of God! But in Plymouth Colony, State and “Church” were united, and when such an unscriptural situation prevails, persecution of those who differ in matters of religion inevitably follows.

And so the legislation continued to heap up. In 1658 it was enacted that those who “profaned the Lord’s day” by travelling, or bearing of burdens, were to be fined or put in the stocks for four hours. In 1659, 1661, 1662, 1665, 1668, and 1682, similar “Sabbath-breaking” legislation was enacted. By laws passed in 1662 and 1674, alcoholic beverages could not be sold by inn-keepers, etc., on the Lord’s day (would God they had seen fit to prohibit this poison on *any* day of the week!). In 1665 and 1669 it was enacted that persons found sleeping or playing around the

¹²⁰ *Plymouth Colony Records*, Vol.11, pgs.57-8.

meeting house of the church were to be admonished, and if they persisted they were to be put in the stocks. Nor was “unnecessary violent riding on the Lord’s day” permitted, nor smoking of tobacco on the Lord’s day when on the way to or from the meetings of the churches, within two miles of the meeting house!¹²¹

Such nonsense is the natural outworking of creating a religious law where God’s Word does not have one. When once the Scriptures are set aside, then men will come up with all kinds of absurd laws and regulations, and even seek to fob them off on the public as being according to the Word of God.

In 1652 and 1656, laws were passed which prohibited Indians from hunting, working or playing in the colony on Sundays.¹²²

The “Christian Sabbath” Doctrine in the Massachusetts Bay Colony

In the Massachusetts Bay Colony the situation was very much the same with regards to “Sabbath” legislation. Such legislation was passed in 1629. But to show just how far the governors and ecclesiastical ministers of this colony were prepared to go, let the following be carefully noted. When the civil authorities were in any doubt concerning any question of government, they referred it to the so-called “Reverend Elders.” And on 13 November 1644, the Elders gave the following answers to certain questions put to them, suggesting the *death penalty* for “profaning the Sabbath”!

“The striking of a neighbour may be punished with some pecuniary mulct, when the striking of a father may be punished with death. So any sin committed with an high hand, as the gathering of sticks on the Sabbath-day, may be punished with death, when a lesser punishment might serve for gathering sticks privily, and in some need.”¹²³

“In the first draught of the laws of Mr. Cotton, which I have seen, corrected with Mr. Winthrop’s hand, diverse other offenses were made capital, viz., profaning the Lord’s-day in a careless or scornful neglect or

¹²¹ *Plymouth Colony Records*, Vol.11, pgs.100,122,137,140,214,217-8,224-5, 228,236,258.

¹²² *Plymouth Colony Records*, Vol.11, pgs.60, 184.

¹²³ *Massachusetts Bay Colony Records*, Vol.1, pg.93.

contempt thereof. Numbers 15:30-36.”¹²⁴

Modern-day “Sunday Sabbatarians” may recoil in horror at the thought of applying the death penalty to those who (in their view) “profane the Sabbath”. But such a doctrine, so opposed to the Gospel, to the entire spirit of New Testament Christianity, is merely the logical outworking of the doctrine of the “Sabbath” when it is believed that an entire nation must be *forced* by law to observe it. For *if* the “Sunday Sabbath” commandment must be enforced by law, and *if* it is a moral commandment, then logically the breaking of it must be punishable in a manner worthy of the breaking of a moral commandment. And although most modern-day “Sunday Sabbatarians” would never say the death penalty should be applied for “Sabbath-breaking”, the fact remains that most of them *do* say the State should enforce “Sunday/Sabbath” legislation, making the day a day of rest throughout the land. Well then, they are not in a position to criticise those who take it to the next logical step. The fact is, those Massachusetts Bay “Sunday Sabbatarians” were simply putting their doctrine into practice, consistently with their false belief. Modern-day “Sunday Sabbatarians” are not as honest with themselves on this point.

As the old saying goes, they cannot have their cake and eat it.

Further “Sabbath” legislation was enacted in 1646; and in 1649 a general court, sitting in Boston, enacted the following: “Upon information of sundry abuses and misdemeanours committed by several persons on the Lord’s-day, not only by children playing in the streets and other places, but by youths, maids and other persons, both strangers and others, uncivilly walking the streets and fields, travelling from town to town, going on shipboard, frequenting common houses and other places to drink, sport, and otherwise to misspend that precious time, which things tend much to the dishonour of God, the reproach of religion, and the profanation of his holy Sabbath.... It is therefore ordered by this court and the authority thereof, that no children, youths, maids or other persons, shall transgress in the like kind on penalty of being reputed great provokers of the high displeasure of Almighty God, and further incurring the penalties hereafter expressed”. And what were these penalties? Admonishment

¹²⁴ *History of Massachusetts*, by Thomas Hutchinson, Vol.1, pg.390.

for the parents of children over seven for the first offence, a fine of five shillings for a second offence, ten shillings for a third offence; and for an offence thereafter, “punishment according to the merit of the fact.” And if the fine could not be paid, all above fourteen years of age were to be “whipped by the constable not exceeding five stripes for ten shillings fine; and this to be understood of such offences as shall be committed during the daylight of the Lord’s-day.”¹²⁵

No wonder children throughout the English-speaking Western world were raised to believe that it was sinful for them to even play an innocent game on the Lord’s day! We have read the work of a modern author, praising the fact that until recent times, children were not seen in the streets on the Lord’s day – as if playing innocently was a sin. But in light of such legislation as this, we are not surprised that so many “Sunday Sabbatarians” have taken this view. What nonsense this is!

And note, too, that once again, we see evidence of the utter confusion that has always reigned, as to precisely when the Lord’s day should be observed as a Sabbath. Here, it was during the daylight hours; but others have said, from nine to four; still others, from sunset on Saturday till sunset on Sunday; and still others, from midnight to midnight. No one really knows – and this is simply because the Lord has not appointed Sunday as a Sabbath.

And so it continued. Further legislation to the same effect was passed in 1654, 1658, 1665, 1667, 1668, 1673, 1677, 1679, and 1695. In 1658, the law lamented the fact that young people were behaving in an ungodly manner on Saturday nights and on the Lord’s day evenings; and penalties were imposed, including corporal punishment, for violating the “Sabbath.”¹²⁶ Surely wrongful behaviour at any time is what should have been punished, not the fact that it occurred on Saturday or Sunday night! And again, incidentally, we see the utter confusion concerning exactly when the so-called “Sabbath” began. In fact, in the mid-1700s, it was enacted that the observance of the Sunday “Sabbath” was to commence from sunset on Saturday.¹²⁷ This at least was more consistent with the

¹²⁵ *History of Massachusetts*, Vol.3, pgs.316-7.

¹²⁶ *Massachusetts Bay Colony Records*, Vol.4, part I, pg.347.

¹²⁷ *Acts and Laws of the Province of Massachusetts Bay*, folio edition, pgs.392-6,

Jewish way of reckoning time. But very few “Sunday Sabbatarians” follow this practice today. Every man does what is right in his own eyes when it comes to the precise time for “observing the Lord’s day Sabbath”.

The law of 1667 stated that any disturber of the peace on the “Sabbath” was to be put in a cage in the market-place in Boston and other towns, until examined by the authorities.¹²⁸

Legislation continued to be made into the eighteenth century, with “Sabbath” enforcement laws being enacted in 1711, 1716, 1727, 1741, 1760, and 1761. In 1716, the law stated that if a person was absent for a month from the Sunday services, he was to be fined twenty shillings, or “three hours in the stocks or cage”.¹²⁹ When attendance at a church service is made compulsory by law, then the Gospel has been set aside. One of the most basic tenets of New Testament Christianity is that men are to be won to Christ through the preaching of the Gospel, the Holy Spirit working in the hearts of the elect as and when He chooses. “We *persuade* men,” wrote Paul (2 Cor.5:11). The concept of a “State Church”, or of churches being supported by the State, is entirely foreign to the Gospel. To assume that everyone in a given society is Christian, and therefore *must* attend a church, is to overturn the very essence of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Such a mentality *always* leads to persecution. One has to wonder at the “Christianity” of those ministers at the time, who were happy to accept such legislation, so contrary to the blessed Gospel.

The “Christian Sabbath” Doctrine in New Haven Colony

In New Haven Colony, similar legislation was enacted, in 1647 and 1656. But here the law went even further – and it sends a chill down the spine to read such legislation: “Whosoever shall profane the Lord’s-day or any part of it, either by sinful servile work, or by unlawful sport, recreation, or otherwise, whether willfully or in a careless neglect, shall be duly punished by fine, imprisonment, or corporally.... But if the court upon examination, by clear and satisfying evidence, find that the sin was

Boston, 1759.

¹²⁸ *Massachusetts Bay Colony Records*, Vol.5, pg.133.

¹²⁹ *Acts and Laws of the Province of Massachusetts Bay*, pg.328.

proudly, presumptuously, and with a high hand, committed against the known command and authority of the blessed God, such a person therein despising and reproaching the Lord, shall be put to death, that all others may fear and shun such provoking, rebellious courses. Numb.15, from 30 to 36 verse.”¹³⁰ That professing “Christians”, claiming to be disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, and followers of the Gospel, could legislate the *death penalty* for so-called “Sabbath-breaking”, is so horrendous that it boggles the mind. In the first place, the first day of the week is not the Lord’s Sabbath. That was the seventh day *alone*, under the Old Covenant. In the second place, although ancient Israel was a theocracy, no Gentile nation today is such, and never will be. A “State Church” concept is entirely foreign to the Gospel. In the third place, no advocate of such a penalty could ever find a single verse in the entire New Testament to justify such action. In the fourth place, it goes against the entire spirit and teaching of the Gospel, which teaches that Christians are to preach the Gospel to those who will hear; and if men will not hear, they are to be left alone. It is the Holy Spirit alone who regenerates, making a man a new creature in Christ – not any law of man.

The “Christian Sabbath” Doctrine in the Colony of Connecticut

In the Colony of Connecticut, in 1650, the professing “Christian” rulers revealed their utter blindness to the truth of the Gospel when they decreed the following as part of the law against burglary: “And if any person shall commit [burglary, or] rob, in the fields or houses on the Lord’s-day, besides the former punishments, he shall, for the first offense, have one of his ears cut off; and for the second offense in the same kind, he shall lose his other ear in the same manner, and if he fall into the same offense the third time, he shall be put to death.”¹³¹ And men, calling themselves ministers of Christ in that colony, went along with this evil legislation? They were blind leaders of the blind. No other conclusion can be reached.

Although no one was ever actually put to death for “Sabbath-breaking”, it was on the statute books; and many were imprisoned, fined,

¹³⁰ *New Haven Colonial Records*, 1653-65, pg.605.

¹³¹ *Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut*, prior to 1665, pg.514.

put in the stocks, and whipped – including women and children.¹³²

Two years after the union of the colonies of New Haven and Connecticut, Indians were forbidden by law from “profaning” Sunday. Violation meant a fine or the stocks for them. In this, too, we see the utterly false nature of this doctrine of the “Christian Sabbath.” American Indians, regardless of the fact that the majority were not professing Christians, were required to obey this law. In this, the colonists went further even than the Jews, who did not enforce the Sabbath on the Gentile nations around them. The colonists were stricter than the Jews – and yet in truth, only the Jews ever had the Sabbath given to them!

Further legislation was passed in 1653, 1668, 1676, 1684, 1715, 1721, 1726, 1733, and 1761.

The “Christian Sabbath” Doctrine in the Colony of New Netherlands

The Colony of New Netherlands (now the state of New York) was administered by officers appointed in Holland, and Sunday observance was not anywhere near as strict in Holland, or in the colony, in its early years. But this changed after Peter Stuyvesant was made the colony’s “Dictator” in 1647. “Sabbath-breaking” was then forbidden by law. Again, though, we see the confusion as to what period of time constituted the “Sabbath”, and exactly what should or should not be permitted, and for what reasons: for liquor could not be sold before two o’clock on Sundays, “When there is no preaching”, and after nine o’clock in the evening.¹³³ It was all arbitrary then, and it is all arbitrary now. Each “Sunday Sabbatarian” man does what is right in his own eyes on these matters; or each church does so.

In 1673, each town was given authority to pass laws on “Sabbath-breaking.” In 1695 further legislation was enacted. Negro or Indian slaves or servants were to be whipped for “Sabbath-breaking” if their masters refused to pay the fine imposed.¹³⁴

¹³² *The Lord's Day*, pg.140.

¹³³ *History of New Netherlands*, first period, pg.466.

¹³⁴ *Documents Relating to the Colonial History of New York*, Vol.2, pg.621; and *Laws of New York from 1691 to 1773*, large folio edition, Vol.1, pgs.23-4. New York, 1774.

The “Christian Sabbath” Doctrine in Virginia and Pennsylvania

In Virginia, the laws regarding “Sabbath observance” were similar to those in New England. The very first law ever enacted in what would become the United States, was passed in Virginia in 1617, three years before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth; and this law stated that he who did not attend a church service on Sunday was to pay a fine of two pounds of tobacco.¹³⁵

Further legislation was passed in 1623, 1629, 1642, 1657-8, 1691, 1696, and 1705.

In Pennsylvania, however, the early Sunday laws were in fact far less strict than in the New England states. In 1700-1701, the law that was passed stated that all servile work on Sunday was prohibited; but there were many exceptions allowed by law.¹³⁶

Things Were (Somewhat) Better in Rhode Island

Even in the colony of Rhode Island, where religious liberty and toleration were practised to a degree unique in the New England colonies, and indeed in the world, “Sabbath” legislation was still enforced. But there was a difference: in 1673, it was stated in the enactment (correctly) that “although we know by man not any can be forced to worship God, or for to keep holy or not to keep holy any day”; yet “this Assembly, not to oppose or propagate any worship, but as by preventing ‘debaistness,’ although we know masters or parents cannot and are not by violence to endeavour to force any under their government to any worshiper, or from any worship, that is not debaistness, or disturbant to the civil peace, but they are to require them, and if that will not prevail, if they can, they should compel them not to do what is debasing or uncivil, or inhuman, not to frequent any immodest company or practices.” And, therefore, it was enacted that on the first day of the week, anyone who was drunk, or who was entertaining in gaming or tippling, was to be fined; “that all modest assemblies may not be interrupted; especially all such that

¹³⁵ *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, May 1899, Vol.3, No.5, “Virginia Papers,” 1619; and Sabbath Doc. No.45, pg.15, New York.

¹³⁶ *Acts of the Assembly of the Province of Pennsylvania*, Vol.1, pgs.19-21, folio edition, Phila. 1762.

profess they meet in the worship of God”.¹³⁷

This was indeed better than any “Sunday law” in any other New England colony. Essentially, men were free to worship God, or not, on the first day of the week, for it was the (very correct) conviction of the Rhode Island authorities that men could not legislate on matters of worship. Christians would of course want to do so, and as for all the rest, they were not under any such law. However, in order to prevent disturbance of the peace, and the disruption of the worship of God by those who wanted to worship Him, those who would behave in such a manner were to be dealt with by the authorities. Furthermore, it was enacted in 1679 that no servile work was to be done on the first day of the week more than necessity required, nor were men permitted to sport, game or play on the first day of the week; and that those found violating this law were to be fined, or placed in the stocks.¹³⁸

With the civil aspect of the legislation we must still find fault; for surely disturbers of the peace, drunkards, etc., should be punished by the authorities, *regardless* of the day on which this occurs, and there should not be any particular or additional penalty for doing so on a Sunday; but certainly the Rhode Island legislation was closer to the truth of the Gospel than any other, in that at least the authorities did not enforce church attendance on the Lord's day, but understood that men must be persuaded of the truth of the Word of God, by the preaching of the Word and the inward work of the Holy Spirit.

These laws were modified or re-enacted in 1750 and 1784.

The “Christian Sabbath” Doctrine in Eighteenth Century England

In the eighteenth century the rise of Methodism occurred, and with it, “Sunday Sabbath” observance once again became prominent in England. One, a highly-esteemed minister among the Methodists, “endeavoured to suppress the generally prevailing custom in country places during the summer, of walking in the fields on the Lord's-day, between the services, or in the evening in companies. He not only bore his testimony against it from the pulpit, but reconnoitred the fields in person to detect and

¹³⁷ *Rhode Island Colonial Records*, Vol.2, pgs.503-4.

¹³⁸ *Rhode Island Colonial Records*, Vol.3, pg.31.

reprove delinquents.”¹³⁹

How sad that such an innocent, healthy pastime as simply walking in the fields, enjoying the Lord’s creation, was viewed as something sinful if it was done on the Lord’s day! But this is the natural regression when once men begin to add to God’s Word, and to create laws which are simply not biblical. For as there is no scriptural justification for forbidding work on the Lord’s day, so there is none for forbidding walking on that day; and yet when once the door is opened to allow *some* foolish man-made laws, what is to prevent it from being pushed wide open and allowing more, and still more? The bottom line is that Scripture has been set aside; and whenever that happens, there is no guideline, no check to the man-made traditions that can be heaped one on top of the other.

Conclusion

Inevitably, what happens to the “Sunday Sabbath” concept? It passes into a mere “civil Sunday”: “that secularized cultural deposit which remains in a once predominantly Christian culture when the vital faith of the masses has waned.”¹⁴⁰ We see this in every Western, once-Protestant nation: originally, because of “Sunday Sabbatarian” influence, Sunday was made into a “Sabbath” by legislation; but naturally, men who were not Christians saw no purpose to this, and in fact (again very naturally) revolted against it. Why should they be forced to cease from all labour on a day which has no relevance for them? The fact that Christ rose from the dead on the first day has no relevance to anyone who is not a Christian, for *Christ Himself* means nothing to them, and what He accomplished on that day was for His elect and no others. Thus, inevitably, as the influence of Christianity in a culture wanes, and as Christians themselves, whether true or merely professing Christians, become a minority within that culture or at least retreat from the public arena before the rising tide of secularism or some other tide, doctrinal reasons for observing Sunday as a “day of rest” fall away. And if it remains as a holiday, or at least partly as a holiday, a “day off”, it does so merely because society has become used to it, and likes it, and finds it convenient. But it wants this holiday on its own terms: as a day for recreation, sport, amusements of

¹³⁹ *Bampton Lectures on Sunday*, Lecture 7, pgs.218-9.

¹⁴⁰ *The Lord’s Day*, pg.141.

all kinds.

And here is the thing: whether Sunday is treated, by the world, as a day of work like any other day, or as a day of recreation, it does not matter! Those zealous but misguided Christians who expend so much time and energy on trying to get their governments to legislate Sunday as a “day of rest” have missed the point entirely. The first day of the week is the Lord’s day, but it is only so to *Christians* – and that is regardless of whether they observe it as a “day of rest” or not. Christ rose on the first day for His people! He did not make it into a day of rest to be enforced upon an entire society or culture by legislation! The people of the world are under no obligation whatsoever to sit and do nothing on this day, to treat it as a “day of rest” from all labour or recreation, merely because *Christians* assemble on that day for worship! This is the height of absurdity.

But of course, it is the contention of this book that *Christians* do not have to treat the Lord’s day as a “day of rest” either! Certainly, they are to assemble at some point on this day, with their brethren, to worship their Lord together; but if the rest of the day is employed in innocent recreation, or even in secular work, there is no sin in this. None whatsoever. Our Lord did not make the Lord’s day the “Christian Sabbath.” *No* day is a Sabbath for Christians, for they have found rest in Christ.

As Sunday increasingly becomes “just another day” in Western society, we do not view this as a cause for lamentation. Our “Christian Sabbath” brethren view it as a tragedy, but not us! The tragedy, as far as we are concerned, is that Sunday was ever legislated as a “Sabbath” in the first place; and the purpose of this historical survey has been to give further reasons for that conviction. Any movement *away* from such an absurdity is a good thing. As even the concept of a “civil Sunday” begins to crumble in certain quarters, with Sunday becoming increasingly a day of work like any other day, Christians living in such societies are going to find themselves in precisely the same position as the Christians of the first century, and as Christians in various non-Western countries find themselves in today: they will have to assemble for worship either in the evening after work, or very early in the morning before work. And this will, perhaps, force at least some of those who are “Sunday Sabbatarians”

to re-think their reasons for observing Sunday as a “Sabbath”, and to once again carefully examine this whole issue in the light of the Holy Scriptures; for it has been so easy for them to wax eloquent about Sunday being the “Christian Sabbath” when the law has been on their side. Now that this is changing, it may perhaps drive them back to the Scriptures, to ascertain whether their views on this matter are found *there*, or were shaped and moulded by a Constantinian, Augustinian, medieval Roman Catholic concept that found its way into Protestantism via “Sabbatarian” Puritanism.

Perhaps this will happen; perhaps not. But whether it does or not, as was stated in the introduction to this book, we will not be browbeaten into holding a position which has no scriptural support, merely because, in our day and age, this happens to be the view of the majority of English-speaking sovereign grace people. Something is not true merely because a majority believes it to be true. The majority is not always right! If we hold to some doctrine merely because a majority believes it, then to be consistent we should all become Papists. What saith the Scripture? This is all that matters.

PART THREE:

WORKS BY OTHER AUTHORS

Although we readily include the following works by other authors on this subject, we need to make a few things very clear. Name-dropping is a detestable practice. Far too many professing Christians are content to believe a particular doctrine, *not* because they have studied it in the light of Holy Scripture, but because some famous theologian taught it. This is foolish and unbiblical. We are always very concerned when someone says, “Who else taught this doctrine?” or, “Did any renowned minister of the Gospel teach it?” as if *who* taught it is what counts, not whether or not it is taught in the *Bible*. It is always helpful and encouraging when one finds that believers past and present have held to essentially the same doctrine, and expounded it; but this is not the test of orthodoxy. If a particular doctrine is taught in the Word of God, then it matters not who opposes it. Even if one stands alone in holding to it, if it is the truth then it matters not whether one, or a thousand, hold to it: it must be embraced. To the Word and to the Testimony! What saith the Scripture? This should be the only question on anyone’s lips.

Today, it appears that the vast majority of materials, in English, on the subject of the Lord’s day, published by men who believe and proclaim the doctrines of sovereign grace, are from the “Christian Sabbath” perspective, and many of them would lead the reader to believe that the “Christian Sabbath” doctrine has always been held by sound teachers of the Word. This is a fallacy and needs to be exposed. Often, those who reject the idea of a “Christian Sabbath” are branded as “Antinomians” by the other camp. And yet, some godly men – men whom many in the other camp would look up to, and whose writings and teachings they would hold in high esteem – rejected the idea of the “Christian Sabbath” doctrine; and if we are Antinomians, then so are *they*. “Sunday Sabbatarians” all too often equate rejection of the “Christian Sabbath” notion with a rejection of the eternal moral law of God; and as we have sought to show in this book, the one does not necessarily imply the other by any means! “Oh how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day,” wrote the psalmist (Psa. 119:97); and we echo his words. We who hold to

this position are not lawless; but we are “under the law to Christ” (1 Cor. 9:21), being New Covenant believers; citizens of Mount Zion, not those who encompass Mount Sinai.

Therefore, in reproducing the following works by various authors, our purpose is not to cater to those who say they will only believe this doctrine if they see it taught by those they hold to be “great” men of the faith. Certainly the works reproduced here demonstrate that there have been others, historically, who have held to, and proclaimed, many of the very same things which have been set forth previously in this book, even though in some particulars they arrive at somewhat different conclusions from what we have sought to show here. But at the end of the day, what we or anyone else believes is not important: all that matters is *what does the Bible say?* Our purpose in including these writings by other authors can be stated, firstly, in the words of John Bunyan: “But when the scales are even by what already is put in, a little more, you know, makes the weight the better. Or grant we had down weight before, yet something over and above may make his work the harder, that shall by hanging fictions on the other end, endeavour to make things seem too light.”¹⁴¹ Secondly, our purpose in reproducing these works is simply to provide the reader with the teachings of other men on this subject, *for his own edification*. Many of these works are hardly known today, and that is a real tragedy, for they are rich in doctrinal truth. We certainly *do not endorse every statement* in the following works, as will be perfectly evident to the reader when comparing what they wrote with what we have written in this book; in some particulars we differ; but in general they have been a blessing to us, and they will be to many others as well; and in almost all points we agree, and we include them here to demonstrate that many through the years have rejected the “Christian Sabbath” teaching, without in any sense being heretics or Antinomians. Besides, the fact that those who reject the “Christian Sabbath” notion are not always in agreement in every single particular should never be held against them, when it is perfectly evident, to anyone who peruses the volumes of “Christian Sabbath” literature, that it is often difficult to find two “Sunday Sabbatarians” who agree in every

¹⁴¹ *Questions About the Nature and Perpetuity of the Seventh-Day Sabbath*, by John Bunyan. Published in *The Works of John Bunyan*, Vol.2, pg.361. The Banner of Truth Trust, 1991.

particular either! In fact, there is a *vast amount* of disagreement between “Sunday Sabbatarians” on various aspects of their doctrine, especially when it comes to precisely how the day should be observed.

It will be noted that, apart from William Tyndale and John Frith, all the authors in this section were Baptists. It is to be greatly regretted that so many Baptists today have turned away from the doctrine of these Baptist forebears of theirs, preferring instead the Puritan and Presbyterian doctrine on this matter of the supposed “Christian Sabbath”. And this false notion of a “Christian Sabbath”, as shown elsewhere in this book, has led to Baptists even becoming confused concerning, and inconsistent in their teaching of, the doctrine of the separation of Church and State, which historically has been such a vital component of what they have stood for.

In reproducing these works, we have kept as closely as possible to the original layout of the works themselves, merely dividing long portions into paragraphs as an aid to reading where it was deemed appropriate, as some of the old writers made use of very lengthy paragraphs with very little spacing, to which modern readers are unaccustomed.

Shaun Willcock

THE FIRST DAY NOT DIVINELY APPOINTED AS A SABBATH

by William Tyndale

Preface

William Tyndale, the godly Bible translator who was martyred in 1536, did not keep any day as a Sabbath. We certainly agree entirely with his contention that we do not need any holy day at all in the Christian Church. But we do not agree that the seventh-day Sabbath can be changed into any day of the week, nor that it may be kept every tenth day, nor that there can be two Sabbaths held every week if we so desire. Why, then, include this quotation? Apart from his true observation that no Sabbath day is needed at all in the Christian Church, this quotation is very valuable because, if we who reject the “Christian Sabbath” doctrine were to hold to all of it, we would be condemned as rank Antinomians by very many “Sunday Sabbatarians” today! And yet, as hard as we listen, we do not hear these same brethren condemning William Tyndale for what they would certainly believe is his unscriptural teaching on the Sabbath! Our “Sunday Sabbatarian” friends must be consistent. If we deserve to be branded as Antinomians, then so does Tyndale. The same standard must be applied to all, and that is the unchanging standard of God’s Word. Many, who are so quick to write us off because of our position on the Lord’s day, do not by any means hurl the same accusations at Tyndale. This is hypocritical.

(The following is excerpted from William Tyndale’s “Reply to Sir Thomas More,” in *Works of the English Reformers*, Vol.2, pg. 101, London, 1831. See also *The Whole Works of W. Tyndall, John Frith, and Doctor Barnes*, pg.287, London, 1573).

And as for the Sabbath, a great matter, we be lords over the Sabbath, and may yet change it into the Monday, or any other day as we see need; or may make every tenth day holy day, only if we see a cause why. We may make two every week, if it were expedient and one not enough to teach the people. Neither was there any cause to change it from the

The Sabbath and The Lord's Day

Saturday, than to put a difference between us and the Jews, and lest we should become servants to the day after their superstition. Neither needed we any holy day at all, if the people might be taught without it.

THE SABBATH ABROGATED; THE FIRST DAY IS NOT A SABBATH

by John Frith

Preface

John Frith was William Tyndale's friend and associate in the great work of Bible translation, and he, too, suffered martyrdom for the Lord's sake. His position on the abrogation of the Sabbath, and on the fact that the first day of the week is not a Sabbath and men may work on it, is for the most part a very scriptural one. Although he erred in thinking that it was the early Christians, rather than the Lord Himself, who set upon the first day of the week, yet he saw from the Scriptures the truth that the first day of the week is the day on which the Christian churches should assemble for hearing the Word of God preached, and for receiving the Lord's supper (falsely called a "sacrament" by Frith); and he also saw clearly that the first day was not the new "Sabbath", for he very plainly stated that men were free to work on the first day of the week. And how right he was in stating that the Jews, at least, can point to some scriptural justification for keeping the seventh day (even though the New Testament Scriptures are very clear that this day has been abrogated), whereas the first day "is not commanded by God's law."

And again we say to our "Sunday Sabbatarian" brethren: if we are Antinomians for rejecting the notion of a "Christian Sabbath", then so was the godly John Frith. Consistency demands that if you speak so harshly of us, you must do the same of Frith and so many other faithful servants of Christ in the past.

(The following is taken from John Frith's *Declaration on Baptism*, pg.96. Unfortunately we do not have the date this was published. See also *The Whole Works of W. Tyndall, John Frith, and Doctor Barnes*, pg.96. London, 1573)

Our forefathers who were in the beginning of the church, did abrogate the Sabbath, to the intent that men might have an ensample of Christian

liberty, and that they might know that neither the keeping of the Sabbath, nor of any other day is necessary according to Paul: "Ye observe days, times and months." "I am afraid of you, that I have laboured in vain toward you." Howbeit, because it was necessary that a day should be reserved, in which the people should come together to hear the Word of God, they ordained, instead of the Sabbath, which was Saturday, the next day following, which is Sunday. And, although they might have kept the Saturday with the Jew, as a thing indifferent, yet they did much better to overset the day, to be a perpetual memory that we are free, and not bound to any day, but may do all lawful works to the pleasure of God and the profit of our neighbour. We are in manner as superstitious in the Sunday as they were in the Saturday; yea, and we are much madder. For the Jews have the Word of God for their Saturday, since it is the seventh day, and they were commanded to keep the seventh day solemn. And we have not the Word of God for us, but rather against us; for we keep not the seventh day as the Jews do, but the first, which is not commanded by God's law. But Paul biddeth that no man judge us, as concerning holy days, meats and such other exterior things; yea, and in no ways will he that we observe them, counting them more holy than other days. For they were instituted that the people should come together to hear God's Word, receive the sacraments, and give God thanks; that done, they may return unto their houses and do their business as well as any other day. He that thinketh that a man sinneth which worketh on the holy day, if he be weak or ignorant, ought better to instruct and so to leave his hold; but if he be obstinate and persevere in his sentence, he is not of God but of the devil, for he maketh sin in such as God leaveth free. According to this ensample, I would that our ceremonies were altered; because (as I have said) the people seek health in them, and what villainy more can they do to Christ's blood.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE NATURE AND PERPETUITY OF THE SEVENTH-DAY SABBATH

by John Bunyan

“The Son of man is lord also of the Sabbath day.”

Preface

*John Bunyan (1628-1688) is regarded as one of the greatest Christian writers who ever lived. His book, **The Pilgrim’s Progress**, is the most well-known Christian book ever written. This Baptist pastor is highly esteemed by Christian men the world over – and rightly so. And yet, on the subject of the “Christian Sabbath”, Bunyan was an Antinomian according to the definition of those who hold that anyone who rejects the morality of the fourth commandment is seeking to overturn the eternal moral law of God. But Bunyan was no Antinomian! His work on the subject of the Sabbath should be very carefully studied by those today who are so swift to brand as “Antinomian” those who disagree with them on the issue of the Sabbath. Much of what he wrote found an answering echo in our heart when we first read it, many years ago, and it was instrumental at the time in opening our eyes to the errors of the Sabbath being instituted at creation, of the fourth commandment being part of the eternal moral law, etc.*

*Bunyan lived at a time when the “Christian Sabbath” doctrine was upheld by many, including those who drew up the (Presbyterian) Westminster Confession of Faith; and he was clearly influenced by their doctrine, observing the first day of the week as a “Christian Sabbath” in much the same way as other “Sunday Sabbatarians” did. But he did not support this doctrine with the usual arguments used by “Sunday Sabbatarians”, that it was a “creation ordinance”, that the fourth commandment was a moral commandment, etc. In fact, in the first section of his book he did an excellent job of showing that the Sabbath was **not** a creation ordinance, that it was first given to men after the Exodus, and much more. He was fond of asserting (very correctly) that the seventh-day Sabbath “was not from paradise, nor from nature, nor from the fathers, but from the wilderness, and from Sinai”. But being in many ways of*

the Puritan mould, and living at that time in England, he did not go far enough. In the second section of his book, he upheld the Lord's day (the first day of the week) as the "Christian Sabbath." In this he was in error. But he certainly demolished the usual Puritan arguments regarding the supposedly eternally binding nature of the fourth commandment.

*Bunyan was thus very correct in the **first** part of his treatise, in which he pulled down the "Sunday Sabbatarians'" false view of the Sabbath commandment being moral law, binding on all men in all ages; but he was in error in the **second** part of the treatise, where, it is greatly to be regretted, he could not extricate himself from the Puritan view of the "Christian Sabbath". His book is thus a mixture of truth (in the first section) and error (in the second).*

*It is a great pity that he thought of the first day of the week as a "Sabbath", instead of merely as the day on which Christians are to assemble for worship. Many of his arguments, in fact, in which he attempts to prove that the first day is a "Sabbath", are excellent arguments if they are only used to prove that the first day is the day on which Christians are to assemble for worship – **not** a "holy day" of **rest**. Frequently he mentions that the moral law only requires that **time** be set aside for worship, and that God must tell us the day on which to worship Him; and in this he was certainly correct; but then he goes too far when he asserts that the day on which churches must worship (the first day of the week) is also made a **holy** "Christian Sabbath", an entire **day of rest**. This is saying too much, far more than the Scriptures say.*

*But the main reason his work on this subject is so valuable, is because he only made use of the **New Testament** in attempting to prove his teaching on the "Christian Sabbath." He did not in any way prove that for New Testament believers, the first day of the week is the "Christian Sabbath", but merely that the first day of the week is the day on which the Lord's people are to assemble for worship. But he most certainly **did** conclusively prove that the fourth commandment of the decalogue was not an eternal moral law, and that the Sabbath was not a "creation ordinance." His work on this is highly recommended for this reason.*

We have reproduced here that part of Bunyan's book (the first part) which proves that the fourth commandment of the decalogue was not eternal

moral law, even though at times, in this section, he still claims the Lord's day to be the "Christian Sabbath". The entire work is, however, to be found in **The Whole Works of John Bunyan, Volume 2**.

We have also included all of the footnotes, as well as the "Editor's Advertisement" by George Offor, the editor of Bunyan's works, because it contains some very useful information on this subject. For example, he points out that William Tyndale did not believe that the Sabbath was a moral law. Now although we do not agree with Tyndale that Christians may change it to any day of the week we choose, as explained previously, his position on this is important for this reason: here was a Christian man, a godly man, a man greatly looked up to by believers of the "Christian Sabbath" persuasion, who was, by their own definition, an "Antinomian" – for he rejected the idea that the fourth commandment of the decalogue was eternal moral law. And yet do we hear Tyndale being branded as an Antinomian? No, we do not. It is both hypocritical and unjust to brand us as Antinomians, yet not Tyndale, when he rejected the "Christian Sabbath" notion as surely as we do.

Offor also cites John Calvin and Martin Luther as being another two men, greatly admired by many "Sunday Sabbatarians", who must also be labelled as Antinomians if those, today, who reject the notion of the "Sunday Sabbath" are so labelled, for (although we do not admire those two Reformers as so many others do) they also held positions very different from that of "Sunday Sabbatarians." Yet are they so branded and rejected? No, they are not. Instead, they are held in the highest esteem. Again, this is hypocritical and unjust.

We disagree strongly with Offor's statement that "the extent of that period called a day, in creation, has never been defined". This is incorrect! The days of creation were periods of time of twenty-four hours, just as they are now. It is also a pity that Offor does not explain that Sir Thomas More was a Papist; and it is also a pity that he uses the phrase, "Holy Church", without explaining that this is how Papists view the "Church" of Rome – not Protestants. We also do not agree with him that Heb. 4:10 speaks of Christ resting from His work, as explained elsewhere.

We have retained all the footnotes included in Bunyan's work, as supplied by Offor.

(The following is excerpted from *The Works of John Bunyan*, Vol. 2,

pgs.359-371. The Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1991 reprint of the 1854 edition.)

EDITOR'S ADVERTISEMENT

All our inquiries into divine commands are required to be made personally, solemnly, prayerfully. To “prove all things,” and “hold fast” and obey “that which is good,” is a precept, equally binding upon the clown, as it is upon the philosopher. Satisfied from our observations of nature, that there is a God; our next inquiry is into the revelation of his will: which, when understood, must be implicitly obeyed, in defiance of any usages of society, and of every erroneous pre-conceived opinion. In this important investigation, we shall find, that the commands of God revealed to man, fall under two classes.

First, Moral and Eternal, being essential to the happiness of all created intelligences, whether pure or sinful. As, the fear and love of the Creator, who preserves and bountifully blesses his creatures; and flowing from this is love to all his creation. He who wantonly destroys life in order that he may glut a demoniac propensity with the agonizing death struggle, is a practical atheist. The Christian will cherish and promote the happiness of all; he dares only to take away life to preserve life.

Second, Ceremonial or Temporal. Those which have been commanded by God, for local, family or national observances, and which, when they have fulfilled their intended object, are removed or suffered gradually to die away.

The well-being of society requires that a portion of time be set apart for divine worship. Individuals are commanded to pray without ceasing. An invaluable custom leads families to unite in morning and evening prayer; and it is an important question whether the Creator having sanctified, and rested on, the seventh day, intended that rest as a pattern to all his rational creatures. If so, *the* seventh day must depend upon our being able to fix upon which day of the week the creation commenced. Again our inquiries will extend to those injunctions, given to the Jews in the wilderness, to sanctify certain days to public worship; and whether that law was intended for all mankind. In either case it is essential that we ascertain whether those various Sabbaths of weeks – of months or of

years – with the ceremonies to be performed on them, were to continue to the end of time or for a limited period.

In all these inquiries we are strictly confined to revelation, for there is no indication in nature, or in any of its laws, of a day of rest; but on the contrary a state of progression marks every day alike. Our Lord has taught us that “the Sabbath was made for man,” and therefore did not exist among the angels, prior to the creation of man, as all moral or universal obligations must have existed; for they are the same from eternity to eternity; and over this, like other ceremonial or local commands, the Creator claims dominion. “The Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath.”

Researches into these questions were made in earlier times, and some curious calculations have appeared to prove, that the work of creation commenced on the day called Monday, so that what is now termed the first day of the week, was originally the rest of God from creation; as it was his rest from the work of redemption, by rising from the tomb. But the extent of that period called a day, in creation, has never been defined: and the terms “work” or “rest,” as applied to the Deity, are used in condescension to our finite powers. The controversy upon this subject assumed a more public and definite form at the Reformation. Sir Thomas More asserted that the seventh day was superseded by the first, in obedience to tradition:¹⁴² it forms the first of the five commandments of Holy Church – “The Sundays hear thou mass.” William Tyndale, in reply, contends that “we be lords over the Sabbath;” we may change it for Monday, or any other day, as we see need, or have two every week, if one is not enough to teach the people.¹⁴³ Calvin preferred a daily assembling of the church, but if that was impossible, then at stated intervals: his words are – “Since the Sabbath is abrogate, I do not so rest upon the number of seven, that I would bind the church to the bondage thereof; neither will I condemn those churches that have other solemn days for their meetings.”¹⁴⁴ Luther considers the observance of

¹⁴² Dialogues, 1st chap., xxv.

¹⁴³ Answer to More.

¹⁴⁴ Institutes, b. ii. ch.8.

the Jewish Sabbath one of the “weak and beggarly rudiments.”¹⁴⁵

The controversy became still more popular in this country, when James the First and Charles the First put forth the book of sports to be allowed and encouraged on Sundays. The Puritans called Sunday “The Sabbath,” and a voluminous contest was carried on as to whether it ought not rather to be called “The Lord’s day.” In 1628, Mr. Brabourne, a clergyman of note, kept the Jewish Sabbath, and in a short time several churches, in England, assembled on that day, and were called “seventh day, or Sabbath keepers” – many of them were Baptists. This led to the controversy in which Bunyan took his part, in this very conclusive and admirable treatise.

The work was first published in the year 1685, and was not reprinted until the year 1806, when it appeared in the third volume of select works by John Bunyan; since then it has been reprinted in two American editions of his works. The reason why it was not republished, probably was, that the churches of the Sabbath keepers died away. At this time only three are known in England; one of these is at Millyard, London, where my talented antiquarian friend, W.H. Black, is elder and pastor. These places of worship are supported by an endowment. Bunyan’s book does not appear to have been answered; indeed, it would require genius of no ordinary kind to controvert such conclusive evidence.

His arguments are, that the appearances of nature shew no differences of days – that no Sabbath or other day was set apart for worship before the giving of the Law at Sinai. “Thou camest down also upon Mount Sinai, and madest KNOWN unto them thy holy Sabbaths, by the hand of Moses.” Ne. ix.13,14. “The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: *in it* thou shalt not do any work – and remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and *that* the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm, THEREFORE the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day.” De. v.14,15. While many crimes are mentioned in patriarchal times, there is no complaint of Sabbath-breaking. We read of fratricide, drunkenness, lying, unbelief, theft, idolatry, slave-dealing, and other crimes, but no hint as to sanctifying or desecrating the Sabbath. At length, a few

¹⁴⁵ Com. on Gal. iv.9.

days before the giving of the law, a natural phenomenon announced to the Jews, the great change that was at hand – the manna fell in double quantity on Friday, and was not found on Saturday. So new was this that, contrary to the command, the people went out on the seventh day as on other days, and were rebuked but not punished for it. But no sooner is the Sabbath instituted by Moses, than it is broken, and the Sabbath-breaker is punished with a cruel death. It was instituted as a peculiar observance to distinguish the Jews from all other nations – “The Lord has given YOU the Sabbath.” Ex. xvi.39. “The *children of Israel* shall keep the Sabbath.” Ex. xxxi.16,17. “I gave them [the Israelites who were delivered from Egypt] my Sabbaths to be a sign between me and them.” Eze. xx.12. Ceremonies were commanded to be performed as the Sabbath worship, which cannot now be observed, see Le. xxiv. Nu.xxviii. Ne. xiii.22. Eze. xlvi.4. The Jewish Sabbath was “a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ.” Col. ii.16,17. The shadows have fled away; we possess the substance. The covenant of Moses was written on stone – the new covenant is written on our hearts, He. viii.9,10.

Bunyan admits no uncertainty as to a fixed day for christian worship; the law of nature requires it; the God of nature fixes the day, without borrowing it from the ministration of death. The Jewish passover and Sabbaths are superseded; Christ our passover is slain, and we have not an annual but a perpetual feast. We have an infinitely greater deliverance to commemorate than that of the Jews from Egypt. Released from the dominion and punishment of sin, we have entered into a rest boundless as eternity. Manna, which never fell on the Jewish Sabbath, falls in peculiar and rich abundance on the first day of the week, when it first began to fall. The first day is peculiarly sanctified and honoured of God. On *this* day the Son rested from His work of redemption, He. iv.10. He is Lord of the Sabbath, and hath peculiarly blessed his own day. On *this* day some of the saints that slept arose. Mat. xxvii.52,53. On *this* day Christ was made the head of the corner, and we will rejoice and be glad in it. On the *first* day God begat his beloved Son from the dead. Ac. xiii.33. Let all the angels of God worship him. He. i.6. Hence it is called the Lord’s day. Re. i.10. *This* day is the only one named upon which Christ appeared to his disciples after his resurrection: it was on the evening of the first day of the week, and on the evening of the following eighth day,

that they assembled and Christ appeared in the midst of them. On *this* day he walked with his disciples to Emmaus, and made their hearts to burn within them with holy joy and wonder. The marvels of the day of Pentecost honoured the first day of the week. On *this* day the first great conversion of “about three thousand souls” took place. On *this* day the disciples at Jerusalem [doubtless the author meant to say Troas – *S. W.*] came together to break bread. Ac. xx.7. Upon THE, not A, first day they broke bread; and upon THE first day, the collections were made for the poor saints. 1 Co. xvi.1,2. With such concurrent and ample testimony we must conclude that the seventh day Sabbath, with its Jewish ritual, is dissolved, and the first day has taken its place. The Saviour said, “It is finished;” and from that moment to the end of the inspired volume, the seventh day is swallowed up in the glories of the first day of the week. Let Jews commemorate their temporal deliverance from Pharaoh and Egypt with their divers ceremonies; but Christians, blessed with a foretaste of eternal glory, will commemorate the resurrection of their Lord, as the first fruits of an unspeakable rest from the dominion of sin, of Satan, and of hell. Our glorified Redeemer sanctioned and blessed the first day, with his personal appearance in the assemblies of his saints. His inspired apostles kept it, as it is recorded, and thus it is sanctioned by the Holy Ghost; and their descendants are bound to keep it to the end of the world. Go, little treatise, and carry conviction with thee. Emancipate the christian mind from all the beggarly rudiments of Jewish rites and ceremonies. Add to the holy enjoyments of God’s saints in public worship, on the day when their eternal redemption is commemorated by the triumphant resurrection of their Lord. – GEO. OFFOR.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE NATURE AND PERPETUITY OF THE SEVENTH-DAY SABBATH

QUESTION I.

Whether the seventh day sabbath is of, or made known to, man by the law and light of nature?

Something must be here premised before I show the grounds of this question. First then, by the law or light of nature, I mean that law which was concreate with man; that which is natural to him, being original with, and essential to, himself; consequently, that which is invariable and unalterable, as is that nature. Secondly, I grant that by this law of nature, man understands that there is one eternal God; that this God is to be worshipped according to his own will; consequently, that *time* must be allowed to do it in: but whether the law or light of nature teacheth, and that of itself, without the help of revelation, that the seventh day of the week is *that* time sanctified of God, and set apart for his worship, that is the question; and the grounds of it are these:

First, Because the law of nature is antecedent to this day, yea completed as a law before it was known or revealed to man, that God either did or would sanctify the seventh day of the week at all.

Now this law, as was said, being natural to a man, for man is a law unto himself, Ro. ii. could only teach the things of a man, and there the Apostle stints it, 1 Co. ii. 11. But to be able to determine, and that about things that were yet without being, either in nature or by revelation, is that which belongs not to a man as a man; and the seventh day sabbath, as yet, was such. For Adam was completely made the day before; and God did not sanctify the seventh day before it was, none otherwise than by his secret decree. Therefore, by the law of nature, Adam understood it not, it was not made known to him thereby.

Second, To affirm the contrary, is to make the law of nature supernatural, which is an impossibility. Yea, they that do so make it a predictor, a prophet; a prophet about divine things to come; yea, a prophet able to foretel what shall be, and that without a revelation; which is a strain that never yet prophet pretended to.

Besides, to grant this, is to run into a grievous error; for this doth not only make the law of nature the first of prophets, contrary to Ge. iii.10. compared with Jn. i.1. but it seems to make the will of God, made known by revelation, a needless thing. For if the law of nature, as such, can predict, or foretel God's secrets, and that before he reveals them, and this law of nature is universal in every individual man in the world, what need is there of particular prophets, or of their holy writings? And indeed here the Quakers and others split themselves. For if the law of nature can of itself reveal unto me one thing pertaining to instituted worship, for that we are treating of now, and the exact time which God has not yet sanctified and set apart for the performance thereof, why may it not reveal unto me more, and so still more; and at last all that is requisite for me to know, both as to my salvation, and how God is to be worshipped in the church on earth.

Third, If it be of the law of nature, then all men by nature are convinced of the necessity of keeping it, and that though they never read or heard of the revealed will of God about it; but this we find not in the world.

For though it is true that the law of nature is common to all, and that all men are to this day under the power and command thereof; yet we find not that they are by nature under the conviction of the necessity of keeping of a seventh day sabbath. Yea, the Gentiles, though we read not that they ever despised the law of nature, yet never had, as such, a reverence of a seventh day sabbath, but rather the contrary.

Fourth, If therefore the seventh day sabbath is not of the law of nature, then it should seem not to be obligatory to all. For instituted worship, and the necessary circumstances thereunto belonging, is obligatory but to some. The tree that Adam was forbid to eat of, we read not but that his children might have eat the fruit thereof: and circumcision, the passover, and other parts of instituted worship was enjoined but to some.

Fifth, I doubt the seventh day sabbath is not of the law of nature, and so not moral; because though we read that the law of nature, and that before Moses, was charged upon the world, yet I find not till then, that the profanation of a seventh day sabbath was charged upon the world: and indeed to me this very thing makes a great scruple in the case.

A law, as I said, we read of, and that from Adam to Moses, Ro. v.13,14. The transgressions also of *that* law, we read of them, and that particularly,

as in Ge. iv.8 & vi.5; ix.21,22; xii.13; xiii.13; xviii.12-15; xix.5; (Eze. xvi.49,50¹⁴⁶) Ge. xxxi.30; xxxv.2; xl.15; xliv.8-10. De. viii.19,20; xii.2. Ps. cvi.35-37. and Romans the first and second chapters.

But in all the scriptures we do not read, that the breach of a seventh day sabbath was charged upon men as men all that time. Whence I gather, that either a seventh day sabbath was not discerned by the light of nature, and so not by that law imposed; or else, that men by the help and assistance of that, for we speak of men as men,¹⁴⁷ in old time kept it better, than in after ages did the church of God with better assistance by far. For they are there yet found fault with as breakers of the sabbath. Eze. xx.13.

It follows therefore, that if the law of nature doth not of itself reveal to us, as men, that the seventh day is the holy sabbath of God. That that day, as to the sanction of it, is not moral, but rather arbitrary, to wit, imposed by the will of God upon his people, until the time he thought fit to change it for another day.

And if so, it is hence to be concluded, that though by the light of nature men might see that time must be allowed and set apart for the performance of that worship that God would set up in his house, yet, as such, it could not see what time the Lord would to that end choose. Nature therefore saw *that*, by a positive precept, or a word revealing it, and by no other means.

Nor doth this at all take away a whit of that sanction which God once put upon the seventh day sabbath; unless any will say, and by sufficient argument prove, that an ordinance for divine worship receiveth greater sanction from the law of nature than from a divine precept; or standeth stronger when it is established by a law humane, for such is the law of nature, than when imposed by revelation of God.

But the text will put this controversy to an end. The sanction of the seventh day sabbath, even as it was the rest of God, was not till after the law of nature was completed; God rested the seventh day and sanctified it. Ge. ii.3. Sanctified it; that is, set it apart to the end there mentioned,

¹⁴⁶ The original edition refers to (Ezek.49,50), but it is evidently a typographical error in omitting the chapter.

¹⁴⁷ Man unaided by revelation.

to wit, to rest thereon.

Other grounds of this question I might produce, but at present I will stop here, and conclude, That if a seventh day sabbath was an essential necessary to the instituted worship of God, then itself also as to its sanction for that work, was not founded but by a positive precept; consequently not known of man at first, but by revelation of God.

QUESTION II.

Whether the seventh day sabbath, as to man's keeping of it holy, was ever made known to, or imposed by, a positive precept upon him until the time of Moses? Which from Adam was about two thousand years.

Something must also be here premised, in order to my propounding of my grounds for this question; and that is, That the seventh day was sanctified so soon as it had being in the world, unto the rest of God, as it is Ge. ii.2,3. and he did rest, from all his works which he had made therein. But the question is, Whether when God did thus sanctify this day to his *own rest*, he did also by the space of time above-mentioned, impose it as an holy sabbath of rest upon men; to the end they might solemnize worship to him in a special manner thereon? And I question this,

First, Because we read not that it was. And reading, I mean, of the divine testimony, is ordained of God, for us to find out the mind of God, both as to faith and our performance of acceptable service to him.

In reading also, we are to have regard to two things.

- I. To see if we can find a precept: or,
- II. A countenanced practice for what we do. For both these ways we are to search, that we may find out what is that good, that acceptable will of God.

For the first of these we have Ge. ii.16,17. and for the second, Ge. viii.20,21. [as to public worship but not on a stated day.]

Now as to the imposing of a seventh day sabbath upon men from Adam to Moses, of that we find nothing in holy writ either from precept or

example. True, we find that solemn worship was performed by the saints that then lived: for both Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, sacrificed unto God, Ge. iv.4; viii.20,21; xii.7; xiii.4; xxxv.1. but we read not that the seventh day was the time prefixed of God for their so worshipping, or that they took any notice of it. Some say, that Adam in eating the forbidden fruit, brake also the seventh day sabbath, because he fell on that day;¹⁴⁸ but we read not that the breach of a sabbath was charged upon him. That which we read is this; “Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?” Ge. iii.11. Some say also that Cain killed Abel on a sabbath day;¹⁴⁹ but we read not that, in his charge, God laid any such thing at his door. This was it of which he stood guilty before God; namely, That his brother’s blood cried unto God against him from the ground. Ge. iv.10.

I therefore take little notice of what a man saith, though he flourisheth his matter with many brave words, if he bring not with him, “Thus saith the Lord.” For that, and that only, ought to be my ground of faith as to how my God would be worshipped by me. For in the matters material to the worship of God, it is safest that thus I be guided in my judgment; for here only I perceive “the footsteps of the flock,” Ca. i.8. Eze. 3.11. They say further, that for God to sanctify a thing, is to set it apart. This being true; then it follows, that the seventh day sabbath was sanctified, that is, set apart for Adam in paradise; and so, that it was ordained a sabbath of rest to the saints from the beginning.

But I answer, as I hinted before, that God did sanctify it to his own rest. “The LORD (also) hath set apart him that is godly for himself.” But again, it is one thing for God to sanctify this or that thing to an use, and another thing to command that that thing be forthwith in being to us. As for instance: the land of Canaan was set apart many years for the children of Israel before they possessed that land. Christ Jesus was long sanctified; that is, set apart to be our redeemer before he sent him into the world. De. xxxii.8. Jn. x.36.

¹⁴⁸ Adam is supposed by some rabbins not to have passed one night in a state of perfection, (see Ainsworth on Gen. iii.1; xxviii.11; and Psal. xlix.13), and to have fallen on the Sabbath day.

¹⁴⁹ The murder of Abel took place “at the end of days;” see margin to Gen. iv.3. Properly rendered “in process of time;” but by some supposed to mean at the end of the week. See Dr. Gill’s Commentary.

If then, by God's sanctifying of the seventh day for a sabbath, you understand it for a sabbath for man, (but the text saith not so) yet it might be so set apart for man, long before it should be, as such, made known unto him. And that the seventh day sabbath was not as yet made known to men.

Second, Consider secondly, Moses himself seems to have the knowledge of it at first, not by tradition, but by revelation; as it is. Ex. xvi.23. "This is *that* (saith he) which the Lord hath said, (namely to me; for we read not, as yet, that he said it to any body else), Tomorrow *is* the sabbath of the holy rest unto the Lord."

Also holy Nehemiah suggesteth this, when he saith of Israel to God, Thou "madest known unto them thy holy sabbath [by the hand of Moses thy servant]" Ne. ix.14. The first of these texts shews us, that tidings of a seventh day sabbath for men, came *first* to Moses from heaven: and the second, that it was to Israel before unknown.

But how could be either the one or the other, if the seventh day sabbath was taught to men by the light of nature, which is the moral law? Or if from the beginning it was given to men by a positive precept for to be kept.

This therefore strengtheneth my doubt about the affirmative of the first question, and also prepareth an argument for what I plead as to this we have now under consideration.

Third, This yet seems to me more scrupulous, because that the punishment due to the breach of the seventh day sabbath was hid from men to the time of Moses; as is clear, for that it is said of the breaker of the sabbath, "They put him in ward, because it was not [as yet] declared what should be done to him." Nu. xv.32-36.

But methinks, had this seventh day sabbath been imposed upon men from the beginning, the penalty or punishment due to the breach thereof had certainly been known before now.

When Adam was forbidden to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the penalty was then, if he disobeyed, annexed to the prohibition. So also it was as to circumcision, the passover, and other

ordinances for worship. How then can it be thought, that the seventh day sabbath should be imposed upon men from the beginning; and that the punishment for the breach thereof, should be hid with God for the space of two thousand years! Ge. ii.16,17; xvii.13,14. Ex. xii.43-48. and the same chapter, ver.19.

Fourth, God's giving of the seventh day sabbath was with respect to *stated* and *stinted* worship in his church; the which, until the time of Moses, was not set up among his people. Things till then were adding or growing; *now* a sacrifice, *then* circumcision, then again long after that the passover, &c.

But when Israel was come into the wilderness, there to receive as God's congregation, a stated, stinted, limited way of worship, then he appoints them a time, and times, to perform this worship in; but as I said afore, before that it was not so, as the whole five books of Moses plainly shew: wherefore the seventh day sabbath, as such a limited day cannot be moral, or of the law of nature, nor imposed till then.

And methinks Christ Jesus and his apostles do plainly enough declare this very thing. For that when they repeat unto the people, or expound before them the moral law, they quite exclude the seventh day sabbath. Yea, Paul makes that law to us complete without it.

We will first touch upon what Christ doth in this case.

As in his sermon upon the mount, Mat. v-vii. In all that large and heavenly discourse upon this law, you have not one syllable about the seventh day sabbath.

So when the young man came running, and kneeling, and asking what good thing he should do to inherit eternal life, Christ bids him keep the commandments; but when the young man asked which; Christ quite leaves out the sabbath day, and puts him upon the other. As in Mat. xix.16-19. As in Mar. x.17-20. As in Lu. xviii.18-20.

You will say, he left out the first, and second, and third likewise. To which I say, that was because the young man by his question did presuppose that he had been a doer of them: for he professed in his supplication, that he was a lover of that which is naturally good, which is God, in that his petition was so universal for every thing which he had commanded.

Paul also when he makes mention of the moral law, quite leaves out of that the very name of the seventh day sabbath, and professeth, that to us Christians the law of nature is complete without it. As in Ro. iii.7-19. As in Ro. xiii.7-10. As in 1 Ti. i.8-11.

“He that loveth another, saith he, hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not covet; and if *there be* any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love *is* the fulfilling of the law.”

I make not an argument of this, but take an occasion to mention it as I go. But certainly, had the seventh day sabbath been moral, or of the law of nature, as some would fain persuade themselves, it would not so slenderly have been passed over in all these repetitions of this law, but would by Christ or his apostles have been pressed upon the people, when so fair an opportunity as at these times offered itself unto them. But they knew what they did, and wherefore they were so silent as to the mention of a seventh day sabbath when they so well talked of the law as moral.

Fifth, Moses and the prophet Ezekiel both, do fully confirm what has been insinuated by us; to wit, that the seventh day, as a sabbath, was not imposed upon men until Israel was brought into the wilderness.

1. Moses saith to Israel, “Remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and *that* the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: THEREFORE the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.” Yea, he tells us, that the covenant which God made with them in Horeb, that written in stones, was not made with their forefathers, to wit, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but with them. De. v.1-15.
2. Ezekiel also is punctual as to this: I caused them, saith God by that prophet, “to go forth out of the land of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness. And I gave them my statutes, and shewed them my judgments, which *if* a man do, he shall even live in them. Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I *am* the Lord that sanctify them.” Eze. xx.10-12. Ex. xx.8; xxxi.13; xxxv.2.

What can be more plain? And these to be sure, are two notable witnesses of God, who, as you see, do jointly concur in this; to wit, That it was not from paradise, nor from the fathers, but from the wilderness, and from Sinai, that men received the seventh day sabbath to keep it holy.

True, it was God's sabbath before: for on the first seventh day we read, that God rested thereon, and sanctified it. Hence he calls it in the first place, MY sabbath. I gave them my sabbath: But it seems it was not given to the church till he had brought them into the wilderness.

But I say, if it had been *moral*, it had been natural to man; and by the light of nature men would have understood it, even both before it was, and otherwise. But of this you see we read nothing, either by positive law, or countenanced example, or any other way, but rather the flat contrary; to wit, that Moses had the knowledge of it first from heaven, not by tradition. That Israel had it, not of, or from their fathers, but in the wilderness, from him, to wit, Moses, after he had brought them out of the land of Egypt. And that that whole law in which this seventh day sabbath is placed, was given for the bounding and better ordering of them in their church state for their time, till the Messias should come and put, by a better ministration, this out of his church, as we shall further shew anon.

The seventh day sabbath therefore was not from paradise, nor from nature, nor from the fathers, but from the wilderness, and from Sinai.

QUESTION III.

Whether when the seventh day sabbath was given to Israel in the wilderness the Gentiles, as such, was concerned therein.

Before I shew my ground for this question, I must also first premise, That the Gentiles, as such, were then without the church of God, and pale thereof; consequently had nothing to do with the essentials or necessary circumstances of that worship which God had set up for himself now among the children of Israel.

Now then for the ground of the question.

First, we read not that God gave it to any but to the seed of Jacob.

Hence it is said to Israel, and to Israel only, "The Lord hath given YOU the sabbath." Ex. xvi.29. And again, "also I gave THEM my sabbath." Eze. xx.5,12.

Now, if the gift of the seventh day sabbath was only to Israel, as these texts do more than seem to say; then to the Gentiles, as such, it was not given. Unless any shall conclude, that God by thus doing preferred the Jew to a state of gentile-ism; or that he bestowed on them, by thus doing, some high Gentile privilege. But this would be very fictitious. For, to lay aside reason, the text always, as to preference, did set the Jew in the first of places. Ro. ii.10. Nor was his giving the seventh day sabbath to them but a sign and token thereof.

But the great objection is, because the seventh day sabbath is found amongst the rest of those precepts which is so commonly called the moral law; for thence it is concluded to be of a perpetual duration.

But I answer: That neither that as given on Sinai is moral; I mean, as to the manner and ends of its ministration; of which, God permitting, we shall say more in our answer to the fourth question, whither I direct you for satisfaction. But,

Second, The Gentiles could not be concerned, as such, with God's giving of a seventh day sabbath to Israel, because, as I have shewed before, it was given to Israel, considered as a church of God. Ac. vii.32. Nor was it given to them, as such, but with rites and ceremonies thereto belonging, so Le. xxiv.5-9. Nu. xxviii.9,10. Ne. xiii.22. Eze. xlvi.4.

Now, I say, if this sabbath hath ceremonies thereto belonging, and if these ceremonies were essential to the right keeping of the sabbath: and again, if these ceremonies were given to Israel only, excluding all but such as were their proselytes, then this sabbath was given to them as excluding the Gentiles as such. But if it had been moral, the Gentiles could as soon have been deprived of their nature as of a seventh day sabbath, though the Jews should have appropriated it unto themselves only.

Again, to say that God gave this seventh day sabbath to the Gentiles, as such, (and yet so he must, if it be of the moral law) is as much as to say, that God hath ordained that *that* sabbath should be kept by the Gentiles *without*; but by the Jews, *not* without her ceremonies. And what

conclusion will follow from hence, but that God did at *one* and the *same* time set up two sorts of acceptable worships in the world: one among the Jews, another among the Gentiles! But how ridiculous such a thought would be, and how repugnant to the wisdom of God, you may easily perceive.

Yea, what a diminution would this be to God's church that then was, for one to say, the Gentiles were to serve God with more liberty than the Jew! For the law was a yoke, and yet the Gentile is called the dog, and said to be without God in the world. De. vii.7. Ps. cxlvii.19,20. Mat. xv.26. Ep. ii.11,12.

Third, When the Gentiles, at the Jews' return from Babylon, came and offered their wares to sell to the children of Israel at Jerusalem on this sabbath; yea, and sold to them too: yet *not they*, but the *Jews* were rebuked as the only breakers of that sabbath. Nay, there dwelt then at Jerusalem men of Tyre, that on *this* sabbath sold their commodities to the Jews, and men of Judah: yet not they, but the men of Judah, were contended with, as the breakers of this sabbath.

True, good Nehemiah did threaten the Gentiles that were merchants, for lying then about the walls of the city, for that by that means they were a temptation to the Jews to break *their* sabbaths; but still he charged the breach thereof *only* upon his own people. Ne. xiii.15-20.

But can it be imagined, had the Gentiles now been concerned with this sabbath by law divine, that so holy a man as Nehemiah would have let them escape without a rebuke for so notorious a transgression thereof; especially considering, that now also they were upon God's ground, to wit, within and without the walls of Jerusalem.

Fourth, Wherefore he saith to Israel again, "Verily my sabbaths YE shall keep." And again, "YE shall keep the sabbath." And again, "The children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout THEIR generations." Ex. xxxi.14-16; and xvi.29.¹⁵⁰

What can be more plain, these things thus standing in the testament

¹⁵⁰ "The Lord hath given YOU the sabbath." See also xxxi.17, "It (the observance of the sabbath) is a sign between me and the *children of Israel* for ever." – ED.

of God, than that the seventh day sabbath, as such, was given to Israel, to Israel ONLY; and that the Gentiles, as such, were not concerned therein!

Fifth, The very reason also of God's giving of the seventh day sabbath to the Jews, doth exclude the Gentiles, as such, from having any concern therein. For it was given to the Jews, as was said before, as they were considered God's church, and for a sign and token by which they should know that he had chosen and sanctified them to himself for a peculiar people. Ex. xxxi.13-17. Eze. xx.12,13.

And a great token and sign it was that he had so chosen them: for in that he had given to them this sabbath, he had given to them (his own rest) a figure and pledge of his sending his Son into the world to redeem them from the bondage and slavery of the devil: of which indeed this sabbath was a shadow or type. Col. ii.16,17.¹⁵¹

Thus have I concluded my ground for this third question. I shall therefore now propound another.

QUESTION IV.

Whether the seventh day sabbath did not fall, as such, with the rest of the Jewish rites and ceremonies? Or whether that day, as a sabbath, was afterwards by the apostles imposed upon the churches of the Gentiles?

I would now also, before I shew the grounds of my proposing this question, premise what is necessary thereunto; to wit, That *time* and *day* were both fixed upon by law, for the solemn performance of divine worship among the Jews; and that *time* and *day* is also by law fixed, for the solemnizing of divine worship to God in the churches of the Gentiles.

¹⁵¹ This is a striking application of Col. ii.17. The sabbath "a shadow of things to come;" to the Jews it was a shadow of the rest that remaineth to the children of God, reflected from the completion of the work of creation. The day of rest and worship to the Christian, is a much stronger type, yet but a *shadow* of the holy enjoyments of his eternal rest, prefigured from the finishing of the mightier work of redemption. — ED.

But that the seventh day sabbath, as such, is *that* time, *that* day, that still I question.

Now before I shew the grounds of my questioning of it, I shall enquire into the nature of that ministration in the bowels of which this seventh day sabbath is placed. And,

First, I say, as to that, the *nature* of that law is moral, but the ministration, and circumstances thereunto belonging, are shadowish and figurative.

By the nature of it, I mean the matter thereof: by the ministration and circumstances thereto belonging, I do mean the giving of it by such hands, at such a place and time, in such a mode, as when it was given to Israel in the wilderness.

The matter therefore, to wit, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength:” and “thy neighbour as thyself,” is everlasting, (Mar. xii.29-31.) and is not from Sinai, nor from the two tables of stone, but in nature; for this law commenced and took being and place that day in which man was created. Yea, it was concreate with him, and without it he cannot be a rational creature, as he was in the day in which God created him. But for the ministration of it from Sinai, with the circumstances belonging to that ministration, they are not moral, nor everlasting, but shadowish and figurative only.

That ministration cannot be moral for three reasons. 1. It commenced not when morality commenced, but two thousand years after. 2. It was not universal as the law, as moral, is; it was given only to the church of the Jews in those tables. 3. Its end is past as such a ministration, though the same law as to the morality thereof abides. Where are the tables of stone and this law as therein contained? We only, as to that, have the notice of such a ministration, and a rehearsal of the law, with that mode of giving of it, in the testament of God.

But to come to particulars.

1. The very preface to that ministration carrieth in it a type of our deliverance from the bondage of sin, the devil, and hell. Pharaoh,

and Egypt; and Israel's bondage there, being a type of these.

2. The very stones in which this law was engraven, was a figure of the tables of the heart. The first two were a figure of the heart carnal, by which the law was broken: the last two, of the heart spiritual, in which the new law, the law of grace is written and preserved. Ex. xxxiv.1. 2 Co. iii.3.
3. The very mount on which this ministration was given, was typical of Mount Zion. See He. xii. where they are compared. ver. 18-22.
4. Yea, the very church to whom that ministration was given, was a figure of the church of the gospel that is on Mount Zion. See the same scripture, and compare it with Ac. vii.38. Re. xiv.1-5.
5. That ministration was given in the hand and by the disposition of angels, to prefigure how the new law or ministration of the Spirit was to be given afterwards to the churches under the New Testament by the hands of the angel of God's everlasting covenant of grace, who is his only begotten Son. Is. lxiii.9. Mal. iii.1.¹⁵² Ac. iii.22,23.
6. It was given to Israel also in the hand of Moses, as mediator, to shew, or typify out, that the law of grace was in after times to come to the church of Christ by the hand and mediation of Jesus our Lord. Ga. iii.19. De. v.5. He. viii.6. 1 Ti. ii.5. He. ix.15; xii.24.
7. As to this ministration, it was to continue but "till the seed should come;" and then must, as such, give place to a better ministration. Ga. iii.19. "A better covenant, established upon better promises." He. viii.6.

From all this therefore I conclude, that there is a difference to be put between the morality of the law, and the ministration of it upon Sinai. The law, as to its morality was before; but as to *this* ministration, it was not till the church was with Moses, and he with the angels on Mount Sinai in the wilderness.

Now in the law, as moral, we conclude a time propounded, but no seventh day sabbath enjoined. But in that law, as thus ministered,

¹⁵² In Bunyan's original edition it is "Matth. 3,1," but this must be a typographical error. — ED.

which ministration is already out of doors;¹⁵³ we find a seventh day; that seventh day on which God rested, on which God rested from all his works, enjoined. What is it then? Why the whole ministration as written and engraven in stones being removed, the seventh day sabbath must also be removed; for that the *time*, nor yet the *day*, was as to our holy sabbath, or rest, moral; but imposed with that whole ministration, as such, upon the church, until the time of reformation: which time being come, this ministration, as I said, as such, ceaseth; and the whole law, as to the morality of it, is delivered into the hand of Christ, who imposes it now also; but not as a law of works, nor as that ministration written and engraven in stones, but as a rule of life to those that have believed in him. 1 Co. ix.21.

So then, that law is still moral, and still supposes, since it teaches that there is a God, that time must be set apart for his church to worship him in, according to that will of his that he had revealed in his word. But though by that law *time* is required; yet by that, as moral, the time never was prefixed.

The time then of old was appointed by such a ministration of that law as we have been now discoursing of; and when that ministration ceaseth, that time did also vanish with it. And now by our new law-giver, the Son of God, he being “lord also of the sabbath day,” we have a time prefixed, as the law of nature requireth, a *new* day, by him who is the lord of it; I say, appointed, wherein we may worship, not in the oldness of that letter written and engraven in stones, but according to, and most agreeing with, his new and holy testament. And this I confirm further by those reasons that now shall follow.

First, Because we find not from the resurrection of Christ to the end of the Bible, anything written by which is imposed that seventh day sabbath upon the churches. *Time*, as I said, the law as moral requires; but *that* time we find no longer imposed. And in all duties pertaining to God and his true worship in his churches, we must be guided by his laws and testaments. By his old laws, when his old worship was in force; and by his new laws, when his new worship is in force. And he hath verily now

¹⁵³ “Out of doors,” no more to be found, quite gone, fairly sent away. – *Locke*. “Out of court.” – *Law-term*. – ED.

said, "Behold, I make all things new." Re. xxi.5.

Second, I find, as I have shewed, that this seventh day sabbath is confined, not to the law of nature as such, but to that ministration of it which was given on Sinai; which ministration as it is come to an end as such, so it is rejected by Paul as a ministration no ways capable of abiding in the church now, since the ministration of the Spirit also hath taken its place. 2 Co. iii. Wherefore instead of propounding it to the churches with arguments tending to its reception, he seeks by degrading it of its old lustre and glory, to wean the churches from any ¹⁵⁴likement thereof:

1. By calling of it the ministration of death, of the letter, and of condemnation, a term most frightful, but no ways alluring to the godly.
2. By calling it a ministration that *now* has no glory, by reason of the exceeding glory of that ministration under which by the Holy Spirit the New Testament churches are. And these are weaning considerations. 2 Co. iii.
3. By telling of them it is a ministration that tendeth to blind the mind, and to veil the heart as to the knowledge of their Christ: so that they cannot, while under that, behold his beauteous face, but as their heart shall turn from it to him. 2 Co. iii.
4. And that they might not be left in the dark, but perfectly know what ministration it is that he means, he saith expressly, it is that "written and engraven in stones." See again 2 Co. iii. And in that ministration it is that this seventh day sabbath is found.

But shall we think that the apostle speaks any thing of all here said, to wean saints off from the law of nature, as such! No verily, that he retains in the church, as being managed there by Christ: but **THIS** ministration is dangerous *now*, because it cannot be maintained in the church, but in a way of contempt to the ministration of the Spirit, and is derogatory to the glory of that.

Now these, as I said, are weaning considerations. No man, I do think, that knows himself, or the glory of a gospel ministration, can, if he

¹⁵⁴ "Any likement," any fondness or partiality. – ED.

understands what Paul says here, desire that such a ministration should be retained in the churches.

Third, This seventh day sabbath has lost its ceremonies (those unto which before you are cited by the texts) which was with it imposed upon the old church for her due performance of worship to God thereon. How then can *this* sabbath *now* be kept? Kept, I say, according to law. For if the church on which it was first imposed, was not to keep it, yea, could not keep it legally without the practising of those ceremonies: and if those ceremonies are long ago dead and gone, how will those that pretend to a belief of a continuation of the sanction thereof, keep it, I say, according as it is written?

If they say, they retain the day, but change their manner of observation thereof; I ask, who has commanded them so to do? This is one of the laws of *this* sabbath. “Thou shalt take fine flour, and bake twelve cakes thereof: two tenth deals shall be in one cake. And thou shalt set them in two rows, six on a row, upon the pure table before the Lord. And thou shalt put pure frankincense upon *each* row, that it may be on the bread for a memorial, *even* an offering made by fire unto the Lord. Every sabbath he shall set it in order before the Lord continually, *being taken* from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant.” Le. xxiv.5-8. You may see also other places, as Nu. xxviii.9,10. Ne. xiii.22 and Eze. xlvi.4.

Now if these be the laws of the sabbath, this seventh day sabbath; and if God did never command that *this* sabbath should by his church be sanctified without them: and, as was said before, if these ceremonies have been long since dead and buried, *how* must this sabbath be kept?

Let men take heed, lest while they plead for law, and pretend themselves to be the only doers of God’s will,¹⁵⁵ they be not found the biggest transgressors thereof. And why can they not as well keep the

¹⁵⁵ This spirit is not extinct. Mr. Shenston, in his “Plea for the Seventh-day,” charges those who keep the Lord’s day “that they yield to the tide – keep their friends – riches – comforts; they believe that the seventh-day is the sabbath, and would greatly prefer keeping it, if the rulers of the nation would alter the day; they imagine that their God is some dumb idol!” (Edit. 1826, pp.41,42). Language most unseemly and insulting – charging all who observe the Lord’s day with being hypocrites and the worst of fools. Mr. S. forgot the solemn proverb, “with what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged.”

other sabbaths? As the sabbaths of months, of years, and the jubilee? For this, as I have shewed, is no moral precept, it is only a branch of the ministration of death and condemnation.

Fourth, The seventh day sabbath, as such, was a sign and shadow of things to come; and a sign cannot be the thing signified and substance too. Wherefore when the thing signified or substance, is come, the sign or thing shadowing ceaseth. And, I say, the seventh day sabbath being so, as a seventh day sabbath it ceaseth also. See again Ex. xxxi.13,14. Eze. xx.12,21. Col. ii.14.

Nor do I find that our Protestant writers, notwithstanding their reverence of the sabbath, do conclude otherwise; but that though time as to worshipping God, must needs be contained in the bowels of the moral law, as moral; yet they for good reasons forbear to affix the seventh day as *that* time there too.

They do it, I say, for good reasons; reasons drawn from the scripture; or rather, for that the scripture draws them so to conclude: yet they cast not away the morality of a sabbath of rest to the church. It is to be granted them, that time for God's worship abideth for ever, but the seventh day vanishes as a shadow and sign; because such indeed it was, as the scripture above cited declares as to the sanction thereof as a sabbath.

The law of nature then calls for time; but the God of nature assigns it, and has given power to his Son to continue SUCH time as himself shall by his eternal wisdom judge most meet for the churches of the Gentiles to solemnize worship to God by him in. Hence he is said to be "Lord even of the sabbath day." Mat. xii.8.

Fifth, I find by reading God's Word, that Paul by authority apostolical, takes away the sanctions of all the Jews' festivals and sabbaths.

This is manifest, for that he leaves the observation or non-observation of them, as things indifferent, to the mind and discretion of the believers. "One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day *alike*. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." Ro. xiv.5.

By this last clause of the verse, "Let every man be fully persuaded

in his own mind,” he doth plainly declare, that *such* days are now stript of their sanction.¹⁵⁶ For none of God’s laws, while they retain their sanction, are left to the will and mind of the believers, as to whether they will observe them or no. Men, I say, are not left to their liberty in such a case; for when a stamp of divine authority is upon a law, and abides, so long we are bound, not to *our* mind, but to that law: but when a thing, once sacred, has lost its sanction, then it falls, as to faith and conscience, among other *common* or indifferent things. And so the seventh day sabbath did. Again,

Sixth, Thus Paul writes to the church of Coloss. “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body *is* of Christ.” Col. ii.16,17. Here also, as he serveth other holy days, he serveth the sabbath. He gives a liberty to believers to refuse the observation of it, and commands that no man should judge against them for their so doing. And as you read, the reason of his so doing is, because the body, the substance is come. Christ saith he, is the body, or that which these things were a shadow or figure of. “The body *is* of Christ.”

Nor hath the apostle, since he saith “or of the sabbath” one would think, left any hole, out at which men’s inventions could get: but man has sought out many; and, so, many he will use.

But again, That the apostle by this word “sabbath” intends the seventh day sabbath, is clear; for that it is by Moses himself counted for a sign, as we have shewed: and for that none of the other sabbaths were a more clear shadow of the Lord Jesus Christ than this. For that, and that alone, is called “*the* rest of God:” in it God rested from all his works. Hence he calls it by way of eminency, “MY sabbath, and MY holy day.” Is. lvi.4; lviii.13.

Yet could that rest be nothing else but typical; for God, never since the world began, really rested, but in his Son. “This is he,” saith God, “in whom I am well pleased.” This sabbath then, was God’s rest typically, and was given to Israel as a sign of his grace towards them in Christ. Wherefore when Christ was risen, it ceased, and was no longer of

¹⁵⁶ This was the opinion of those great Reformers, Tyndale, Calvin, and Luther; see introduction by the Editor. It was a sentiment which led to no practical evil. – ED.

obligation to bind the conscience to the observation thereof. [Or of the sabbath.] He distinctly singleth out *this* seventh day, as that which was a most noble shadow, a most exact shadow. And then puts that with the other together; saying, they are a shadow of things to come; and that Christ has answered them all. "The body *is* of Christ."

Seventh, No man will, I think, deny but that He. iv.4. intends the seventh day sabbath, on which God rested from all his works; for the text doth plainly say so: yet may the observing reader easily perceive that both it, and the *rest* of Canaan also, made mention of ver.5. were typical, as to a day made mention of vers.7 and 8. which day he calls another. He would not afterwards have made mention of another day. If Joshua had given them rest, he would not. Now if they had not that rest in Joshua's days, be sure they had it not by Moses; for he was still before.

All the rests therefore that Moses gave them, and that Joshua gave them too, were but typical of another day, in which God would give them rest. He. iv.9,10. And whether the *day* to come, was Christ, or Heaven, it makes no matter: it is enough that they before did fail, as always shadows do, and that therefore mention by David is, and that afterward, made of another day. "There remains therefore a rest to the people of God." A rest to come, of which the seventh day in which God rested, and the land of Canaan, was a type; which rest begins in Christ *now*, and shall be consummated in glory.

And in that he saith "There remains a rest," referring to that of David, what is it, if it signifies not, that the other rests remain not? There remains therefore a rest, a rest prefigured by the seventh day, and by the rest of Canaan, though they are fled and gone.

"There remains a rest;" a rest which stands not now in signs and shadows, in the seventh day, or Canaan, but in the Son of God, and his kingdom, to whom, and to which the weary are invited to come for rest. Is. xxviii.12. Mat. xi.20. He. iv.11.

Yet this casts not out the Christian's holiday or sabbath: for that was not ordained to be a type or shadow of things to come, but to sanctify the name of their God in, and to perform that worship to him which was also in a shadow signified by the ceremonies of the law, as the epistle to the Hebrews doth plentifully declare.

And I say again, the seventh day sabbath cannot be it, for the reasons shewed afore.

Eighth, Especially if you add to all this, that nothing of the ministration of death written and engraven in stones, is brought by Jesus, or by his apostles, into the kingdom of Christ, as a part of his instituted worship. Hence it is said of that ministration in the bowels of which this seventh day sabbath is found, that it has now NO glory; that its glory is done away, in or by Christ, and so is laid aside, the ministration of the Spirit that excels in glory, being come in the room thereof.

I will read the text to you. “But if the ministration of death, written *and* engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which *glory* was to be done away: (It was given at first with this proviso, that it should not always retain its glory, that sanction, as a ministration.) How shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation *be* glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which was done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth *is* glorious.” 2 Co. iii.7-11.

What can be more plain? The text says expressly, that this ministration doth NOT remain; yea, and insinuates, that in its first institution it was ordained with this proviso, “It was to be done away.” Now if in its first institution upon Sinai it was thus ordained; and if by the coming in of the ministration of the spirit, this ordination is now executed; that is, if by it, and the apostle saith it, it is done away by a ministration that remains: then where is that seventh day sabbath?

Thus therefore I have discoursed upon this fourth question: And having shewed by this discourse that the old seventh day sabbath is abolished and done away, and that it has nothing to do with the churches of the Gentiles; I am next to shew what day it is that must abide as holy to the Christians, and for them to perform their New Testament church service in.

The Sabbath and The Lord's Day

Bunyan now goes on to give his reasons for believing that the first day of the week, or Lord's day, is the "Christian Sabbath". As stated previously, many of his arguments in this section are excellent in proving that the first day of the week is the day on which Christians are to assemble for worship. But unfortunately Bunyan went further, claiming that they show that the entire day should be observed as a Sabbath – a holy day of rest. In this he was incorrect.

OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF PUBLIC WORSHIP,
AS TO PLACE AND TIME

by John Gill

Preface

*John Gill (1697-1771) was a sovereign grace Baptist minister and biblical scholar, mighty in the Scriptures. His **Exposition of the Old and New Testaments**, and his **Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity**, must be ranked among the greatest Christian works ever written. And yet modern-day “Sunday Sabbatarians” must, if they are to be consistent, reject him as a great Antinomian! For he shows, with thorough biblical exegesis, that the Sabbath was not a creation ordinance; that it was only given to men after the Exodus; that only the Israelites under the law were to observe it; that the fourth commandment has now been abrogated; etc. In addition, by thorough biblical exegesis he proves that the first day of the week is the day on which, by apostolic example, the churches of God are to assemble for worship. But we differ with him when he comes to the conclusion that the Lord’s day is to be the “Christian Sabbath”. He conclusively proves, from Scripture, that the Lord’s day is the day on which believers are to assemble for worship; but in the very last section in this otherwise excellent treatise, in seeking to prove that the Lord’s day is to be observed as a day of rest (i.e. essentially as a “Christian Sabbath”), he gives **not a single scriptural reference** for anything that he teaches, which for Gill is highly unusual, and demonstrates that he, like Bunyan, was to this extent a product of his times, and could not take his doctrine to the logical conclusion and reject the idea of a “Christian Sabbath” entirely.*

As an important additional point, Gill points out that men such as Calvin, Beza, and Zanchius, among others, viewed the choice of the Lord’s day as the day of worship as having been left entirely to the choice of believers, as an exercise of their Christian liberty. Gill disagreed with them; and although we too disagree completely with this view, and in addition are not moved in the least to consider it merely because Calvin or any other man, too often incorrectly revered by far too many Christians, believed

*it to be true; yet it is significant for this one reason: that many "Sunday Sabbatarians", who are so quick to condemn as "Antinomian" those who reject the notion of a "Christian Sabbath", do not speak so harshly of men such as Calvin or Beza – even though, in this matter, those men were very far from being "Sunday Sabbatarians"! This is hypocritical and unjust. If we are Antinomian, then so were they; "Sunday Sabbatarians" cannot pick and choose. Some of the men they most look up to had no time for any "Christian Sabbath" doctrine as espoused later by the Puritans; and yet no word of condemnation is directed at **them** for this.*

*For the record, we do not agree with Gill in quoting from certain ancient authors as if they were Christians, when they most certainly were not (men such as Origen, Jerome, etc.). What various so-called "early church fathers" thought about these things is not important, **except** as historical records of what was believed by some in their own days; these were fallible men, men who often taught heresies, and are certainly no authorities for Christians. All that is important is what the Scriptures say. Nor does it matter what a particular ancient and defective copy of the Scriptures said on one point, when it added to the true Word of God. And nor was Gill correct in implying that Heb. 4:10 is about Christ.*

We have retained all of Gill's footnotes just as they were given by him.

(The following is taken from *A Complete Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity*, by John Gill, pgs.964-972. The Baptist Standard Bearer, Inc., Paris, Arkansas, 1989 reprint.)

The circumstances of *place* and *time* of public worship, deserve consideration; since for public worship there must be some certain *place* to meet and worship in, and some stated *time* to worship at. As to the first of these, it may soon be dispatched; since there does not appear to be any place appointed for it, until the tabernacle was erected in the wilderness. It is probable that there was some certain place where our first parents worshipped, after their expulsion from the garden of Eden; whither Cain and Abel brought their sacrifices, and offered them; but where it was is not easy to say; perhaps the cherubim and flaming sword, at the east of the garden of Eden, were the symbols of the divine presence, since the

Lord is frequently represented as dwelling between the cherubim; which may have respect, as to the cherubim in the tabernacle and temple, so to these; and there might be a stream of light, splendour, and glory, an emblem of the Shekinah, or divine Majesty, which had then appeared in the form of a flaming sword; and now near to this, or however in sight of it, might be the place of public worship; and hence when Cain was driven from these parts, he is said to be *hid from the face of God*, and to go out *from the presence of the Lord*, Gen.iii.24. and iv.3,4,14,16.

As for the patriarchs in succeeding times, before the flood, it does not appear that they had any other places to worship in but their own houses, where families might agree to meet, and worship in them in turn and course. And the patriarchs after the flood, as they were strangers, sojourners, and travellers in the earth; they built altars here and there for their convenience, and where they worshipped. Abraham in his travels came to a place near Bethel, as it was afterwards called, and built an altar, and worshipped; and on his return from Egypt he came to the same place again, and there worshipped as before, Gen.xii.8. and xiii.3,4. Jacob, in his travels, came to a place called Luz, and where he remarkably enjoyed the divine presence, and thought it no other than the house of God, and therefore set up a stone for a pillar, and said it should be the house of God; and called the name of the place Bethel; and which God so honoured as to call himself by the name of the *God of Bethel*; and hither, with his family, he came many years after, and erected an altar unto God, Gen. xxviii.17-22. and xxxi.13. and xxxv.6,7.

There does not seem to be any settled place of worship until the tabernacle was built in the wilderness; and then every man was to bring his offering to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and there offer it, before the tabernacle of the Lord, Lev.xvii.4,5. and this tabernacle was moveable from place to place; not only while in the wilderness, but when the Israelites were come into the land of Canaan: it was first at Gilgal, then at Shiloh, after that at Nob and Gibeon; hence the Lord says, he had not dwelt in an house, in any fixed place, from the time the Israelites came out of Egypt; as if he had before;¹⁵⁷ but had walked in

¹⁵⁷ See my Note on 1 Chron.xvii.5.

a tent, in a tabernacle, 2 Sam.vii.6. It had been said by the Lord, that when the Israelites came into the land that was given them, there would be a place chosen of God to dwell in, and where all offerings were to be brought, and feasts kept, Deut.xii.10,11. the name of the place was not mentioned, but it eventually appeared, that the city of Jerusalem, and the temple there, were meant; and the place where the temple was to be built was first discovered by David, and shewn to Solomon; and which was confirmed to him by the Lord himself, to be the place he had chosen for an house of sacrifice, 1 Chron.xxii.1. 2 Chron.vii.12. and this continued a place of worship until destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar; and after the Jews' return from the Babylonish captivity it was rebuilt, and remained to the times of Christ.

Indeed, after the captivity, there were synagogues erected in various parts of the land of Judea, which were a sort of chapels of ease, where prayer was made, and Moses and the prophets read and expounded on Sabbath-days; but no sacrifices were offered in them, nor any of the yearly feasts kept there: and whereas there had been, before the times of Christ, there still was a controversy between the Jews and Samaritans, whether the temple at Jerusalem or mount Gerizim, were the place of worship; this was decided by our Lord, who declared that the time was coming, that neither at the one place nor at the other, should God be worshipped; but every where, John iv.20,21. as the apostle also says, 1 Tim.ii.8. and, indeed, since, under the gospel dispensation, as was foretold, the name of the Lord shall be great among the Gentiles, from the rising of the sun to the going down of it; and offerings of prayer and praise should be offered to him in every place, Mal.i.11. No one place could be fixed on for all the nations of the earth to meet and worship in; and saints are now therefore at liberty to build places of worship for their convenience wherever they please, as the first christians did, and continued to do.

But the circumstances of *time*, or a stated day of worship, requires more particular consideration; it having been a matter of controversy which has exercised the minds of good and learned men, for a century or two past, and not yet decided to the satisfaction of all parties; and in order to obtain what satisfaction we can, it will be proper to enquire,

I. What day has been, or is observed, as a stated time of public worship; with the reasons thereof. And,

First, It has been thought and asserted, that the seventh day from the creation, was enjoined Adam in a state of innocence, as a day of public and religious worship, and so to be observed by his posterity in after-times; but if it was enjoined Adam in his state of innocence, it must be either by the law of nature, written on his heart, or by a positive law given him.

1st, It does not seem to be the law of nature written on his heart; for then, –

1. He must be bound to keep a Sabbath before the institution of it; he was created on the sixth day, after the image of God; one part of which was the law of nature, written on his heart; but the institution of the Sabbath-day was not until the seventh day, if it was then; for it is yet a matter of question. – 2. There would have been some remains of it in his posterity after the fall; and even among the Gentiles; for these have the *law written in their hearts*, Rom.ii.14. but now it does not appear that they were ever directed by the law and light of nature to observe, the seventh day of the week as an holy Sabbath; what has been alleged in favour of it will be considered hereafter. – 3. Was this the case, it would have been re-inscribed with other laws, in more legible characters on the hearts of God's people in regeneration, according to the promise in the covenant of grace, Heb.viii.10. and had the law of the seventh-day Sabbath been one of them, it must easily have been discerned by them; and the observance of it would have been out of question. Nor,

2dly, Does it seem to be enjoined Adam, by any positive law; and, indeed, if it had been written on his heart, as a branch of the law of nature, there would have been no need of any such law to have directed and instructed him; and to have a positive law given him, to keep a seventh-day Sabbath, without any positive rules and directions what worship should be observed by him on that day, which do not appear, the law would have been useless; we have no account of any positive law given to Adam in a state of innocence, but that which forbid eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil; which tree, and its fruit, we know nothing of; and did we, that law would not be binding upon us.

The proof of such a law, with respect to the Sabbath, is founded,

1. On Gen.ii.2,3. where it is said, that God having ended his work, *rested on the seventh-day, and God blessed the seventh-day, and sanctified it.* But, – (1.) No mention is made of a Sabbath, and of the sanctification of that, as in the fourth command, Exod.xx.11. only of the seventh-day, and not of that as a Sabbath. – (2.) The words are a narrative of what God did himself; but do not contain a precept of what Adam should do; they only declare what God did, that he blessed and sanctified the seventh-day; but do not enjoin Adam to keep it holy, as a Sabbath. – (3.) At most they seem only to design a destination of that day to holy service hereafter; God *blessed* it, that is, pronounced it an happy day; all his works being finished, and man, an holy creature, the crown and glory of all, made after his image:¹⁵⁸ on a survey of which, God rested, and took delight, pleasure, and refreshment in them, on the seventh-day; which he *sanctified*, not by keeping it holy himself, nor by imparting any holiness to it, which a day is not capable of; but he separated, or set it apart for holy use in after-time, which is a very common sense of this word: so Jeremiah was sanctified before he was born; that is, appointed and ordained to be a holy prophet; which purpose was not carried into execution until some time after; and so God might be said to sanctify or set apart in his mind and purpose, the seventh-day to be an holy Sabbath in future time; though it was not actually executed, as it should seem by what will be hereafter observed, until many hundred years after the creation. Besides, – (4.) The words in Gen.ii are understood by many learned men proleptically, or by way of anticipation; as other things are in this same chapter; so some places are called by the names they bore in the times of Moses, which they had not from the beginning; see ver.11-14. or the words may be considered as in a parenthesis; and the rather, since had they been read, or to be read, in common with the preceding, the word *God*, and the phrase *the seventh-day*, would have been omitted; and have been read, *and he blessed and sanctified it*; and the reason for it, which follows, seems manifestly taken from the fourth command, as given on Mount Sinai, Exod.xx.11. and Moses writing his history of the creation, after this precept was given, took

¹⁵⁸ Vid. Heidegger. Hist. Patriarch.Exercit.3. s. 59. p. 109.

the opportunity of inserting this whole passage, to give the greater sanction to it with the Israelites. – (5.) After all, be it that the text in Genesis enjoins the keeping the seventh-day from the creation, as a Sabbath; which seventh-day now cannot be known by any people or persons whatever; it could never be the same with the Jewish seventh-day Sabbath; for that was to be observed after six days labour of man; *Six days shalt thou labour, &c.* whereas this could be only after the six days labour of God, who rested from his work on the seventh; but it was Adam's first day, and could not with any propriety be called a rest from labour to him, when, as yet, he had not laboured at all: such a Sabbath was not suitable to him in a state of innocence, which supposes imperfection and sin; the creature would not have been in bondage had he not sinned, this was the effect of the fall; Adam, in innocence, had no man-servant, nor maid-servant, nor any cattle in a state of bondage, groaning under burdens, to rest from their labours. This is a law merely calculated for sinful man.

2. The other remaining proof of such a law so early, is taken from Heb. iv.3,4. where no mention is made of a seventh-day Sabbath; and in which the apostle takes notice of the several rests which had been under the former dispensation, and shews, that neither of them was the rest promised, and had, under the gospel-dispensation: not the seventh-day rest from the creation, for that was God's rest: not the rest of the Israelites in the land of Canaan, which Joshua gave them; for then David a long time after, would not have spoken of another day of rest, the gospel-dispensation, into which believers now enter. Upon the whole, it must appear at least very dubious and uncertain, that there was any institution of a seventh-day Sabbath from the creation; and especially when it is considered,

Secondly, That there is no proof of the patriarchs, from Adam to the times of Moses, observing such a day. For,

1. We no where read of any law being given them for the observation of the seventh-day Sabbath; Adam and Eve had a law which forbade the eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge; which Tertullian calls the primordial law; Abel was taught the law of sacrifices; Noah had the laws which forbade eating the blood with the flesh of a beast alive, and

the shedding of human blood; and Abraham the law of circumcision; but neither of them had any law, as we know of, which enjoined them to observe the seventh-day Sabbath. The Jews pretend that there were seven laws given to the sons of Noah; but this of keeping the seventh-day Sabbath is not among them.

2. Many of the religious actions of the patriarchs are taken notice of, and commended, both ceremonial and moral; as their offering of sacrifice, calling on the name of the Lord, prayer to God, and meditation on him and his works; their piety, fear of God, and eschewing evil; but not a word of their observance of a seventh-day Sabbath.
3. The sins of men, both before and after the flood, are observed, but Sabbath-breaking does not appear among them. The old world was full of violence, rapine, and oppression; and in the new world, intemperance, incest, idolatry, and other sins, men were chargeable with; but not with this: it does not appear among the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah; nor is it to be found among the abominations for which the old inhabitants of Canaan were cast out of it. But no sooner was the law of the Sabbath given to the Israelites in the wilderness, but we hear of the breach of it, and of a severe punishment for it.
4. It was the general opinion of the ancient fathers of the christian-church, that the patriarchs did not observe a Sabbath, nor were obliged to it; but were righteous men, and saved without it: not Adam, nor Abel, nor Enoch, nor Noah, nor Melchizedek, nor Lot, nor Abraham, nor Job, nor any before Moses; so say Justin Martyr,¹⁵⁹ Irenaeus,¹⁶⁰ Tertullian,¹⁶¹ and Eusebius;¹⁶² by whom are mentioned particularly, all the above persons, as good men, and non-observers of a Sabbath. Some have fancied that they have found instances of a seventh-day Sabbath observed in the time of the patriarchs; as at the offerings of Cain and Abel, which are said to be *in process of time*, or *at the end of days*, Gen.iv.3. but this phrase seems to design, not the end of a week, or seven days, no number being expressed, but rather the end of a year,

¹⁵⁹ Dialog. cum Trypho. p.236, 240, 241, 245, 261, 319.

¹⁶⁰ Adv. Haeres. l. 4. c. 30.

¹⁶¹ Adv. Judaeos, c.2,3,4.

¹⁶² Hist. Eccl. l. 1. c.2,4. Demonstr. Evangel. l. 1. c.6 et. Praepar. Evangel. l. 7. c.6. p.304.

days being sometimes put for a year;¹⁶³ and so refers to the harvest, at the end of the year, when the fruits of the earth were gathered in; and therefore Cain might think his sacrifice, at that time, would have been the more acceptable. And some conjecture a Sabbath was observed by Noah in the ark, Gen.viii.10,12. since he is said to send out the dove again, after seven days; but this number seven has respect, not to the first day of the week, from whence the days were numbered; but to the first sending out of the dove, be it on what day it may. And besides, Noah might have respect to the known course of the moon, which puts on another face every seven days;¹⁶⁴ and which, in its increase and wane, might have an influence upon the water, which he was careful to observe and make trial of this way. Moreover, it is observed, that in Job's time there was a day when the sons of God met together, Job i.6. and ii.1. but who these sons of God were, whether angels or men, is not certain; nor where, nor on what day they met; no mention is made of a seventh-day, much less of a Sabbath; nor of a certain rotation of this day every week; nor of the distance between the first and second meeting. Arguments from this, and the above instances, must be very far-fetched, and are very slight and slender grounds to build such an hypothesis upon, as the observation of a seventh-day Sabbath.

Thirdly, There is no mention of a Sabbath before the descent of the manna in the wilderness of Sin: some of the Jewish writers¹⁶⁵ speak of it as given at Marah, a few weeks before, which they suppose is included in the word *statute*, Exod.xv.25. but this is said without any foundation; but the seventh day from the descent of the manna is expressly called a *Sabbath*, Exod.xvi.23-26. and is the first we hear of, and which appears to be quite a new thing; for had the Israelites been used to a seventh-day Sabbath, the rulers of the people might easily have conjectured, that the reason of twice as much bread being gathered on the sixth day, was on account of the Sabbath being the day following, as a provision for that, had that been the case, without coming to tell Moses of it, who

¹⁶³ Vid. Heidegger. Hist. Patriarch. Exercitat. 5. s.18. p.178.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. Exercitat. 18. s.32. p.562.

¹⁶⁵ T. Sanhedrin, Fol.56.2. Seder Olam Zuta, p.101. Ed. Meyer, Yalkut, par.1. fol.73.2,3.

gave this as a reason of it to them; *To-morrow is*, or rather it should be supplied, *shall be, the rest of the holy Sabbath to the Lord*; for a *to-morrow* cannot be spoken of with propriety in the present tense, *is*; but as future, *shall be*; and therefore on the seventh-day, when the manna ceased, which was a confirmation of it, he says to them, *see*, take notice of it, as something new and wonderful, and a sufficient reason of the institution of the Sabbath, and why that day was given unto them for a Sabbath; and when the fourth command was given, a month after, it is introduced with a *memento*, as the other commands are not; *Remember*; what had been lately enjoined them; and that appears to be a new law; for when a man was found guilty of the breach of it, no penalty being as yet declared, the people brought him to Moses, and he was put into the ward, until the mind of God was known concerning it, Numb.xv.31-36. Moreover, if there had been a Sabbath before the giving of the manna, the Sabbath preceding the seventh-day from the descent of that, must have been the fifteenth of the month, on which day it is certain the Jews had a wearisome journey, by divine appointment, the cloud going before them, Exod.xvi.1. and was concluded with gathering quails; so that it was not a day of rest to them, nor the rest of the holy Sabbath to the Lord.

Fourthly, The seventh-day Sabbath, as it was declared on the descent of the manna, that it was peculiar to the Jews; *The Lord hath given you the Sabbath*; – *so the people rested the seventh-day*, Exod.xvi.29,30. So it was when it received a further sanction from the fourth precept of the decalogue. For,

1. The whole decalogue, or ten commands of the law of Moses, as such, were given to the Jews only;¹⁶⁶ as a covenant, it was made with the Israelites in the wilderness, and not even with their fathers, which were before them; and in which respect they had the preference to all other nations on earth, as Moses affirms, Deut.v.2-21. and iv.6,7,8. and as is affirmed by David, Psalm cxlvii.19,20. and by the apostle Paul, Rom.ix.4. and which appears from the preface to the decalogue; *I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt*; which cannot be said of any other nation.
2. The fourth command is particularly and expressly declared as peculiar

¹⁶⁶ Vid. Zanchii. Oper. tom. 4.l.1. c.11. p.222,223.

to them; *My Sabbaths shall ye keep*, saith the Lord; *for it is a sign between me and you*, and not others, Exod.xxxi.13. that is, of the national covenant between them. The same is repeated, ver.16,17. where the children of Israel, as distinct from all other nations to whom it was no sign, are directed to keep the Sabbath. So Nehemiah says, that when God spoke to the Israelites in the wilderness, he made *known to them his holy Sabbath*; which it seems had not been made known unto them before; but now was made known to them, and not to others; and is mentioned along with peculiar precepts, statutes, and laws commanded them, Neh.ix.14. and the prophet Ezekiel, from the Lord, tells the Jews, that the Lord had *given* to their fathers in the wilderness, his *Sabbaths, to be a sign between him and them*; it is not said he restored them, but *gave* them, denoting a new institution, and as peculiarly belonging to them: and this is the sense of the Jewish nation in general,¹⁶⁷ that the Sabbath only belongs to them, and that the Gentiles are not obliged to keep it, for though a Gentile proselyte or stranger within the gate, for the sake of national decorum, and to avoid offence and scandal, was to do no work on it for an Israelite, yet he might for himself, as the Jews interpret it,¹⁶⁸ but then this supposes, that a stranger not within the gate, was not obliged to observe it. Besides, some of the Jewish writers understand this stranger, or proselyte, of a proselyte of righteousness, who was under equal obligation to the commands of the law, as a Jew.

3. The time and place when and where this precept was given, with the reason of it, shew that it was peculiar to the Jews; it was given them in the wilderness, after they were come out of Egypt; and their deliverance from thence is expressly observed, as the reason why it was commanded them, Deut.v.15. The Lord's resting on the seventh day from his works of creation, is used as an argument to enforce the keeping of the seventh-day Sabbath, now enjoined; but not as a reason of the institution of it.
4. None but Jews were ever charged with the breach of the seventh-day Sabbath; the children of Israel were charged with it in the

¹⁶⁷ Zohar in Exod. fol.26. 4. T. Bab. Sanhedrin, fol.59. l. Bartenora in Misn. Sabbat, c.24. s.1.

¹⁶⁸ T. Bab. Ceritot, fol. 9. l. Piske Tosephot Yebamot, art. 84. Maimon, Hilchot Sabbat, c.20. s.14.

wilderness, soon after it was enjoined them, Ezek.xx.20,21,23,24. so in Nehemiah's time, though the Tyrians, who sold fish to the Jews on Sabbath-days, were threatened, and shut out of the city, and forbid to come there with their goods; yet it was the Jews who bought them, who are charged with the profanation of the Sabbath, Neh.xiii.15-20. and it was the sense of the Jews, that the Gentiles are not to be punished for the breach of it; yea, rather, that they are punishable for keeping it;¹⁶⁹ they having no other laws binding upon them, but the seven laws they speak of, as given to the sons of Noah.

5. The law of observing the seventh-day Sabbath is not of a moral nature; was it, it would be binding on all mankind, Jews and Gentiles; and could not have been dispensed with, nor abolished, as it is, Matt. xii.1-12. Col.ii.16,17. and if such, as has been observed, it must have been written on the heart of Adam, when created; and would be, not only re-inscribed on the hearts of regenerate men, but even the work of it would appear to be written on the hearts of Gentiles, as their consciences would bear witness; whereas it does not appear. Some, indeed, pretend to say, that the seventh day of the week was reckoned holy with the Gentiles; but of all the instances produced from Clemens and Eusebius, there is but one now extant among the poets, and that is in Hesiod; and the seventh day he speaks of as holy, is not the seventh day of the week, but the seventh day of the month, the birthday of Apollo, as the poet himself suggests, and the Scholiasts¹⁷⁰ on him; which was the seventh day of the month Thargelion, kept sacred at Athens on that account; hence Apollo was called Ebdomegena.¹⁷¹ As for the Jews' seventh-day Sabbath, the Heathen writers¹⁷² speak of it as having its origin from Moses, and as peculiar to the Jews,¹⁷³ and the day itself was held by them in the utmost contempt; see Lam.i.7. there is scarce a poet of theirs¹⁷⁴ but has a lash at it, and at the Jews on

¹⁶⁹ T. Bab. Betza, fol.16. l. et Sanhedrin, fol.58.2. et 59. l. Bemigdbar Rabb. fol.234. 4. Maimon. Hilchot, Melachim, c.10. s.9.

¹⁷⁰ Proclus et Moschepulus in *ibid*.

¹⁷¹ Plutarch. Sympos. l. 8. c.1.

¹⁷² Justin e Trogo, l. 36. c.2. Tacit. Hist. l. 5. c.4.

¹⁷³ Cultraque Judaeo septima Sacra viro, Ovid. de arte amandi, l. 1.

¹⁷⁴ Juvenal. Satyr. 6. v. 158. Satyr. 14. v. 105,106. Pers. Satyr. 5. v. 184. Martial. l. 4. ep.4. vid. Senecam apud Aug. de Civ. Dei, l. 6. c.11.

account of it; and represent them as a parcel of idle people, who keep that day to indulge themselves in sloth; the principal day of the week sacred with the Gentiles, was the first day of the week, dedicated to the sun, and from thence called Sunday: so that if any argument can be drawn from the observation of the heathens, it is in favour of the Christian, and not of the Jewish Sabbath.

6. It is impracticable and impossible, that a seventh-day Sabbath should be kept by all people, in all nations of the world, at the same time exactly and precisely. It was and could only be observed by the Jews themselves, when they were together under a certain meridian; it cannot be kept now by them, as they are scattered about in distant parts of the world, with any precision, at the same time; such an hypothesis proceeds upon a false notion that the earth is plain, and has every where the same horizon, and is not globular, nor having horizons, and meridians, and degrees of longitude different in every place and country; which latter is most certainly true. If the earth is a globe, consisting of two hemispheres, when it is day on one side of the globe, it is night on the other; so that let the sabbath begin at what time you please; if from sun-setting, as the Jews begin theirs, and continue it to sun-setting the next day; when it is sun-setting with us, it is sun-rising with those in the other hemisphere; and so *vice versa*; and if it is begun at midnight, and continued to midnight, as with us; when it is midnight on one side of the globe, it will be midday, or noon, on the other; so in each case there must be half a day's difference in the exact time of the Sabbath; and according to the variations in horizons, meridians, and longitudes, will the day differ. If therefore the earth is a globe, as it is certain it is; and as horizons, meridians, and longitudes differ, as they most certainly do; then it is impossible that the same exact precise time should be every where kept; and God has never commanded that which is impossible. Besides, it may be observed, that in Greenland, and other northern countries, for several months together, there is no sun-rising nor sun-setting, and so no days to be distinguished that way, the sun being at such a time always above the horizon; so that a Sabbath-day, consisting of twenty-four hours, or of a day and a night, cannot be observed in such parts of the world; nay, it has been made to appear, that one and the same day, at one and the same place, may be Friday, Saturday, and what

is called Sunday. Supposing a Turk, whose Sabbath is Friday, and a Jew, whose Sabbath is Saturday, and a Christian, whose Sabbath is the first day of the week, dwell together; the Turk and the Christian set out on their travels at the same time, leaving the Jew where he was; the Turk by travelling westward loses a day, and the Christian travelling eastward gets one; so that both compassing the world, and meeting together again at the same place, the Jew continuing where he was, the same day will be Friday to the Turk, a Saturday to the Jew, and Sunday to the Christian; so Dr. Heylin.¹⁷⁵ Those that travel round the world westward, it is observed by others,¹⁷⁶ as this makes their days longer, so they find fewer in compassing the globe, losing one day in tale, though they lose no time; so that if the sabbath of their nation was the seventh, they would find it their sixth on their return: and those that travel eastward, as their days are shorter, are more in number, and gain one in tale; and on their return, would find their eighth, or first day of the week, to be the nation's Sabbath. So there would be three Sabbaths kept in a nation, and all exactly observing time. It may be said, the same objection will lie against the first day as the seventh. It is granted; but then we observe that on another footing, as will be seen presently.

Fifthly, The first day of the week, or Lord's day, is now the day of worship observed by the generality of Christians; upon what account, and by what authority, must be our next enquiry. Not by virtue of any positive precept, or express command of Christ, for which there is none; wherefore some great and good men, as Calvin,¹⁷⁷ Beza,¹⁷⁸ Zanchius,¹⁷⁹ and others, have been of opinion that it was a matter of pure choice, in the first churches, and a branch of their Christian liberty; who were left free, as to choose a place where, so the time when, to worship; and therefore fixed on this day, and substituted it in the room of the Jewish Sabbath, antiquated, as being most proper and suitable, and having the sanction

¹⁷⁵ History of the Sabbath, par. 1. p.48.

¹⁷⁶ See Dr. Watts's Holiness of Times, &c. p.55.

¹⁷⁷ Institut. l. 2. c.8. s.34.

¹⁷⁸ Confess. Fidei. c.5. s.41.

¹⁷⁹ In Precept. 4. tom. 4. p.670.

of an apostolic practice; to which I have been inclined to agree; only cannot but be of opinion, that the practice and examples of the apostles of Christ, men inspired by the holy Spirit, who wrote, taught, and practised no other than agreeable to *the commandments of the Lord*, Matt.xxviii.20. 1 Cor.xiv.37. carry in them the nature, force, and obligation of a precept. So though there is no express command for infant baptism, yet had it been countenanced, as it has not been, by the like practice and examples of the apostles, we should have judged it our duty to have followed such a practice and such examples; it is upon this footing we observe the first day of the week, as being –

1. The most proper and suitable day for divine worship; as the change of the day of worship was necessary, there being a new dispensation, and new ordinances of divine service; and to testify to the world our faith of Christ's coming, death, and resurrection from the dead; no day was so proper as the first day of the week, which immediately followed upon, and was the next remove from the seventh-day Sabbath, now abrogated; so that the Christian church was never without a day of worship, pointed at so early by the practice of the apostles, who met that very first day of the week on which Christ rose from the dead; and which further shows the propriety and suitableness of this day as a day of rest; Christ had now finished the great work of our redemption and salvation; and so ceased from his work, as God did from his; and it may be further observed, that after our Lord's resurrection from the dead, we never read, throughout the whole New Testament, that ever the Jews' seventh-day Sabbath was kept by any Christian assembly; only the first day of the week. So that,
2. The observation of this day is confirmed by the practice and examples of the disciples of Christ, and of the first churches; for, – (1.) On the very day Christ rose from the dead, which was the first day of the week, the disciples assembled together, and Christ appeared in the midst of them, and by his gracious presence and divine instructions, shewed his approbation of their thus meeting together, and encouraged them to it; and on that day sennight they met again, and Christ again stood in the midst of them; now though there had been a seventh-day preceding this, the disciples did not assemble on that day, but on this, and Christ with them, John xx.19,29. – (2.) The apostles met together on the day of Pentecost, which was the first day of the week, as has been proved

by many learned writers. Just before our Lord's ascension, he ordered his disciples to wait at Jerusalem for the promise of the Spirit; and though there were two Jewish seventh-day Sabbaths before Pentecost, from the time of his ascension, yet it does not appear that they met together on either of them; but on this day they did; and it looks as if they had an order from Christ to meet on it, and a promise from Christ that they should then have the Spirit descend upon them; and therefore it seems they were waiting for that day, in expectation of having the promise fulfilled on it; and hence it is said, *When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place*, Acts ii.1. and this day was honoured and confirmed by the miraculous effusion of the Spirit, by preaching the gospel to men of all nations, and by the conversion and baptism of three thousand persons. – (3.) It was on the first day of the week that the disciples at Troas met together to break bread, when Paul preached unto them, Acts xx.7. Now he had been there seven days before, so that there must have been in that time a seventh-day Sabbath of the Jews; but it does not appear that he and they assembled on that day; but only on the first, and that for religious worship; he, to break bread, to celebrate the Supper of the Lord, and they, to hear him preach. – (4.) The apostle Paul gave orders to the church at Corinth, as he had to the churches of Galatia, to make a collection for the poor saints on the first day of the week, when met together, 1 Cor. xvi.1,2. which shews that it was usual to meet on that day; yea, it implies an order, or the renewal and confirmation of an order, to meet on that day, or otherwise how should the collection be made on it; and what day so proper as when the saints meet for divine worship, and their hearts are warmed and refreshed with the word and ordinances. In an ancient copy, mentioned by Beza on the place, after *the first day of the week*, it is added, by way of explanation, *the Lord's day*; and also in others;¹⁸⁰ and so Jerome¹⁸¹ explains it. – (5.) This is the day John means by the *Lord's day*, when he says, *I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day*, Rev. i.10. he speaks of it as then a well-known name of it; so called because Christ rose from the dead on it; in commemoration of which it was kept, and in which his gospel was preached and ordinances administered; for it was now upwards of

¹⁸⁰ Vid. Mill. in loc.

¹⁸¹ Adv. Vigilantium Oper. tom. 2. fol. 42.

sixty years from the resurrection of Christ, to John's being an exile in Patmos, where he wrote his Revelation; and this day was observed as a day of religious worship in the earliest ages of Christianity. Ignatius,¹⁸² who died but eight or ten years after the apostle John, says, "Let us keep the Lord's day, on which our Life arose." And Justin Martyr,¹⁸³ a few years after him, says, on the day commonly called Sunday by the heathens, (meaning the first day of the week) all met together in city and country for divine worship. Dionysius of Corinth, speaks of the Lord's day as an holy day,¹⁸⁴ and Clemens of Alexandria,¹⁸⁵ in the same century, observes, that he that truly keeps the Lord's day, glorifies the resurrection of the Lord. Tertullian,¹⁸⁶ in the beginning of the third century, speaks of the acts of public worship, as *Lord's-day* solemnities. And in the same century Origen¹⁸⁷ and Cyprian¹⁸⁸ make mention of the first day as the *Lord's day*, and the time of worship; and so it has been in all ages to the present time.

Now upon the whole, since it does not appear, that a seventh-day Sabbath was enjoined Adam in innocence; nor that the patriarchs ever observed it; and that the first mention of it was at the giving of the *manna*; and that it was ordered to be observed by the Jews, and them only, by the fourth precept of the decalogue, since abrogated; and that the first day of the week, or Lord's day, is substituted in its room, as the day of worship, by the practice and example of the apostles; there surely can remain no scruple about the observance of the latter: but if, after all, the fourth command, with the morality of it, hangs upon the minds of any; be it that that command is still in force, though not granting it, which would bring us back to Judaism, and into a state of bondage; and allow it all the morality that can be ascribed to a day; according to the letter of it, it requires no more nor other than this, a rest on the seventh day,

¹⁸² Ad Magnes. p.35.

¹⁸³ Apolog. 2. p.98,99.

¹⁸⁴ Apud Euseb. l. 4. c.23. Irenaeus, l. 5. c.24.

¹⁸⁵ Stromat. l. 7. p.744.

¹⁸⁶ De Anima, c.9.

¹⁸⁷ Homil. 5. in Esaïam, fol. 104. 3. et alibi.

¹⁸⁸ Ep. 33. p.66. et. Ep. 58, p.138.

after six days of labour; it does not direct to any epocha from whence it is to begin, as from the creation of the world, the seventh day from which the greatest mathematician in the world cannot assure us which it is, nor even the year of the creation; it only directs to, and regards the seventh day from whence a man begins to labour in whatsoever place or country he lives; nor does it direct to any set time or hour when to begin these seven days, or by what names to call the days of the week; the rule is only, *Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work*, or thou mayest if thou wilt, *but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God*; and such an account of time as is made in whatsoever place a man lives, is to be taken, and of which every man is capable; it does not require he should be a skilful mathematician; a man that uses a spade, or follows the plough, is capable of counting six days, on which he has wrought, and when he comes to the seventh, he must know it is not his own, but the Lord's; and such an account a man may keep, let him live on what side of the globe he will; in Europe, or in America, north or south; in Great Britain, or in the East and West Indies: nor is the observation of the first day any objection to this rule, since that is after six days labour; the very first day on which Christ rose, kept by his disciples, was after six days labour; for the Jews' sabbath being between that and the six days labour, can be no objection, since that was a day of rest, and not of labour; so that for that time there were two successive days of rest, after the six days of labour; when, upon the next return of the first, which was immediately after, it proceeded regularly, as it does now.

In short, the only safe rule to go by is, that of the apostles, be the day what it may; *He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord*, Rom. xiv.16. or he ought so to do.

Gill now proceeds to show in what manner he believes the Lord's day should be observed; and this is given below. The reader will note, however, that the usually soundly scriptural Gill gives NO scriptural justification for any of the statements made below. Not one! At this point in his otherwise generally excellent treatise – a treatise in which, as seen above, he utterly demolishes the notion of the Sabbath being moral law, or of the Sabbath being given to anyone other than the nation of Israel between the time of Moses and the Lord Christ – Gill, like Bunyan before him, still could not fully move away from the idea that the first day of the

week is to be observed, in some way or other, as a holy day of rest. In this he was incorrect, as amply demonstrated by the fact that he could not produce a single verse of Scripture to support what he writes in this last brief section below; but even so, it does not alter the fact that in most of what he wrote above, he was thoroughly biblical; and – dare we say – unanswerable.

(Here follows Gill's last section)

Which leads me to observe,

- II. In what manner the Lord's day is to be regarded or observed; not to ourselves, to our own profit and pleasure; but to the Lord, to his service and glory.
1. Not as a Jewish Sabbath; with such strictness and severity as not to kindle a fire, dress any manner of food, and travel no further than what is called a Sabbath-day's journey; though perhaps these were not enjoined with the strictness some have imagined. But, – 2. We are not to do our own work; that is, to follow any trade, business, or occupation employed in on other days; otherwise there are works of piety, mercy, and charity to be done; and also of necessity, for the preservation of life, the comfort and health of it, our own or others. – 3. It is to be employed more especially in acts of public worship, in assembling together for that purpose, in preaching, and hearing the word preached, in prayer, and singing praises. – 4. In private acts of devotion, both before and after public worship; such as has been already observed, when the duty of public hearing the word was considered. – 5. The whole of the day should be observed, from morning to evening; the early part should not be indulged in sleep, nor any part spent in doing a man's own business, in casting up his accounts, and setting right his shop-books; nor in carnal pleasures and recreations, in games and sports; nor in walking in the fields; nor in taking needless journeys. But besides public worship, men should attend to reading the scriptures, prayer and meditation, and Christian conferences; and in such pious exercises they should spend the whole day.

NO CHANGE OF THE SABBATH FROM THE SEVENTH TO THE FIRST DAY

by Isaac Backus

Preface

Isaac Backus (1724-1806) was a sovereign grace Baptist preacher and historian in America, who also worked tirelessly for religious liberty for Baptists. He was opposed to the notion "that the whole of the ten commandments, as they were delivered from Mount Sinai, were moral and immutable."

(The following is excerpted from *A History of New England with Particular Reference to the Baptists*, by Isaac Backus, pgs.500,501-502. Two volumes in one; 1871 reprint edition, New York: Arno Press, 1969. See also *Isaac Backus on Church, State, and Calvinism: Pamphlets, 1754-1789*, edited by William G. McLoughlin, Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1968. The second pamphlet is entitled "A Short Description of the Difference Between the Bondwoman and the Free").

If the following things are considered, it may prevent divisions among Christians upon this article [i.e. changing the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week]. That God is Lord of all our time is a moral and immutable truth, but the sanctification of a particular day was never known to man without a positive precept. It does not appear that Israel knew anything about the Sabbath of the seventh day, until after they came into the wilderness, when it was said to them, Tomorrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord... But when Christ came, he said to the Jews, The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath day. Matt. xii. 8... And [so] the glory of the ministration which was written and engraven in stones, is done away under the New Testament. II Cor. iii. 6-8. But the Lord's day is ever to be regarded. Rev. i. 10. Though he who does not regard it to the Lord, does not regard it at all. Rom. xiv. 6.

EXTRACTS FROM AN ESSAY ON THE SABBATH

by John Leland

Preface

John Leland (1754-1841) was a sovereign grace Baptist minister, who preached the Gospel in Virginia and Massachusetts during a time of revival, with multitudes hearing him and large numbers coming to Christ.

*Unfortunately Leland believed that assembling on the first day of the week was not necessarily something appointed by the Lord, but that Christians were free to do so if they like, or to settle upon another day of the week instead. Although he himself attended public worship on the first day of the week, he had no problem with those who conscientiously kept the seventh day instead of the first, as the day for corporate worship. However, it must be understood that those who met on the seventh day, in his time, although they were incorrect in their notions about the seventh day, were not cultists like the Seventh-day Adventists today! In his day, there were seventh-day **Baptists**, for example. Even so, however, Leland was incorrect in being willing to ignore the first day and meet on the seventh day, as if it were a matter neither here nor there; and this belief affected his exposition of Acts 20:7, 1 Cor. 16:1,2, and Rev. 1:10. Certainly the first day of the week should not be ignored in favour of any other day; for the first day is the appointed day for Christian churches to assemble. They may do so on other days as well, of course; but they are not to neglect assembling on **this** day.*

*Thus, in these matters, Leland went too far; and it may then be asked why we have included extracts from his writings on the subject, in this book. The reason is that the purpose of this section of the book is to demonstrate that there **have** been Christians who have **not** subscribed to the “Christian Sabbath” doctrine of the Puritans. They do not always agree on all points, certainly; but then, “Sunday Sabbatarians” do not agree on all points relating to their “Christian Sabbath” doctrine, either! Leland sought to show that the first day of the week was not appointed as a “Christian Sabbath”, with some sound arguments.*

(These extracts, which were taken from an essay written in 1828, were kindly sent to us by C. C. Morris, editor of *The Remnant*, Hawkins, Texas, USA).

The common definition given of *moral law*, is, “that it is the eternal rule of right; arising from the relation that exists between men and their God, and between man and man; and that it will be unalterably binding, as long as the perfections of God and the faculties of man exist.” Very good! In a law there are three essential requisites, viz: the *principle*, the *details*, and the *penalty*. The principle of this law is *remember the seventh day and keep it holy*. The details are, *thou shalt do no work, but rest within thy gates with thy children, servants and beasts: thou shalt neither gather sticks, kindle a fire, or think thine own thoughts*. The penalty is, the Sabbath breaker *shall surely be put to death*. If, therefore, the observance of the seventh day is of moral obligation, the day cannot be changed – the exercises altered, nor the penalty remitted. If the fourth commandment is *moral law*, why should God, by an absolute precept, direct the Jews to break it, by circumcising their children on the Sabbath? and why should he instruct the priests, on the day of atonement, (which sometimes happened on the seventh day, and always was a Sabbath,) to butcher, burn, wash and profane the temple on that day?

The reason given for the remembrance of the seventh day, in Exodus 20:11 is, because God rested from the labour of creation on that day and hallowed it: but in Deut.5:15, where Moses is rehearsing and explaining the law, the reason assigned why the day should be kept, is, *that they were delivered from the bondage of Egypt*. In this rehearsal of the ten commandments, he says, “*The Lord MADE NOT this covenant with our FATHERS but with us.*” That the fourth commandment was an integral part of this covenant, will not be denied, but it was not made with the fathers who were dead, but with those Israelites who were then living. See verse third.

In approaching the New Testament, our hearts should be open and our thoughts vigilant. Here a greater than Moses, with an unveiled face, is speaking to all. Christianity is for all nations – to be preached to every

creature under heaven, and sounded in all the world. The precepts of it, therefore, must be such as can operate every where, and not be limited to any little section of the earth.

Has the blessed Saviour, or his inspired apostles, left on record any command for all men, or for any men, to observe the seventh day, the first day, or any day in every week, as a Christian Sabbath? deriving its morality, either from the *rest* of God, on the seventh day, or from the law of Moses; but varying its mode of exercise to suit the Christian economy? If so, where is the precept to be found?

In the New Testament there is a marked difference between the Sabbath and the first day of the week; and (if our translation is admitted,) one is never used for the other.

Is it good logic? Is it honest, to draw and enforce consequences from premises that cannot be true? If the premises be true, and God does command all men everywhere, to keep the first day of each week in unison with each other, under the penalty of *certain death*; what shall we think of the wisdom and goodness of our Maker?

The history and precepts of the New Testament, with a bold front declare that the Christian religion, in all its parts, cannot be performed without a *public assemblage*: days must, therefore, be appointed, either stated and perpetual, or occasional and contingent: and these days must be appointed by God – by magistrates, or by a mutual agreement of those who assemble together. Magistrates made no Sabbatical or other laws, to direct the Christians when to assemble, before *Constantine*. The Christian church lived three hundred years, therefore, in her purest state, without them: and it has been a heavy curse to the Christian saints, that any such laws were ever in existence. It returns, therefore, that either God or the worshippers themselves must fix the day, for the solemnities of Christian worship. The Israelites lived condensed in a small section of the earth; and God appointed for them the seventh day Sabbath, and a number of feasts and days beside; which, in their located situation, they could all of them keep. But as Christ's subjects are in every kingdom and

nation under heaven, (I have said,) it would be impossible for *any day* to be attended to by all of them at once.

Among other *perfect qualities* of the Lord Jesus, his *example* for gospel preachers was one. He found the men of the world where they were; the Jews in particular, in the constant habit of synagogue worship; and *his custom* was to enter into the synagogue every Sabbath day; thus availing himself of their customs, for opportunities to preach unto them, and heal all that had need of healing. The old Sabbath was yet in force; but it was not an article which he enforced. He gave no information that the Sabbath should be changed, the *seventh day* for *the first*; or that synagogue worship was ordained by God.

THE SABBATH

by William Gadsby

Preface

*William Gadsby (1773-1844) was a sovereign grace Baptist pastor in England. His ministry was much used of the Lord, and he was also the author of many excellent hymns. Although he was a "Sunday Sabbatarian", the hymn reproduced below beautifully expresses the truth that the seventh day Sabbath was a wonderful type of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is hymn no. 636 in **A Selection of Hymns for Public Worship**, by William Gadsby, better known as "Gadsby's Hymns."*

The Sabbath. – Heb. iv.8-11; Exod. xxxi.15.

The Sabbath was a day of rest;
The day the Lord Jehovah blest;
 A lively type of Christ;
The labouring poor may venture here;
The guilty banish all their fear,
 And lean on Jesus' breast.

When foes without, and foes within,
Wrath, law, and Satan, guilt and sin,
 The child of God molest;
Fatigued with sin, distressed with fear,
He enters into Christ, and there
 He finds a settled rest.

Jesus is Zion's only rest;
Thrice happy is the man, and blest,
 That into him believes;
His six days' toil is finished then;
His slavish fear for ever gone;
 By faith in Christ he lives.

The Sabbath and The Lord's Day

A precious resting-place indeed;
Whatever weary pilgrims need
 Is richly treasured here.
Here sinners may commune with God,
And drink full draughts of heavenly love,
 Nor death nor danger fear.

O may I ever rest in him,
And never, never stray again,
 Nor after strangers roam;
Dear Jesus, fix my roving heart,
Nor ever let me from thee start,
 Till thou shalt take me home.

WHAT IS TRUTH?

by Gilbert Beebe

Preface

*Gilbert Beebe, who died in 1881, was a sovereign grace Baptist pastor in New York, and editor of **The Signs of the Times** for about fifty years. The following articles are most interesting treatises on the subject, with some excellent remarks. His condemnation of “the use of means” is a great pity, and common to some who held to what is termed the “Hyper-Calvinist” position, to which Beebe evidently subscribed; his views on the beast of Rev.13 are incorrect; and he appeared to believe that the “Lord’s day” referred to the perpetual “Sabbath” of resting in Christ (he was correct about the perpetual, antitypical “Sabbath”, but not about the term, “the Lord’s day”, which is clearly a term for the first day of the week). He was also evidently uncertain of the meaning of Heb. 4:10, for in one place he incorrectly taught that this verse (“For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his”) refers to Christ, although he did not, however, make use of this verse as “Sunday Sabbatarians” have done, but rather the opposite; yet in another place he taught (correctly) that this verse refers to the believer.*

Concerning his remarks on Presbyterians in one of his articles: the inclusion of this is by no means meant to imply that there have not been many godly Christians who have been Presbyterians. There most certainly have been, and are. But in Beebe’s time, certain Presbyterians were leading the campaign which he rightly condemns.

But aside from these points, his articles are very good treatises showing the antitypical fulfilment of the legal Sabbath in Christ, the believer’s true rest, as well as other points; including the evil that inevitably follows when the State legislates on “Sabbath-keeping,” and the hypocrisy and double standards of many of those who would lay down laws for (to their minds) “correctly observing the first-day Sabbath.” He very properly refused to call Sunday the “Sabbath”, always referring to it either as the first day of the week or as Sunday.

(The following is excerpted from *Editorials of Gilbert Beebe*, Vol.2, pgs.485-493. Benton L. Beebe, New York, 1874; republished by Welsh Tract Publications, Salisbury, Maryland, USA, 1984).

(Here is an extract of a letter sent to Gilbert Beebe, with his reply immediately following, both of which have been abridged for inclusion here):

“But to be definite, permit me to ask of you, what is truth in relation to the perpetuity of the Sabbath? taking into consideration the course pursued by those friends of Christ who after attending to his burial returned to their homes, ‘and kept holy the seventh day according to the commandment;’ and also the direction given by the Saviour to his disciples in regard to the destruction of Jerusalem, when he said, ‘Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day.’ To what extent is the moral law, so called, binding?”

In allegiance with Jesus as his King, it is his [the Christian's] highest privilege to observe all things whatsoever he has commanded, and to walk in all his ordinances blameless, as did Zacharias and Elizabeth.

But to come to those particular points upon which light is sought by our inquiring friend. “What is truth in relation to the perpetuity of the Sabbath, &c?” In all candor we reply, the Sabbath in the letter or legal observance of it, as it was obligatory upon Israel under the legal dispensation, is abrogated, and with all other hand-writing of ordinances was nailed with the great law fulfiller to the cross; blotted out and done away, so that the apostle Paul commands the church of God, “Let no man, therefore, judge you in meats, or in drinks, or in respect of a holy day; or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days; which are a shadow of good things to come, but the body is of Christ.” “Touch not, taste not, handle not.” – Col. ii.14,16,17, & 21. But in relation to the spirit, or body, or substance, of which the legal Sabbath was a shadow, it is perpetual. It consists not, however, in the seventh day, or a first day cessation from the ordinary pursuits of life, but in a complete cessation from all the servile works of the law, and entrance into rest. The law dispensation was the six days in which men were commanded to labour and do all their work; but the gospel dispensation is the Sabbath of the Lord our God, and in it

the saints are to cease from all their own works as God ceased from all the works which he had made, when he rested on the seventh day and hallowed it, and as Christ also, when he had fulfilled the law, finished transgression and made an end of sin, rested from his own works as God did from the works of creation when he had finished them.

As under the abrogated law men were not permitted to gather sticks, kindle fire, or perform any kind of labour, or think their own thoughts, or speak their own words, so under the gospel, those who believe and have entered into rest, according to Hebrews iv. 3, are not suffered to gather sticks and kindle fires; or, as your eastern people would say, make use of means to get up a revival of religion, or by a system of duty religion, to warm themselves into happy frames, or religious exercises. No manner of work shall be done, no burdens shall be borne upon the Sabbath day. Works are excluded, the saints are to live by faith upon the Son of God; rest on him, rest upon his promises, his grace, his blood and righteousness. This glorious rest remaineth, or is perpetuated for the people of God; but God has sworn that those workmongers who hold on to the observance of blotted out hand-writings, and ordinances, nailed to the cross, they shall not enter into rest. They are like the troubled sea, they cannot rest, they cannot cease from their own works. It is impossible to rest in Jesus, unless we believe in him; and faith is the gift of God. Arminians cannot rest; for the very faith which they profess to have, according to their own description of it, allows them no time to rest; they must work with might and main to get it, and then they must work to keep it; and while they have it in possession, it is as inanimate as one of your Yankee spinning jennies; it can affect nothing for you except you exercise it! But O, how different with that faith of which Christ is the author and finisher! It works by love; instead of its being exercised by us, it exercises us, lays hold of the promises for us, overcomes the world for us, enters within the veil for us, and subdues kingdoms, works righteousness, obtains promises, stops the mouths of lions, quenches the violence of fire, delivers from the edge of the sword, out of weakness makes us strong, waxing valiant in fight, and turns to flight the armies of the aliens. What shall we say more? Time would fail to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae, of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets. Such is the vitality and power of the faith of God's elect; having this faith in us

we have confidence in God; we trust in him and are as Mount Zion which cannot be moved, but abideth forever.

Without this faith none can know the blessed privilege of a gospel Sabbath, this Sabbath of the Lord our God; this day which the Lord has made, this Lord's day, this glorious and perpetual Sabbath of rest unto all that have the faith which was once delivered to the saints. But we are requested to notice the Sabbath in connection with the circumstances of the saints observing the seventh day Sabbath, after the burial of the crucified body of our Lord, and of Christ's direction to the saints to pray that their flight should not be on the Sabbath day, &c. In regard to the first circumstance, we would remark that the disciples were not delivered from the obligation to keep the law of Moses, until the resurrection of Christ; for although he had fulfilled every precept, and borne its penalty in his death, put away sin, and made an end of transgression, &c., yet he must rise again from the dead for their justification. As they were buried with him by baptism (immersion) into death, and after the similitude of baptism raised with him, through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. Christ suffered for his people as their Head, and in that relation to them, they, in regard to the demands of law and justice, suffered and were dead and buried with or in him, so that when he was raised up by the glory of the Father, they were raised *with him* to newness of life. No longer to serve under the letter of the law, but to worship God in the newness of the spirit. It must be borne in mind that Christ came to redeem them that were under the law, and to this end came himself under the law, and remained under the law until the resurrection from the dead. This accounts satisfactorily, we would think, for the disciples' keeping the Sabbath day, which elapsed while Christ was in the tomb, according to the commandment of Moses, which was still binding upon them at that time.

The instruction to the disciples to pray that their flight from the fearful calamities of Jerusalem might not take place upon the Sabbath day, is urged by the advocates of a perpetual obligation to keep a seventh day Sabbath, as evidence that our Lord taught the perpetuity of that obligation after he had nailed the hand-writing of ordinances to

his cross. But on examination other sufficient cause will be found to warrant that admonition. It was named incidentally with some other things, which might be serious hindrances to their precipitate flight, in which any hindrance might involve them in the most dreadful calamities. This admonition no more implies that their flight on the Sabbath day would be a violation of the law, than the other circumstances named in verses 19 and 20 of Matt. xxiv; but because, like the other difficulties named, this, should it so occur, might prove a serious hindrance to their flight. Indeed, the reason is assigned by our Lord in the very next verse: "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world" up to that date, and hence the necessity that they should be prepared instantly, at the signal which he would give them to take their flight. If any were circumstanced so as to prevent immediate flight, though this would violate no precept of the law, yet at that moment it would involve them in woe. Or if the flight should be in the winter, which of course could not be overruled by them, it would make it difficult for them to speed their flight; or if on the Sabbath day, the seventh day of the week, which the Jews were at that time very tenacious for the sanctity of, should they attempt a flight, they would subject themselves to an arrest by legal administrators of the Jewish law, according to the usage of the Jews at that time. Up to the very day in which Jerusalem was overthrown, the Pharisees sat in Moses' seat, and enjoined a strict observance of the seventh day Sabbath, and would arrest any offender, just as the authorities of Connecticut formerly did those whom they caught traveling on the first day, which they said had, by some means or other, taken the place of the seventh; and thus it would prove a serious hindrance to their flight.

Is it not astonishing that the aversion of the hearts of men who profess to be the followers of Christ, should be so great to the plain declarations of the scriptures, as to lead them to pervert such passages as these, so as to make them seem to conflict with the testimony of the inspired apostles of Jesus Christ, who by the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost declared that the ordinances of Sabbath days were blotted out and nailed to the cross, as shadows of which Christ was the body or substance. As to the day being changed from the seventh to the first, there is not the least shadow or trace of authority for such a change in the bible. If, as

some have contended, the obligation was moral and not ceremonial, and therefore perpetual, the same argument, if it could be established, would also forbid the change, for moral statutes are as immutable as they are perpetual, and therefore they cannot change.

THE SABBATH DAYS

by Gilbert Beebe

(The following is excerpted from *Editorials of Gilbert Beebe*, Vol.2, pgs.499-508).

As we intimated in our last number, we now resume our remarks concerning Sabbath Days. “To the law and to the testimony,” and what saith the law upon this subject? This shall be our first inquiry. The zealous Sabbatarians of our day urge the fourth commandment of the decalogue as the law on which they base their arguments for the religious observance of the first day of every week, as a Sabbath day, to be observed by the Gentiles, after the manner in which the Jews were required to keep holy the seventh day. The law contained on the first and second tables, they contend, was moral, and consequently binding alike on all intelligent beings, whether Jews or Gentiles; and as the second table was given after the first was broken, and as the tables were of stone, the perpetuity and interminable obligation of that law was thus signified; and as the children of Israel to whom that law was first given were required to see that it was duly observed, they infer that the rulers of the Gentiles should enforce the religious observance of a first day Sabbath in like manner.

We will examine these three leading arguments; and first, the law of the fourth commandment does not enjoin a *first day* Sabbath upon either Jew or Gentile. The words of the law are: “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour 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, nor thy man servant, nor thy maid servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.” Now if the ancient scribes and Pharisees were charged with making void the law of God by their own traditions, how shall modern Sabbatarians, who teach and practice the substitution of the first for the seventh day, escape the same reproof, seeing they have no

higher authority than tradition?

There cannot be found in any part of the sacred volume of divine revelation, one word to authorize or sanction any change of the day. If, as the Sabbatarians argue, 1. God made this law, 2. that he has never repealed or abrogated it, then it must follow, 3. that the law, *as he originally gave it*, is still in full force, according to the fourth commandment; unless it can be proved that he has amended, altered, or changed it; and if this can be proved, then the morality of the institution cannot be sustained, as that which is in its nature moral, is always the same, under all circumstances, and throughout all time. The fourth precept of the decalogue says expressly, *the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God*; but where, in what part of the bible, Old or New Testament is it written, *the first day is the Sabbath*? That passage is among those which cannot be found. Tradition has spoken it. Men have used their own mouths and said, "The Lord saith," albeit, the Lord hath not spoken on that wise.

Again, in the fourth commandment, a Sabbath was not instituted. The word "remember" implies that the institution was prior to the giving of the ten commandments; and in remembering the seventh day, they were to remember it as God's sign and covenant between him and them, which was to endure throughout their generations, or until the body or substance, (which Paul says is Christ – Col. ii. 17,) should come. The peculiar fitness of the seventh day for such a typical purpose, is further expressed, as it was analogous with the rest, after the work of creation was finished, when God rested from all the works which he had made, on the seventh day, thus signifying that in the new or spiritual creation, Christ should finish the work of redemption, make an end of sin, and rest from his work, as God did from his. Labor or weariness must necessarily precede rest. "Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work," but on the seventh day no labour should be performed. It would be strange to say, On the first day thou shalt rest, and on the six next succeeding days thou shalt labour. God rested from all the work which he had made, not from all the works he was going to make; and thus taught in the sign that Christ should rest from the work of redemption after the work should be accomplished, but not before. But there is also another view in which the *sign* is to be considered, in relation to the church. God's people under the law were in a state of toil and labour, under a yoke which they were not

able to bear; but the gospel is rest to the weary, the heavy laden, toil-worn soul who comes to Christ for rest: for such are called of him. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." A first day Sabbath would transpose and confuse the order, and represent the people of God as first experiencing the delightful rest of the gospel, and then endure the toil and thunder of the law afterwards.

But why should we labour and reason upon the suitableness of the time which God appointed, and the impropriety of the time which men would substitute in its place? Is it not enough for us that God has commanded the seventh day, and given no commandment for a first day Sabbath? Shall we, dare we question his wisdom, or venture to attempt an improvement on his legislation? They that fear the Lord will tremble at his word.

God has not only commanded Israel to remember the Sabbath, not *a* Sabbath, but he has added, "to keep it holy," &c. How is the day to be kept *holy*? Has God commanded, or is it left to man to dictate? The manner in which God commanded it to be kept holy by the nation of Israel, may be inferred from the following passages, and the Sabbath Convention at Baltimore may read them, and inform us whether they are still in force?

"Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations on the Sabbath day." – Exodus xxxv. 3. "Abide ye every man in his place; let no man go out of his place on the Sabbath day." – Exodus xvi. 29. "He giveth you the sixth day the bread of two days. Bake that which ye will bake this day, and seethe that ye will seethe, and that which remaineth over, lay up for you to be kept until the morning." – Exodus xvi. 23,29. "Bear no burden on the Sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem, neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath day." – Jeremiah xvii. 21,22. "Not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words." – Isa. lii. 13. "Whosoever doeth any work on the Sabbath day, *he shall surely be put to death*; every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death." – Exodus xxx. 14,15. "And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath day. And they that found him gathering sticks brought him to Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation. And

they put him in ward, because it was not declared what should be done unto him. And the Lord said unto Moses, The man shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp. And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died, as the Lord commanded Moses.” – Numbers xv. 32-36.

The advocates of a legal first day Sabbath, warmly urge that the fourth commandment is not repealed, that the law to keep the day holy is still in full force; will they also contend that the preceding rules are still in full force, or may they be disregarded with impunity? Can any of the modern sticklers for a legal Sabbath, be found conforming, in all respects, to these rules? If the children of Israel had observed all these rules with the single exception of changing the seventh day for some other day of the week, would that have answered the demands of the law? Or, we will suppose a case. The Rev. Mr. Aaron arose on the morning of the Sabbath, and called Jack, his man servant, and Martha, his maid servant, and his sons and his daughters, and bade them hasten and gather some sticks and kindle a fire, and make ready some breakfast; and make ready a chariot and horses, that he might be able to reach the Sabbath School, and officiate in his bible class, in season to preach a missionary sermon, and collect funds for benevolent purposes, and get through in time to attend the grand dedication of the Calf, in the valley of Mount Sinai, which he had made unto the Lord, of the golden jewels which were brought up with Israel from Egypt. How would such obedience have suited Moses? Would the piety and benevolence of his intentions have screened him from the law which forbid his leaving his house or tent on pain of death? How strange that men who boast of their superior light and erudition, at this day should be lorded as immaculate saints, by doing the very things, which, by the law which they profess to adhere to as the rule of their lives, would require them to be stoned to death.

Second. We will notice the morality and perpetuity of the institution. The morality of the Sabbath is insisted on because enjoined by one of the precepts of the decalogue, and the decalogue is supposed to be the moral law. We are aware that the term moral is variously used by theologians; it sometimes is used to mean one thing, and sometimes another, and as it is not a bible term, it is the more difficult to define its precise meaning.

If, however, by a moral law is intended the natural obligation man was created under to his Creator, to reverence and obey him; if it embraces all those duties to God and to our fellow-men, which would be equally binding if no expression had been made on Sinai, we will freely admit that the Sinai covenant or law embraces the moral standard of right, by which all intelligent beings are judged, and by which every mouth is stopped, and the whole world is convicted of guilt before God; but the morality of that law or rule, does not arise from its having been included in the decalogue to Israel, for it was in force in all its power as well from Adam to Moses, as subsequently. But that the Sabbath institution was thus morally binding upon mankind is not so clear. That man was created under an obligation to “remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy,” and that that obligation grows naturally out of the relation that created intelligences stand in to the Creator, is to us incapable of proof. Those on whom God was pleased to impose that ordinance, were bound to observe it simply because God had commanded it. As we have already proved, the Sabbath was enjoined upon Israel before the tables of the law were written, and the fourth commandment required that a law previously given as a type or sign, should be remembered and scrupulously obeyed by those to whom it was previously given.

But that this sign was ever given to the Gentiles, either before the tables were given, or since that time, cannot easily be established. Some have attempted to prove that the Sabbath was enjoined on the human family from the seventh day of creation. That God blessed and hallowed the seventh day, is very clear; but there is no record of an injunction on man from that date to keep any Sabbath. Nor is there to be found in all the scriptures, one word of admonition or reproof against or for breaking the Sabbath. The reason to us is very obvious; the rigid observance of a Sabbath could not be the sign of any covenant which God had made with the Gentiles, because God had made no covenant with them; consequently they had no more to do with a legal Sabbath than they had to do with circumcision. That the law being given on tables of stone, was calculated to impress the mind with its perpetuity, we will not dispute; for heaven and earth were not so permanently established as that law; for Christ declared that both heaven and earth should pass away, but not one jot or tittle of the law should pass away until all was fulfilled; but he also

declared he came to fulfill the law; not to destroy, but to fulfill. In the accomplishment, therefore, of what he came to fulfill, he “blotted out the hand-writing of ordinances,” (the Jewish Sabbath among others,) “that was against us, nailing it to his cross.” This, as well as other ceremonial or typical ordinances, was against us Gentiles, and contrary to us, as they could signify no covenant in which we had an interest, and only formed a middle wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles. In this connection Paul particularizes circumcision, holy days, meat, drink, new moons, and Sabbath days, and declares them but shadows, signs, or types of things to come, and that the substance or body of which they were the shadow or type, was Christ. Circumcision he shows to have been a figure of regeneration. – Rom. ii. 28,29. Meats, drinks, &c., were to signify that the spiritual Israel were to live by faith upon the Son of God – should eat his flesh and drink his blood, while the divers washings under the old covenant pointed to the cleansing blood of Christ, the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost. The new moons are coupled with the holy days and Sabbath days, and these are so clearly applied to the blessed state of rest into which the gospel church is brought, and each individual member enters when enabled to believe in Christ, as to admit of no controversy. Read the third chapter to the Hebrews; there the testimony is so clear that no one who has ever entered into his rest, can fail to discover that the gospel state of the church is the great anti-type of all the Jewish Sabbaths. Again, in the epistle to the Ephesians, Paul tells the Gentile saints, who had entered into the true anti-typical Sabbath, to remember that they being in time past Gentiles, were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise; having no hope, and without God in the world. “But,” he adds, “now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ; for he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having *abolished*” (this is a strong expression,) “in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments, in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace.”

To prove that the law of commandments, which, so far as the Gentile saints are concerned, is abolished, they being redeemed from its power and dominion, by the nailing of Christ to his cross, and are brought under

law to Christ, where they can no longer need the thunders of Sinai, we will compare the last quotation with 2 Cor. iii. 7-11. "But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones," (here he must allude to the decalogue, as no other law was so written,) "was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadily behold the face of Moses, for the glory of his countenance, which glory was to be done away," &c. "For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth; for if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious." The two tables of the law are expressly called a covenant with Moses and with Israel. – Exodus xxx. 28-29. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel. And he wrote upon the table the words of the covenant, the ten commandments." Compare this text with Paul's allegory:

"Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye hear the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons; the one by a bond maid, and the other by a free woman. But he who was of the bond woman was born after the flesh; but he of the free woman was by promise. Which things are an allegory; for these are the covenants, the one from the Mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to the Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. Nevertheless, what saith the scriptures? Cast out the bond woman," this Agar, this Mount Sinai in Arabia. – Gal. iv. 21.

(Concluded.)

Again. Read Hebrews viii. 7-13. "For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord: I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a

God, and they shall be to me a people. And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest: for I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities I will remember no more. In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.”

We come now to examine the third and last proposition, viz.:

That the rulers of the Gentiles are to enforce the religious observance of a Sabbath. This, of all other propositions, is the most important – involves consequences of the most momentous nature, as upon the establishment of this position, all constitutional rights to worship God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and as we understand the scriptures, must be at once relinquished. Col. ii. 14: “Let no man judge you,” &c., in respect to holy days, new moons and Sabbath days, must be disregarded, and the theory that it is right to obey man rather than God, established. The most plausible argument in support of the coercive imposition of this rule which we have heard, is that the law of the fourth commandment is moral, and if moral, alike obligatory on Gentiles and Jews, and of perpetual duration. But, as we have already shown, this argument, if it proves anything, proves too much, for the fourth command enjoins the seventh and not the first day, and it requires no less power to change a moral law than to abrogate or abolish it. We have also made it appear by direct testimony from the bible, that the fourth command required the observance of the seventh day, as God had instructed Israel, by cessation from all business – no kindling of fires, no going out of one’s dwelling place to meeting or elsewhere, no preaching, no praying or singing was required, but perfect inactivity and rest.

But upon the supposition that the rulers of the Gentiles have a right to enforce the religious observance of *a* Sabbath, the question arises, Are they to require such observance as the law of God directed, and enforce by such penalties, or are the rulers of the Gentiles at liberty to alter the manner of regarding the day, and allow a commutation of the penalty of death, for that of a fine, imprisonment or whipping? And have not the rulers of the Gentiles the same authority to compel the people to pray, and perform other religious performances, as to establish for them a Sabbath

by arbitrary power? To say nothing of other nations, it is conceded that neither our federal or state governments have any power over the people which has not been first given them by the people. When, where and in what covenant have the people of these United States invested the congress or the legislatures of the states, or any executive officers, civil or ecclesiastical, with any power to lord it over their consciences, in this or any other matter belonging between themselves and their God?

SABBATH BREAKERS

by Gilbert Beebe

(The following is excerpted from *Editorials of Gilbert Beebe*, Vol.2, pgs.542-546).

“There is one duty which has been strangely neglected by christians and other friends of good morals in this city. We mean the duty of voting at elections. We must have power to punish Sabbath breakers, or we never can compel people to observe the Sabbath; and this must be done by preventing irreligious men from being elected.” – *New York Observer*.

This extract, with some accompanying remarks, was sent us by our correspondent “W.,” to be embodied in his communication in our last number, but did not reach us in time.

The above shows what manner of spirit is abroad in the world. The *Observer*, from which it is taken, is, if we mistake not, a principal organ of the Presbyterians in the United States. Whether this beast has horns like a lamb or not, it certainly can speak with the voice of a dragon; and from its tone, we may judge that the time cannot be very remote, when the image it has set up shall both speak, and cause that as many as will not worship the image, or acknowledge its supremacy, shall be killed; and cause all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand or in their foreheads; and no man be allowed to buy or sell, or enjoy the right of citizenship, save he that hath the mark, or the number of the beast, or the number of his name. Those who are expected to vote the power into the hands of the Presbyterians, to compel the people to submit to their version of the law of God, and to punish delinquents, are, by way of distinction, called christians and lovers of good morals, as though christians were to look to the polls, to the elections, or to legislative councils for the support of their religion, instead of looking alone to God; but those who would vote against their accumulation of power to lord it over the consciences of the people, are to be regarded as anti-religious, and opposed to morality.

“We must have.” Who *must* have? The Presbyterians and those immediately associated with them, in seeking to corrupt the government of our country, alter the constitution, proscribe the people, and finally light up the fires of persecution. “Must have!” Somewhat imperious, to be sure. No ifs, no ands about it; no if the people please, either said or implied; but we must have; no two ways about it; we are determined and settled in this purpose. But, what is it “we must have?” Power, to be sure – that is all we lack – and *we* are determined to be supplied. *We* have the means to control the elections. The Presbyterians alone could bring half a million of voters to the polls seventeen years ago, and now nearly or quite double that number, and the arminians of every religious order are ready to swell the number to an indefinite extent, and *we* know how to “create public sentiment,” and we can spread like a green bay tree, and power is what we want, and “*we must have power.*” But, power for what? “To punish Sabbath-breakers.” Ah! this is what they must have power to do, or else they never can compel people to observe the Sabbath. Well, who has required them to compel people to observe the Sabbath? If they, like their ancient brethren, (the Pharisees,) sit in Moses’ seat, to administer and execute the law which God gave to Israel; and, according to their creed, they are a continuation of what they call the Jewish church, there may be some propriety in their struggle after power to punish Sabbath breakers. The congregation of Israel was required to punish Sabbath breakers, by stoning them to death. If any man kindled a fire, or performed any labour on that day, or suffered any labour to be performed on his premises, he was surely to suffer death. And the Jewish (*alias* Presbyterian) church, is so restricted by the laws of our land and constitution of our state that they are driven to the desperate alternative of calling out its legions to vote down the impediments, in order to regain the power to butcher the wicked Sabbath breakers. What other power to punish Sabbath breakers the *Observer* can suppose the Presbyterians to stand in need of, we cannot imagine. And certainly if they can obtain this power they will have business enough: for if the people of America are under the law which God gave to Israel, and bound to keep the Sabbath as God gave it to that people, and the same penalty is still attached to a transgression of that law, there is not probably a man, woman, or child in the United States, Texas included, who does not deserve to be stoned to death. And if the Judge of the earth should require of the Presbyterians,

as he did of their brethren, that the executors of the law should be themselves blameless of this sin, or that he that has not broken the Sabbath should cast the first stone, it would be a very long time before that stone would be cast; for a more desperately wicked set of Sabbath breakers than the Presbyterians cannot be found on earth, if the fourth commandment be regarded as the standard of judgment and decision; for they have dared to make void that law by their own traditions, by substituting another day, a day of their own selecting; and a very different manner of observing the day than that which God enjoined on those to whom he gave his law.

But what avails our arguing the point? Power they want, and power they say they must have. "And this *must* be done by preventing irreligious men from being elected."

Now comes the tug of war again. To draw the line between religious and irreligious men. Who is to judge between them? Who shall divide the sheep from the goats, and put the mark of the beast on the forehead of the privileged class, which shall admit them to the ballot-box, and disfranchise the heterodox, to await the punishment which the pious Presbyterians have in contemplation for them. Can the Old School Baptists, the Seventh-day Baptists, the Quakers or the Jews, expect to be numbered among the favored order? The thought is preposterous! The same cry which was made against Paul, would be reiterated against those who adhere to the doctrine of the apostles, viz.: "Men of Israel, Help! This is the fellow that teaches all men against the law, and against the people," &c. Irreligious men must not be elected, says the *Observer*. And what better right has the church to dictate who shall be elected to place and power in the affairs of state, than the powers of state have to dictate what shall be the government of the church? If the church may dictate to the world, then we see not why the world may not reciprocate the interference. And in discriminating between the religious and the irreligious, we doubt not that the Presbyterian *Observer* would agree very cordially with the Presbyterian Doctor E.S. Ely, who denounced every president that had held the office, from Washington down to Jackson, as irreligious; and frankly confessed that he would prefer for president a good sound Presbyterian.

We would not be understood to hold that a man's being a Presbyterian or a Baptist, or a member of any other religious sect, so long as he holds his religion as a matter strictly between himself and his God, should be proscribed; it is this proscription which we denounce; but that moment when a profession of religion comes to be regarded as an indispensable qualification for civil office, our land will overflow with hypocrites; and if our streets do not flow with blood, it will be better than our fears.

Never in our recollection has our country been so much agitated as at present, upon the subject of legislating upon the law of God; and what is to be the result of the movement is only known to him who orders the destiny of nations as seemeth to him good. Within a few miles of us there have been several Sabbath conventions recently held, and resolutions passed; but great care has been taken to prevent such discussion of the subjects as would be likely to enlighten the public mind in relation to either the typical or anti-typical Sabbath. The convention at its several meetings has, however, come to the conclusion that it is a sad desecration of the first day Sabbath for loaded teams to be driven on our roads; but whether it be wicked for the clergy and laity of this county to send their milk to New York by the railroad cars on Sunday, they have not yet been able to determine. If the poor teamsters who bring lumber to market have occasion to return with bread and provision for their waiting children, they should let their families fast, and they put up at a tavern, which, in many cases, would cost them half their load; but when the clergy and their deacons have milk to sell, they must improve the market.

Truly this is an age of hypocrisy – a day of rebuke and blasphemy, in which the livery of heaven is stolen to serve the devil in. But notwithstanding all the abominations that are committed in the high places, our God is a Refuge for his saints. Though the earth be removed, and the mountains cast into the midst of the sea, his children have no occasion to fear, for all the wrath of man shall praise him, and the remainder of wrath he will restrain.

THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH

by Gilbert Beebe

(The following is excerpted from *Editorials of Gilbert Beebe*, Vol.2, pgs.566-580).

“Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.” – Psalms cxvi. 7.

While the arminian tribes of anti-christ are engaged with might and main to connect the Jewish covenant with the statutes of our state and nation in order to establish the first day of the week as a legal Sabbath, and to coerce the consciences of our citizens into an observance of their improvement upon the divine law, how pleasant it is to the children of the heavenly kingdom to contemplate the substance, or antitype of which the Jewish Sabbath was only a shadow. All the rites and ceremonies of the old covenant which enjoined the Sabbath implied an external or outward performance of duties in which the children of Israel were to be perpetually engaged, until the sceptre should depart from Judah, and the lawgiver from between his feet; but the law and its requisition was not of faith, neither did it require faith, but obedience, perfect and unremitting. To establish a kind of worldly religion in the absence of faith, and of the Spirit's work in the heart, it is not strange that the modern usurpers of Moses' seat should manifest so strong a propensity to revive the dead works of the law, the abrogated rites of Judaism, and have them incorporated with the laws of our land, and thus pave the way for a national church in our country. But a soul enlightened by the Holy Spirit, is released from the bondage of the law, and ushered into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. In the spiritual devotions of the inspired Psalmist, we trace some sublime predictions of our great Redeemer, his labour and suffering under the law, his bitter death, triumphant resurrection and entrance into his rest; for he hath set down at the right hand of the majesty on high. And what appears so clearly to point to the incarnation, death, resurrection and exaltation of Christ in this beautiful subject, points out also the Sabbatic jubilee of all the saints

of God, which the blessed gospel brings to light.

Compare the connection of the text with the experience of the saints who have ceased from their own works. "The sorrows of death compassed me; I found trouble and sorrow." When was this the case? Ah, when the arrows of the Lord had entered the heart; or at the time when the quickened sinner was brought to see and feel the terrors of the law of God, to hear and tremble at its thundering; to feel a load of guilt and sin sinking his stricken heart in deep despair. Death with its gloomy sorrow as the consequence and wages of sin, presents its awful terrors, compassing the distressed and despairing soul with sorrows; the pains of damned spirits seized with desperate grasp the helpless victim, and the contemplated destiny of banished souls seemed already to have begun its work of retribution. Here was a time of labour, of toil, but alas, the struggle of the soul was unavailing.

"Stern Justice cried, with frowning face,

This mountain (Sinai, or the law) is no hiding place."

Not all the poor creature could do, could satisfy the rigid demands of the law of God, assuage the anguish which he felt, or afford a refuge for his soul. The pains of hell had taken hold with such a deadly grasp, the very best obedience the victim could render to the law would not answer, but still he laboured, sought for peace, for comfort; but what did he find? "I found trouble and sorrow;" and these were all that he could find. The soul became weary, distressed, fainting and exhausted, finding no more to rest upon in the law, or in his works, than Noah's dove could find when absent from the ark. These exercises of the soul, produced by the work of the Spirit, a breathing of desire to God for deliverance. "Then called I upon the name of the Lord, O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul." This calling upon God for deliverance does not take place until the soul is made sensible that there is deliverance no where else. The Spirit in whose hands he is, directs the supplication, and that Spirit opens to the sinking soul the way of life through Jesus Christ. At which he is enabled to break forth in the language of the next succeeding verse of this Psalm. "Gracious is the Lord." O, yes, the plan of grace now breaks forth upon his soul; his heart is ravished, his burden removed; joy and thanksgiving, love and wonder, now overwhelm his soul.

But how, he now inquires, can such deliverance be in justice extended

to a wretch so vile, one whose condemnation was so clearly sealed by the law? But, lo! the Saviour's blood appears, and he is made to add, "And righteous, yea, our God is merciful! The Lord preserveth the simple," and as an illustration of this, he pleads his experience, "I was brought low, and he helped me." The all-inviting charms of Jesus are now presented, and sweeter than the melody of angel voices sounds the words, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls." To which his joyful leaping heart responds: "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." His Sabbath is here begun, his servile labours are ended; he enters into rest. No more to think his own thoughts, or speak his own words; for it is God that worketh in him, to will and to do of his own good pleasure. No more shall he gather sticks, kindle fires, or attempt to warm himself by what he can do; but finds in Christ a sun of righteousness, emitting upon him the golden rays of heavenly light, of burning love; and the fruits of the Spirit are unto him "Love, joy, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, and faith." This is a Sabbath indeed, the observance of which is dictated by a law which is written in his heart, and enforced by the governing power of grace reigning in his soul. This is the day which the Lord has made, and he will rejoice and be glad in it.

(Continued.)

In the preceding number, we offered some remarks upon the preceding verses of the Psalm from which the above text is taken, in which we not only regarded the theme as predictive of the sufferings and triumphs of our Lord Jesus Christ, but also expressive of the experience of all the children of God, who have been delivered from the power of darkness, the bondage and works of the law, and finally brought experimentally into the enjoyment of the christian Sabbath, where they are enabled to rest from their own works, and rely alone upon the finished salvation of our God. That all the sabbatic seasons under the law, and especially the seventh day Sabbath, were typical of the gospel rest, is so fully, clearly, and emphatically settled by the inspired writer of the epistle to the Hebrews, that he must be but a very superficial reader who does not discover the end of the shadow, and the introduction of the substance,

gospel rest.

In Heb. iv. 4, the apostle speaks of the seventh day, in which God rested from his works, &c., and brings forward that rest, in connection with the oath of God, that the carnal unbelieving Israelites should not enter into it. Now it is very certain that the apostle did not intend to say, that the carnal Israelites were prohibited by the oath of God from observing the seventh day Sabbath as enjoined in the fourth commandment of the decalogue, as well as in many other special precepts given by Moses; for no such oath as that had been taken; and no penal laws which our legislatures can enact or enforce can make the citizens of our states keep a seventh day, or a first day Sabbath with as much exactness as did the carnal Israelites the seventh day Sabbath which God enjoined upon them. But although the Jews kept the Jewish Sabbath according to law, they did not, nor could they enter into the Lord's rest, because of unbelief. Unbelief was no impediment to their observing the seventh day as they were commanded; but in a state of unbelief, or in the absence of that faith of which Christ is the author and finisher, no man can enter into his rest. The Sabbath under the law was among the carnal ordinances, and belonged to a worldly sanctuary, [see Heb. iv. 1-11,] and it was therefore adapted to their carnal state. But that rest which remaineth, (after the withdrawing of the carnal ordinances) is spiritual, and no man having not the Spirit can enter into it. There is just as great difference between the Sabbath enjoined by the law on Israel, and the christian Sabbath, as that between a bleeding lamb offered upon the Jewish altars, and the Lamb of God, whom they prefigured; and yet it seems to be one of the most difficult lessons for professing christians to learn, that the gospel Sabbath is a spiritual anti-typical rest: designed not as a rest for the flesh, but for the spiritual creation. The idea of the seventh day Sabbath being continued, with the change only of the day from the seventh to the first, is perfectly preposterous, being sustained by about the same proof as that which can be brought for changing circumcision for baptism, and baptism for infant *rantism* or sprinkling, but no more. The same arguments which are brought for a perpetuation of the Sabbath as a legal institution on any day, first or seventh, would go just as far to prove the obligation of circumcision according to Moses' law, or the continuance of the Jewish priesthood, periodical sacrifices, &c., as they can to establish *new moons and Sabbath days*. With the same propriety might we urge upon Gentile

christians the observance of the feast of the Passover as any other of those abrogated Jewish rites.

But it is argued that the Sabbath day was incorporated with the moral precepts of the law of God, and therefore is, and must of necessity be alike binding on all rational beings, throughout all time. But if this argument proves anything it proves too much for those who use it, for if the law of the Sabbath was a moral law no circumstance nor period can change the manner or time of its observance. If it were binding by a moral precept let it be remembered that moral precepts can admit of no changes, and this argument, if valid, would establish a *seventh day*, but not a *first day* Sabbath. But are we not indebted to tradition for the notion that the ten commandments are the moral law of God? That there were precepts of a moral nature written on the tables of stone we have no disposition to deny; but that the circumstance of their being written there constituted them a moral law would imply that man was not, until the giving of the law in that form, under moral obligation to God. But the fact that death reigned from Adam to Moses, and until (or before) the law sin was in the world, fully establishes the doctrine that man was created under the law of God. The law which was given to Israel on tables of stone was given to them as a covenant in which they were distinguished from all other nations under heaven; and although there were embraced in the commandments obligations such as the Gentiles were under, yet in that particular or covenant form the ten commandments had only to do with Israel. Hence the Lord told Moses that it was a covenant which he would make with him and with the house of Israel; and it is referred to in the promise of a new covenant, that the new covenant should not be like that which he made with Israel in the day when he led them out of Egypt, &c.

Now, if there is a place in the bible where the observance of a Sabbath day is enjoined upon the Gentiles, or any Gentile, we have not been able to find it; and we will be greatly obliged to any person who will direct us to the chapter and verse. Or if it can be found we will be equally grateful for information where or when the Gentiles were ever charged with the sin of Sabbath breaking. We may as well look for charges against them for failing to be circumcised. But had the law of the Sabbath been a moral law it would have applied as well to Gentiles as to Jews. If it

were moral it could not be typical or figurative. We not only find it given expressly as God's sign between himself and the nation of Israel, to be observed by them throughout their generations, but by an apostle divinely and infallibly inspired by the Holy Ghost it is classed with *holy days, new moons, meats, drinks, hand-writing of ordinances, &c.* See Col. ii., where the apostle tells us not only that the Sabbath was a shadow, but that the substance or body of it was Christ. Then the seventh day Sabbath was not the shadow or type of a first day Sabbath, but of a real substance which is Christ. Nor are we left to grope in the dark as to the direct and immediate application, as we have before shown that the rest which heaven born souls find in Jesus Christ is the substance or body which is Christ.

In the application of this figure we see how perfectly it describes the gospel rest.

1. The typical Sabbath was given only to Israel, and to them in covenant form, and to designate them as his peculiar people; so its anti-type is given exclusively to those who, being Christ's, are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise; as the exclusive property of those who are the circumcision which worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.
2. As the Sabbath was a part of God's covenant to Israel, so the *rest* to which it pointed is a new covenant provision for a new covenant people.
3. As none but the legally circumcised tribes of Israel had anything to do with the type, so none but those who are Jews inwardly, whose circumcision is that of the heart, and whose praise is not of men but of God, can enter into this rest or anti-typical Sabbath.
4. As the keeping of the Jewish Sabbath required a strict abstinence from servile labour, so the gospel requires a perfect abstinence from all the works of the law as a ground of our justification before God.
5. As the Jewish Sabbath could not be kept on any other than the seventh day, or until the toil and labour of the six days was ended, so neither is it possible for the heirs of glory to enter into or enjoy the gospel rest until they are released from the bondage and dominion of the legal dispensation.

6. As the gathering of fuel, kindling of fires, thinking of one's own thoughts or speaking of one's own words was a desecration of that day, so the christian violates the spirit of the gospel by attempting, by what he may call *means*, or anything else, to furnish materials for a revival, or to kindle or get one up, or to rely on anything less or more than the gospel itself for light, warmth, comfort or defence; and so also the inventions of our own thoughts, or the utterance of words which God has not spoken, in a gospel sense is a desecration of the sacredness of the gospel Sabbath.
7. As those venders of merchandise who came from Tyre and other places to vend their wares, their victuals, &c., on the Sabbath day, interrupted the observance of the day by the children of Israel in the days of Nehemiah, so those modern venders of foreign merchandise, who come among the saints and lodge around the walls of Zion, professing to supply spiritual food for stipulated salaries, do also interrupt the true Israelites in their attendance on the privileges of the gospel, and break in upon their hours of rest. And as in the days of Nehemiah there were some Jews belonging to his company which were ever ready to encourage these traffickers on the Sabbath days, so there are always some among the members of the gospel church ready to transgress the order of the gospel by encouraging ware speculations in divinity, to break the rest of spiritual Israel by attempting to feed them upon the leeks and onions of Egypt, or the fish and other commodities of Tyre.

In the epistle to the Hebrews we find an exhortation to the New Testament saints to fear, lest any of them should *seem* to come short of the promised rest, after the example of those who could not enter into rest because of unbelief: "For we which have believed," says the apostle, "do enter into rest." And again, "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief." All christians have to maintain a conflict with doubts and unbelief; and when doubts and unbelief prevail, they cannot enjoy their Sabbatic rest, but seem to come short of it. When, however, these doubts are removed, and their faith is in full exercise, it lays hold on the promises, and they are brought into the sweet enjoyment of rest to their souls. And all christians have found that in proportion to the power and prevalence of faith in them,

their souls have found rest in Jesus. But alas! how can they rest on him as their sure foundation, when they lack the evidence that they are his; or while through unbelief they are led to doubt that he is their foundation, or that they have any special interest in him? Nothing can be a more direct violation of the gospel Sabbath, than the observance of the abrogated ordinances and rites of the old covenant; and Paul had just cause to fear that he had bestowed on his brethren labour in vain, when he saw them observing days and months and times and years, which course had a direct tendency to entangle them in the yoke of bondage. He commanded the Colossian brethren to let no man judge them in relation to holy days, new moons and Sabbaths; and enjoined on them to touch not, taste not and handle not any of these abolished rites; they belonged to the six days of labour, but not to the Sabbath of the Lord. The Jewish Sabbath continued but for a day, and was succeeded by days of labour and toil; but the gospel Sabbath is that in which there remaineth rest for the people of God. The gospel Sabbath dawned upon the church of God more than eighteen hundred years ago – when the Sun of Righteousness arose with healing in his wings, and must endure for ever. It is neither confined to the mountain of Samaria, nor to the ancient city of Jerusalem; nor is it to be observed or enjoyed on any particular days, or times, or seasons, but only as the weary soul shall be made to hear and obey the voice of Jesus, commanding him away from everything else to find rest in wearing his yoke and in bearing his burden.

There is a great stir at this time among the workmongrel tribes of anti-christ, in regard to the sanctification of the first day of the week as a Sabbath; and from the zeal which they manifest they would, if it were in their power, move heaven and earth to bring us into bondage, even upon the subject of rest. But alas for them, they have never known what it is to rest in Jesus, nor can they know it, unless they shall be born of God; for they are like the troubled sea, which cannot rest, which continually casteth up mire and dirt.

Christian brethren, have we not wandered from the place of our rest? Have we not at times been led to cry out, as the spouse, “Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest the flock to rest at noon; for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?” – Cant. i. 7. And when we have heard the sweet

response of the Beloved, saying, "Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents," have we not in the language of our hearts ejaculated the words, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee?" Then let us "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and be not again entangled with the yoke of bondage." Let no man judge you in meats and drinks, holy days, new moons and Sabbaths. These are matters between us and our God, and for the use or abuse of which we are not amenable to our fellow-man. Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind; and not holding the head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.

Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why as though living in the world are ye subject to ordinances which all are to perish with the using, after the commandments and doctrines of men. Touch not; taste not; handle not; is the solemn admonition of the apostle of our Lord Jesus Christ. If when Christ died on the cross, to which he nailed all the hand-writing of legal ordinances, we were represented in his death, died with him, and to the law became dead by his body, if he was delivered up for our transgressions, and raised for our justification, – if he is to us the end of the law for righteousness – why should we belie our faith, and act so inconsistently with our profession, as to go back to the beggarly elements, and thereby betray a desire to be again in that bondage from which Christ has delivered us? Although Paul admits this voluntary humility, which is urged upon us in regard to abrogated rites and ordinances, *has a shew of wisdom in will worship*, it cannot have that effect in spiritual worship: let the will worshipers, arminians, workmongers and children of the bond woman monopolize this shew of wisdom, but, my soul, come not into their secret; "Return unto thy rest, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee."

(Concluded.)

The words of the text at the head of our remarks, are peculiarly applicable to the case of a soul delivered from a state of trials, temptations

and bondage. Although in our foregoing remarks we have alluded to the first entrance of quickened souls into gospel rest, the idea of returning to one's rest certainly implies that he has been there before. The children of God who have been brought into the light and liberty of the gospel, experienced deliverance from the yoke of bondage, and made partakers of that rest which the gospel is to them that believe, do sometimes through their unbelief transgress the principles of the gospel Sabbath. The moment that our faith yields to unbelief, we begin to do that which is not lawful for us to do on our spiritual Sabbath. When unbelief prevails, how soon the tempted, tried soul forsakes his rest, and like the dove which went from the ark, seeks throughout the broad expanse around him for something to rest upon. How vain is his research, how unavailing are all his efforts to find a sanctuary, a Sabbath, or a place of rest while absent from the ark. The spiritual Israelite cannot wander far without thinking some of his own thoughts; and he will be very much exposed to speak some of his own words. From his doubting, unbelieving heart, such thoughts as these are apt to arise: Can it be possible that I have passed from death unto life? I find myself so cold, so stupid, and so vile, that I am led to doubt that I ever knew the Lord; all my former exercises must have been imaginary; I must have mistaken my exercises and mistaken the excitement and working of my fleshy mind and feelings, for the work of the Spirit; but if I were indeed a child of grace I should feel as a christian ought to feel. Ah, I did hope that I was delivered from sin, and from sinful thoughts, but now I think there never was a time when I was so filled with depravity. I look within me for an evidence that I am born of God, and I am frightened at what I find within me. O, the corruption of my nature, the hidden depravity of my heart; all is confusion, darkness, murmuring, and unreconciliation to God. And, withal, such a torrent of wicked and blasphemous thoughts break forth, as to lead me to conclude that I am worse than I saw myself to be before I thought I had experienced a deliverance from guilt and bondage.

Is there a saint on earth who has not experienced much of what is described above? Certainly they all know something about these peculiar temptations, doubts and fears; therefore of them all, we inquire if they do enjoy a Sabbath of rest while their minds are distracted with doubt and unbelief. As well might we feel comfortable upon a bed of embers

as to feel our souls at rest while unbelief prevails against our hope in the Redeemer. In this state of unbelief, we not only think our own thoughts and speak our own words, but we are very apt to look about us for a few sticks to make a little fire. We feel so cold, what can be done to warm us? and in this extremity we collect every thing that looks to us like fuel; some duties look as though they would burn with a little blowing, and perhaps afford a sufficient warmth to relieve us from this freezing state that we are in; and before we are aware we find ourselves gathering sticks and kindling fires. And in some extreme cases, perhaps, we have been tempted to borrow a little fire from strange altars to kindle with. We see that our neighbours, the Philistines, and the Moabites, and the Assyrians seem to be warm and animated, and conclude there cannot be much harm in trying the experiment, just to see if we cannot get warm by their fire; for we frequently hear them saying "Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire." But they find by sad experience that the enemies' fire cannot warm their souls; still they labour, and still they are heavy burdened, and still they find no rest to their souls. There were many ways in which the children of Israel transgressed the law of the Sabbath, and every way in which it was possible for them to do so, was figurative of the many ways in which heaven-born souls are tempted to wander from the place of their rest. No toils or labour at the works of the law, no hewing of cisterns, no gathering of sticks, no kindling of fires or anything that the poor backsliding soul can perform will bring him back to the place of his rest. Like the Israelite in the type, he finds in bitterness of soul, that his Sabbath breaking brings bondage to his spirit, and death to his present enjoyments, until he hears the well-known voice behind him saying "This is the way; walk ye in it." He now sees and feels that he has departed from the place of his rest, is astonished at the ingratitude, unbelief, and jealousy of his own wandering heart; is melted down in tenderness at the glorious display of boundless goodness and grace of God which he now beholds, and is led to sing:

"He brings my wandering spirit back,
When I forsake his ways;
And leads me for his mercy's sake
In paths of truth and grace."

And from his very heart he says, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for

the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.”

He is now fully satisfied that Christ is his only resting place, that the gospel is his only rest; that to depart from Christ, or turn away from the spirit of the gospel, is to depart from the place where he causeth his flock to rest at noon.

“For the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.” The goodness of God leadeth to repentance. How the poor wandering, unbelieving heart is made to repent and to dissolve in love, in grief, and in gratitude, as he now beholds new manifestations of his faithfulness and loving kindness. Return, O my soul! Earth has no charms for thee.

“Wretch that I was to wander thus
In chase of false delight;
Let me be fastened to thy cross,
Rather than lose the sight.”

In returning to our rest, we turn away from our own ways, our own thoughts, and our own works, and from everything that conflicts with the gospel; and how sweet and heavenly the exercise, when we can rest upon Christ as our foundation, receive and trust in him, and rest upon his promises, feeling their application by the Spirit to our souls. We can then dismiss our doubts and fears, and rejoice in the sure mercies of our God. Sustained by that almighty power that bears up heaven and earth.

“How can I sink with such a prop
As my eternal God?”

“They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed.” So very different is the spirit of the gospel from that of the law, the very duties which the gospel requires of us are essentially connected with our rest. They do not fatigue the child of grace as Jewish rites fatigued the carnal Israelites. They that wait on the Lord find their strength renewed. They learn of Jesus, and bearing his yoke, or adhering to his commandments, they find rest to their souls. The institutions of the gospel, the ordinances of the house of God, the privileges of the sanctuary, of the closet, and of communion with heaven, cannot weary the soul that rests in Jesus.

His laws are written in their hearts, his government is supreme in their souls; they love his law, they love his government, and cannot rest in anything short of them. While the way of the transgressors is hard, and the wicked are as the troubled sea that cannot rest.

“Go ye that rest upon the law,
And toil, and seek salvation there,
Look to the flame that Moses saw,
And shrink and tremble in despair.

“But, I’ll retire beneath the cross,
Saviour, at thy feet I’ll lie,
And the keen sword that justice draws,
Flaming and red, shall pass me by.”



For information about books, audio messages, pamphlets and tracts
available from us, please contact:

Bible Based Ministries
www.biblebasedministries.co.uk

Contending for the Faith Ministries
(*Distributor for Bible Based Ministries*)
42055 Crestland Drive
Lancaster, CA 93536
United States of America

Some books by the same author:

SATAN'S SEAT

There is a powerful and sinister institution at work in the world, claiming to be Christian but in reality antichristian, which is all the more deadly because it appears so beautiful and holy to so many. According to the Word of God, as well as the historical evidence which perfectly fits the prophetic picture, this is the *Roman Catholic Institution*. This biblical truth has been believed by countless numbers of God's people through the centuries. But it is not believed by the multitudes of modern-day "Protestants", caught up in the pursuit of "unity" with the Roman Catholic Institution. It is the purpose of this book to bring the truth to light.

Satan's Seat traces this religio-political system from its origins in ancient paganism to its final prophetic destruction. It has been written so that the Christian reader will have, in his hands, a book which gives a panoramic view of centuries of history. Fully documented and easy to read, it also presents the Gospel to Roman Catholics, Protestants, and others.

"HOLY WAR" AGAINST SOUTH AFRICA

In April 1994, after decades in which South Africa was torn apart by a Red revolution of horrifying proportions, the Communist-controlled African National Congress came to power. Here is the true story, written by one who lives in SA: the story of a beautiful land drenched in blood and tears. Fully documented, this book demonstrates that the SA revolution would never have succeeded were it not for the enthusiastic, active and sustained support of the Vatican, the World Council of Churches, and other religious institutions, who threw their weight behind the Communist revolutionaries. This was, in a very real sense, a religious revolution, waged as much with terribly distorted interpretations of the Bible as with bullets, and directed as much by those paying allegiance to the Vatican, and to Geneva, as to Moscow.

This book pulls no punches: the mask of piety and holiness which these religious institutions wear is ripped away. In addition, the absolute sovereignty of God in controlling all events is shown throughout.

TRAPPINGS OF POPERY

True Christians reject the great heretical doctrines of Roman Catholicism. And yet Popery has been so all-pervading in society and in religious matters for so long that it has influenced even true Christian churches and infected the lives of true Christians, for they have often retained various *trappings of Popery*, either out of ignorance, or because they view them as mere trifling matters, or because they simply cannot bear to part with them. But *none* of the garments of this old harlot (Rev. 17:1-6) should be worn by the members of Christ's virgin bride. No Christian should ever be like Achan, hiding any "goodly Babylonish garment" in his tent (Jos. 7:1)! The Lord's people must fully "*come out*" of Popery (Rev. 18:4); but many flee from this Babylon like Rachel fleeing from her father's house – with her father's gods hidden amongst her possessions.

This book is an examination of various Popish trappings. Christian, come out – *truly* out – of that Babylonish system, have nothing to do with the harlot or her ways!