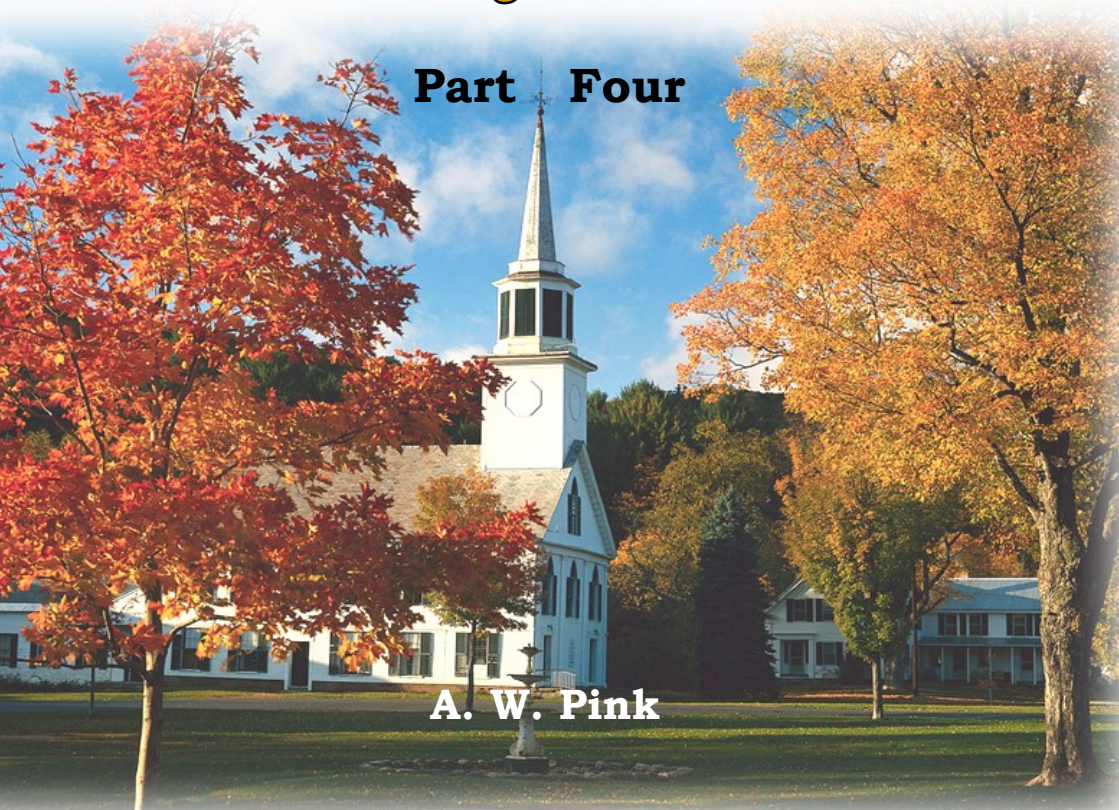




The Holy Sabbath

Part Four



A. W. Pink

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8. Its Observance

9. Its Opposition

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8. Its Observance

In previous chapters it has been shown that the Sabbath was instituted in Eden, observed by the Patriarchs and renewed at Sinai—and that Israel’s prosperity and enjoyment of God’s blessings was to a large extent determined by their observance or non-observance of this Divine ordinance. Turning to the New Testament we have seen that Christ expressly affirmed the Sabbath was “made for man” and not for the Jews only, that He is “Lord of the Sabbath” and therefore invested with authority to determine which day of the week shall be sanctified as a holy rest. And we saw in Hebrews 4 the Apostle proves that “another day” than that which obtained under the old covenant has been appointed for its celebration during the Christian era—the first day suitably celebrating the Saviour’s entrance into His mediatorial rest. This is demonstrated by the practice of the early Church (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1, 2).

We are now to consider the all-important matter of how the Sabbath is to be kept. The chief end of God’s Word and of all instruction therein is that the doctrinal principles which it enunciates may direct us unto a performance suited thereto. The light which we receive from the Living Oracle lays upon us a binding obligation to walk accordingly. Doctrine must regulate deportment. This was the grand rule laid down by the Supreme Teacher: “If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them” (John 13:17). The design of our learning Scripture Truth is for us to obtain such an understanding thereof that conduct accordant therewith may be produced. Where there is knowledge without the corresponding discharge of duty, the truth is held “in unrighteousness” (Rom. 1:18), and then double is our guilt.

Practice must conform to the precept.

It is, then, to the practical side of our subject we now turn: may Divine wisdom be so granted us that we are preserved from going to an undue extreme either on the right hand or on the left. No one who is acquainted with human nature or who is conversant with the history and literature on this branch of our subject, can honestly doubt there is a real danger of failing to preserve the balance here—as everywhere. On the one hand care must be taken lest in our zeal for the sanctity and spirituality of the Sabbath we go to an excess in multiplying rules for its observance, and thereby fall into the Pharisaic error of rigour and excess. On the other hand, there is a far greater danger today of erring on the side of laxity and of accommodating the laws regulating this institution to the lusts of the flesh and yielding to the corrupt practices of an evil and adulterous generation.

The strict requirements of God's holiness must be insisted upon, no matter how the world scoffs at or opposes them. As these very lines are being written [1939] God is manifesting His displeasure at the increasing desecration of His holy rest-day by disturbing the rest of Christendom—those nations which have enjoyed most of the privileges of the Gospel being seriously threatened with war. And the blame for this widespread desecration rests first and chiefly upon the churches: by the banishing of the Law from its pulpits, by the feeble or total lack of protest to legislative bodies for letting down the bars and legalizing the profanation of the Lord's Day, and by the general worldliness of its members. It is therefore high time that Christian leaders should faithfully expound the Fourth Commandment and cease accommodating it to the perverse wills and ways of the ungodly.

Sad, indeed, is the declension in genuine piety. The foundations have been forsaken, standards have been lowered, the spirit of compromise has prevailed till now, "Truth is fallen in the streets." Nor can the apostasy be checked by temporizing the commands of God to the corrupt course of the world. Yet we must beware of *adding to* those commands. Said the Puritan Owen, "I will not deny but that there have been and are mistakes in this matter. Directions have been given, and that not by a few, for the

observance of a day of holy rest, which either for the matter of them or the manner prescribed, have had no sufficient warrant or foundation in the Scriptures. For whereas some have made no distinction between the Sabbath as moral and as Mosaic, unless it be merely in the change of the day, they have endeavoured to introduce the whole practice required on the latter into the Lord's Day."

How is a happy medium in Sabbath observance to be obtained? What will preserve us from undue laxity on the one side, and unwarrantable severity on the other? Where shall we turn for that much-needed guidance which will deliver us from the grievous yoke of Pharisaical excess, and which will also prevent us from degenerating into the lawlessness of our Moderns? We have searched long and diligently for a satisfactory answer to this question, but (amid much that was helpful on other branches of our subject) have failed to meet with anything clear and definite. Personally our firm conviction is that we shall be kept from going wrong in this matter, if we, first, adhere strictly to the *letter* of the Fourth Commandment; and second, apply that commandment to the details of our lives in the *spirit* of the New Covenant.

It should be apparent that we have now arrived at the most important branch of our subject. Unless both writer and reader are genuinely and earnestly desirous of keeping the Sabbath in a manner which will be pleasing to the Lord and beneficial to the soul, then all our previous efforts to prove that this Divine ordinance is binding upon us today, will avail little or nothing. But the task before us now is no easy one: our chief difficulty being the avoidance of too great editing on the one hand, and too much brevity on the other. We do not wish to extend these articles to the point of wearying our friends, yet we must not abbreviate so much that we withhold the help which is desired upon various problems that exercise not a few. Some have had no instruction upon Sabbath observance: others have been given so many rules to follow that a spirit of bondage has been engendered. We shall therefore endeavour to steer a middle course.

Taking Exodus 20:8-11 as our starting point, we note first that that which outstandingly characterizes this season is its

sacredness: “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.” This is basic and foremost. It is “the Lord’s Day,” being instituted for His honour and glory. God, by the appointing and blessing of it, has *made* this day: we, by the worship of Him and performance of spiritual exercises therein, are to keep it holy. And let it be carefully borne in mind that holiness pertains not only to external actions, but also and mainly to the spring from which they proceed, namely, the heart: unless we sanctify the Sabbath in our hearts, the performing of outward devotions will avail us nothing. As the other six days are concerned mainly with secular things, the seventh is to be consecrated unto spiritual ends. Holiness stands opposed not only to all that is *sinful*, but also to the use of such things (our time and energy) as are *commonly* employed.

“Remember the Sabbath *day* to keep it holy:” not a part thereof, but the whole of it. In all countries where Romanism dominates, its deluded votaries spend a part of the morning in religious exercises, and for the balance of the day give themselves up to feasting and pleasuring. Sad to say this evil is becoming more and more rife in Protestant circles: though we may not yet have gone to the same lengths of profanity as is general “on the Continent,” yet thousands in this land who attend some morning service, spend the afternoon and evening in making social calls on their friends, car riding, and other fleshly and worldly activities. It is this unholy mixture, this “lukewarmness”—being neither hot nor cold—which is so nauseating to the Lord. Because it is the Lord’s Day, we rob Him of His due if we regard any part of it as ours.

The second thing we note in Exodus 20:8-11 is that the Sabbath is expressly affirmed to be a day of *rest*: “the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work.” That prohibition is qualified (as the example and teaching of Christ made clear) at two points only: the doing of that which is really essential to life and health, and engaging in acts of love and mercy. Apart from those exceptions, all work and labour—be it manual or clerical, physical or mental—is Divinely forbidden. And this, as was pointed out in earlier articles, is a merciful provision of the Creator for His creatures. Continuous toil is injurious to our constitution. “The Sabbath was made for man,”

for his well-being, because he needed one day of rest in each week. This law is as binding upon and holds good for the wife equally as for the husband, for the servant as much as his master, yea, for his beasts of burden too.

This law is as binding upon our private lives as upon our public, upon the way in which we conduct ourselves within the home as on the outside. It is just as real a profanation of the Holy Sabbath for a merchant to cast up his ledger or write business letters on that day, as for a farmer to go out and plough his fields or sow corn. So, too, is it equally sinful for his wife to prepare and cook elaborate meals on the Lord's Day as it would be for her to do her weekly washing and ironing then. Nor can this be evaded—as many seem to suppose—by the mistress accompanying her husband to the morning service and leaving her daughter or maid to cook the biggest dinner of the week. Alas, in many homes, not only does the cook have no rest on the Lord's Day, but it is the heaviest one of the week for her.

Let us next point out that there is a positive side to the Fourth Commandment as well as a negative. Not only are we to abstain from all worldly business, but we are to be active in spiritual exercises. A day spent in idleness is not one which is kept holy. The Day of Rest is not to be one of indolence, but one of blessed and sacred diligence. Physical rest is necessary, but spiritual rest is yet more essential. In its higher aspect, true Sabbatical rest is the soul resting in the Lord. This is evident from the fact that the Sabbath is both an emblem and a pledge of the eternal rest of the saints, concerning which it is said "His servants shall serve Him" (Rev. 22:3), which means that they will be actively engaged in His worship. Inasmuch then as the duties of this day are eminently spiritual, they are such as lie beyond our own powers to perform, and therefore we must seek the aid of the Holy Spirit.

A third thing we should observe is that the Sabbath is to be a *season of rejoicing*: "This is the day which the LORD hath made: we will rejoice and be glad in it" (Psa. 118:24). The immediate context contains a grand Messianic prophecy, wherein the triumph of Christ was set forth. Under the figure of "the Stone," He is viewed first, in His humiliation, as despised and rejected by men,

as being refused by the builders. Next He is portrayed in His glorification, as owned and honoured of God, as being made “The Headstone of the corner.” The exaltation of Christ was in three stages: when He was raised from the tomb, when He ascended to Heaven, and when He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. “This is the LORD’S doing: it is marvellous in our eyes” (verse 23). The exaltation of Christ was wholly of the Lord: the product of His eternal counsel, the product of His mighty power; and it is the subject of never-ceasing wonderment to His redeemed.

“This is the day which the LORD hath made,” and therefore it is peculiarly and pre-eminently “the *Lord’s Day*,” and so it is expressly denominated in Revelation 1:10. It is the day which the Lord made specially for this Christian dispensation, namely, the first of the week. It is the day which has been made forever memorable by loosing the Redeemer from the pains of death. It is now the day in which His people are to celebrate the Saviour’s victory over the sepulchre. And therefore Christians must exclaim, “we will rejoice and be glad in it:” not only because of its appointment, but because of its occasion, for Christ’s resurrection was both for His own honour and for our salvation. Holy mirth, then, should fill our hearts at this season: Sabbath days ought to be unto us as foretastes of Heaven itself. Then let us welcome each weekly return of it, and duly tune our hearts to show forth His praises therein.

The *order* of Truth in the passage last quoted, is the order we must observe if we are to enter experimentally therein. We shall be glad and rejoice in proportion as our hearts are truly occupied with the risen Redeemer and of our being risen in Him. As Spurgeon well put it, “What else can we do? Having obtained so great a deliverance through our illustrious Leader, and having seen the eternal mercy of God so brilliantly displayed, it would ill become us to mourn and murmur. Rather will we exhibit a double joy, rejoice in heart and be glad in face, rejoice in secret and be glad in public, for we have more than a double reason for being glad in the Lord. We ought to especially rejoice on the Sabbath: it is the queen of days, and its hours should be clad in royal apparel

of delight.”

What abundant cause have we for rejoicing therein! The resurrection of Christ marked the end of His inexpressible humiliation, and signalled the beginning of His unending glorification. It demonstrated that He had made an end of sins, effected reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness (Dan. 9:24). It affords proof of God’s approval of the Mediator’s work and the acceptance of His sacrifice. It meant that the whole Election of Grace were delivered from death and Hell when their federal Head became “alive for evermore.” The resurrection of Christ is both the pledge and the prototype of the resurrection of His sleeping people. “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above” (Col. 3:1). And what are those things which are above? Spiritual rest, spiritual joy—complete deliverance from our warfare with sin, unalloyed rejoicing in the Lord. Then “seek” them: by the actings of faith, by the exercise of hope, by the outgoings of love. We should have a double enjoyment of the things above: by anticipation now, by realization then.

The same keynote is struck in the first stanza of Psalm 92. It is to be noted that the inspired heading to this Psalm is, “A Song for the Sabbath.” And what is its opening theme? This, “It is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto Thy name, O Most High: To show forth Thy lovingkindness in the morning, and Thy faithfulness every night. Upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery; upon the harp with a solemn sound. For Thou, LORD, hast made me glad through Thy work: I will triumph in the works of Thy hands. O LORD, how great are Thy works; and Thy thoughts are very deep” (verses 1-5). Praise is Sabbatical work: the joyfulness of hearts resting in the Lord. Since a true Sabbath can only be found in God, it is essential that we be supremely occupied with His perfections on that day.

Earlier we pointed out that the essential principles which should regulate us in the keeping of the Sabbath Day holy are a strict compliance with the letter of the Fourth Commandment and the discharge of the same in the spirit of the New Covenant. It seems to us that such a combination will best enable to preserve the

balance, delivering us on the one hand from unwarrantable laxity, and on the other from undue rigour and Pharisaic excess. While it is to be emphatically insisted upon that the moral Law is as much binding on us today as ever it was upon the Jews, yet it must also be as unmistakably affirmed that the Christian receives the Law not from Moses but from the hands of Christ. It is not the irksome tasks of slaves, but the ready and joyous service of *sons* and *daughters* which God asks from believers.

It should be the diligent concern of the Christian to observe the Sabbath Day and to perform the duties required therein with a frame of mind becoming God's dear children, and in a spirit answering to the freedom and liberty of the Gospel. We are to serve God in all things "in newness of spirit and not in the oldness of the letter" (Rom. 7:6). That is to say, our obedience and worship is to be rendered unto God with a spirit of grace, joy, liberty, and a sound mind—and not in that darkness, dread, and servility which characterized the old covenant. In contrast from the blessed liberty wherewith Christ makes believers free, that which marked Judaism was a bondage frame of mind, so that their observance of the duties of the Law, and consequently of the Sabbath, were rendered in a servile spirit.

The Puritan John Owen pointed out three things tending thereto. First, the dreadful giving of the Law on Sinai. The fearful phenomena which accompanied the promulgation of the Law at that time was designed to strike terror not only into the generation who immediately witnessed it, but also throughout all generations of the Mosaic economy to awe the hearts of Israel with a dread and terror of it. In proof of this we find the Apostle declaring plainly that Mount Sinai "gendereth to bondage" (Gal. 4:24). It was the very nature of Judaism to bring its subjects into a spiritually servile state, and consequently although secretly on account of the ends of the covenant they were children and heirs, yet "they differed nothing from servants" (Gal. 4:1-3). It is the grand dispensational change brought in by Christ that is treated of in Galatians 4.

Again—the re-enforcement of the Adamic Covenant, with the promise and threat of it, necessarily produced the same effect

upon the nation of Israel, for that covenant was binding upon them throughout the whole continuance of Judaism. True, the Moral Law had a new use and end given unto it at Sinai, yet those who received it were so much in the dark and the proposal of that new end and use was attended with so great an obscurity, that they could not look unto the comfort and liberty which was to be the grand outcome. “The Law made nothing perfect,” and what was of grace in the administration of it was so veiled under typical ceremonies and shadows that they could not behold “the end” or design of that which was to be abolished (2 Cor. 3:13)—where the same grand dispensational change is also discussed.

Finally, the affixing of the death penalty to the Law increased this bondage. The grim prospect of death overshadowing disobedience would obviously inspire their service with terror, and this is exactly what it was designed to express and produce, so as to represent the original curse of the whole Law (Gal. 3:13). Thereby the majority of them were greatly awed and terrified, though a few of them, by special grace, were enabled to delight themselves in God and His holy ordinances. By these things, then, was administered a “spirit of bondage to fear,” which by the Apostle is opposed to “the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba Father” (Rom. 8:15). From those things arose the many anxious scruples which were upon them in the observance of the Sabbath. Though they boasted they were the children of Abraham and never in bondage, yet the Saviour insisted that, whatever they pretended, they were not free until the Son should make them free (John 8:36).

If it were needful for the Apostle to remind the believing Hebrews that they did not go to Sinai, but to Mount Sion, to receive the Law, it is requisite that believers be taught the same today. “For *ye are not come* unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the words should not be spoken to them any more: (for they could not endure that which was commanded, and if so much as a beast touched the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: and so terrible was

the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake.) But ye *are come* unto Mount Sion and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem . . . and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel” (Heb. 12:18-24).

Under the Gospel, Christians are delivered from all the terror provoking considerations which brought the Jews into such spiritual bondage. They are connected with a radically different order of things, for “Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all” (Gal. 4:26), which is but another way of saying that we receive the Law of our obedience from Jesus Christ, who speaks from Mount Sion, and who is to be heeded with a filial spirit of liberty (cf. Gal. 5:1). So far as Christians are concerned the Adamic covenant is absolutely abolished, nor is the remembrance of it anyway revived (Heb. 8:13), so that it should have any influence upon their minds. They have been taken into a Covenant full of peace and joy, for “The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1:17).

In the Covenant of Grace we receive the spirit of Christ or adoption to serve God without legal fear (Luke 1:74; Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6), and there is not anything more insisted on in the Gospel as the principal privilege thereof. Nor would it be of any account to have liberty in the word and rule, if we had it not in the spirit and principle. It is by this Gospel liberty we are delivered from that anxious solicitude about particular instances in outward duties, which was a great part of the yoke imposed by the system of Judaism. It is most important and needful that this principle of evangelical freedom be insisted upon (for though the Fall has made us prone unto lawlessness, yet by nature we are also essentially legalistic), otherwise one of the most vital and fundamental elements of the Gospel will be submerged.

In all his duties, the Christian should look upon God as his *Father*, for through Christ both believing Jews and believing Gentiles have “access in one spirit unto the Father” (Eph. 2:18). Our Father is not One who will “always chide,” nor does He “watch our steps” for our hurt. He is not One who binds upon us a grievous burden, but “knoweth our frame and remembereth that

we are dust” (Psa. 103:14). He does not tie us down to rigid exactness in outward things, while we act in a holy spirit of filial obedience as His children. There is a vast difference between the duties of servants and sons, as there is between obeying a master and a parent. The consideration and application of this principle if it be regulated by the general rules laid down in the Word will resolve a thousand such scruples as perplexed the Jews of old.

Let it also be observed that our Father requires to be worshipped “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). He has far more respect to the inward frame of our hearts wherewith we serve Him, than He does to the mere outward performance of duties. The latter can only be accepted by Him as they are the expressions and demonstrations thereof. If, then, in our observance of the Holy Sabbath our hearts are single and sincere in our desires for His glory with delight, it is of more price with Him than the most rigid and punctilious observance of external duties by number and measure. “It hath been no small mistake that men have laboured more to multiply directions about external duties, giving them out as it were by number or tale, than to direct the inward man unto a due performance of the whole duty of the sanctification of the day according to the spirit and genius of Gospel obedience” (John Owen, to whom we are indebted for much of the above).

Here, then, is the essential difference between the Judaical and the Christian Sabbath: the minds of believers are no longer influenced to the duties of its observance by the curse of the Law and the terror thereof as represented in the threatened penalty of death. Instead it is love for the Person of Jesus Christ and respect for His authority which are the springs of their obedience. This cannot be insisted upon too strongly, for it marks the difference between a slavish and filial compliance. Consequently our main duty lies in an endeavour to obtain spiritual joy and delight in the services of this Day, as these are the special effects of spiritual liberty. Nor will this be difficult to attain if we are actively engaged in the privileges and blessings of the Gospel: the actings of faith upon the benefits secured for us by Christ cannot fail to produce deeper devotion, for faith ever works by love.

Those who have read ‘Studies in the Scriptures’ for any length

of time will scarcely need to be told that in what has been pointed out above we are far from joining hands with those who belittle the sanctity of the Lord's Day and who contend that they are so delivered from the Law that they are free to please themselves (within the limitations of decency) as to how they show their respect for this ordinance. There is a world of difference between spiritual liberty and fleshly license. Those whom Christ makes free are freed *Godwards* and not *sinwards*. The Rule of obedience is the same for those who are now under the New Covenant as it was for those under the Old: it is the spring from which obedience proceeds which is altered. Then, it was the obedience of servants in terror of death for disobedience; now, it is the worship of sons out of gratitude to a loving Father.

Our first and chief concern must be to diligently see to it that the Lord is not robbed by us of any part of His due on the Sabbath Day; yet care needs also to be taken that we are not brought under bondage to "the commandments and doctrines of men." It has to be admitted that some, with a zeal which was not according to knowledge, felt that the sanctification of the Lord's Day could best be secured by multiplying the duties of piety. Accordingly, they drew up excessive directions regarding the same, both proscribing and prescribing that which lacked Scriptural authority for the same under the Gospel. When such a strictness is required that the saints cannot come up to it with a delight therein, then we may rightly suspect that the requirements laid down by God have been exceeded, and the inevitable result will be a swinging to the opposite extreme of laxity.

We cannot improve upon the ways of the Lord, and any attempt to do so must inevitably meet with failure. It is just as foolish to go beyond the Rule which He has given us, as it is wrong for us to come short thereof. Where He has particularized we must not generalize, and where He has only generalized we should not dogmatically particularize. Is it not at this very point that one of the most outstanding differences between the two economies is to be found? Under the Mosaic God furnished detailed laws for the Jews to heed—laws which pertained to every phase of their lives—but under the Christian He has, in many instances, supplied

us only with general principles for the regulation of our conduct. Considerable latitude is allowed us in the application of those principles to particular instances—as is clear from such passages as Romans 14:1-9; 1 Corinthians 8:8-9, etc. Those, then, who are not content with urging unto a compliance with such general principles, and instead, draw up a full code of specific regulations are contravening the genius of Christianity and inculcating the spirit of Judaism.

In order to prevent misunderstanding at this point, we call attention to one or two of the general principles enunciated in the Epistles, to which we must ever turn for full-orbed Christianity. “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31). Here is expressed the fundamental principle for the regulating of practical godliness: this is the grand rule which is ever to guide us where express precepts are not supplied—self is to be denied and the eye fixed on God alone, so that we aim at honouring Him in everything. “Let all things be done decently and in order” (1 Cor. 14:40). This is the general rule to regulate us in all the details of public worship as the former concerned more directly our domestic or private lives. It is a simple principle which, if heeded, will furnish guidance on many matters of church life concerning which the New Testament does not specifically legislate.

“Let all your things be done with charity” (1 Cor. 16:14). If this were duly attended to, how many disputes would be avoided, ill-feelings spared, and difficulties solved? All our affairs, domestically and ecclesiastically, should be regulated by love. Earnestness must not degenerate into bitterness, nor firmness into tyranny. If zeal be governed by love then excesses and cruelty will be obviated. “Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord, and not unto men” (Col. 3:23). Here is yet another general principle, which is to govern us in all our undertakings: our service is not to be forced but spontaneous, rendered not grudgingly but gladly. It will be noted that the chief emphasis in these general principles is thrown upon the *inward* springs of action rather than upon the outward performances themselves, and that they afford room for the exercise of sanctified common sense, moral instincts, and

Spiritual intuitions.

“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” (Isa. 58:13, 14). This is one of the many Old Testament predictions which relates chiefly to Gospel times—the section in which it occurs clearly denoting this, coming as it does after the death of Christ in Chapter 53. In it we may clearly discern the two leading principles which we have contended for throughout this article: the maintenance of the letter of the Fourth Commandment, and a compliance therewith in the spirit of the New Covenant. While there is much greater liberty under the Christian economy than there was under the Mosaic, yet the standard of holiness is not lowered nor are the requirements of God waived.

“If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath.” This, it seems to us, has a twofold force: a general and a specific—if you refrain from trampling upon it, and if you abstain from journeying and gadding about on that Day. The opening clause is explained by, “from doing thy pleasure on My holy day:” fleshly indulgence is no more permissible now than it was under the old covenant. This prohibition is specified in three details: “not doing thine own ways nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words.” The Lord’s Day is not to be spent in seeking our secular interests, nor by engaging in worldly recreations, nor by vain and trifling conversation. Positively, we are to “call the Sabbath *a delight*, the holy of the Lord, honourable,” which agree with Psalm 118:24. The reward for such obedience (verse 14) must be understood of New Testament blessings expressed in Old Testament terminology.

“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” (Isa. 58:13). We quote this passage again because it sums up what we have sought to bring before the reader previously in this booklet. First, it expresses the grand truth that the Sabbath is not to be looked upon as an irksome duty, but as a sacred privilege. Instead of being a burden grievous to be borne, it affords us a special opportunity for profitable and joyous exercises. The spirit in which we are to enter upon its hallowed employments is neither one of bondage nor dread, but of freedom and gladness. We are to find in it our greatest Joy of the week, delighting ourselves in the Lord, all that is within us praising His holy name.

The accompanying promises afford great encouragement for those whose sincere desire it is to honour the Lord in this ordinance: “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” (verse 14). Expressed in New Covenant terms, that means, first, such an observance of the Sabbath will afford us much more comfort in the Lord. “The more pleasure we take in serving God, the more pleasure we shall find in it. If we go about duty cheerfully, we shall go from it with satisfaction” (Matthew Henry). Second, we shall be given victory over our spiritual enemies: observe how the Lord’s causing Israel to triumph over the Egyptians is spoken of as, “He made him ride on the *high places* of the earth” (Deut. 32:13). Third, our souls shall be richly fed with the blessings of the covenant. The precious products of the antitypical Canaan—fed with foretastes of it now.

Having fully established the two basic principles which are to regulate us in Sabbath observance, we must now point out something of the practical application of the same to the details of this duty. First, we will consider *the preparation* which should be made, for we cannot enter properly or profitably into the keeping of this holy rest without a fit approach thereto. It is noteworthy that this expression, “the preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath” (Mark 15:42) occurs not in the Old Testament but in the New, being found in substance in each of the four Gospels. This sacred institution is not to be approached lightly and carelessly,

but with definite forethought and conscientious preparation of our secular affairs, our domestic arrangements, and especially of our hearts. We greatly fear that it is failure at this very point which is the reason why so many miss the richest benefits of this ordinance.

Before proceeding further we must carefully consider the question as to *when* this “preparation” is to begin, and this requires us to fix the time at which the Sabbath itself commences. In certain quarters this has been made a point of controversy, some contending that it begins at sunset of the preceding day and ends with sunset of its own, appealing to, “from even unto even shall ye celebrate your Sabbath” (Lev. 23:32). That this was one noteworthy feature of and obtained throughout the Mosaic economy is readily granted, but that the same is binding on us today we emphatically deny. In the first place, a day of rest, according to the rules of natural equity, ought to be proportioned unto a day of work, and that is reckoned both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament as from morning to evening: Psalm 104:20-23; Matthew 20:1-8.

In the second place, our Lord Jesus Christ, who in His resurrection gave beginning and being to the special Day of holy rest under the Gospel, came forth from the grave not until the morning of the first day of the week, when the light of the sun began to dispel the darkness of the night, or when it dawned towards the day, as it is variously expressed by the Evangelists. This should settle the matter for His people. Thus, the Christian Sabbath is again sharply distinguished from the Judaical Sabbath. Finally, it should be pointed out that in the description furnished of the first seven days of Genesis 1, that while it is said of each of the first six that it was constituted of an evening and a morning, yet of the seventh this is significantly omitted: it *is* simply called “the seventh day,” without any mention of the preceding evening. Thus the Mosaic was distinguished from the primitive Sabbath as well as from the Christian.

Our Sabbath, then, is to be regarded as extending from midnight of the seventh day (Saturday) till midnight of the first day. Thus the “preparation” for it would fall upon the Saturday, particularly the evening of that day. “Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it

holy,” includes the taking of all necessary forethought which is required for the sanctifying thereof. It is a profanation of the Lord’s Day to make it one of feasting, and therefore its meals should be as plain and simple as possible, and all cooking done on Saturday (Exod. 16:23). The women who cared for our Lord’s body mixed the spices and ointments on the day preceding, considering it a servile work not suitable for the Sabbath (Luke 23:54, 56). Has not this been recorded for our learning?

The due preparation of our hearts and minds is especially needful. As we are to keep our foot when going to the house of God (Eccl. 5:1), that is, consider what we are about to do, to where we are going, and that which is due God in our solemn approaches unto Him; so we must not enter into the sacred exercises of His holy day without thought and prayer. “I will be sanctified in them that draw nigh Me” (Lev. 10:3) is the Lord’s unwavering requirement. He is greatly dishonoured when we carelessly rush into any of the appointed means of grace, and therefore does the Apostle exhort us, “Let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear” (Heb. 12:28). This means far more than grave countenances and bodily postures of veneration: let us have hearts and minds that are spiritualized.

Our first concern should be to see to it that our minds are freed from the worries of business and the cares of this life, so that they may without distraction be stayed upon the Lord. Much converse with the world is very apt to beget a worldly frame of mind in us, and being so much absorbed with earthly things during the six working days taints the heart with worldliness. Though it be our duty in all our secular concerns to live unto God therein and do everything unto His glory, yet they exert such an influence upon us as to unfit us for spiritual exercises and heavenly contemplation. And therefore it devolves upon us to purge our minds of secular affairs, business concerns, and worldly cares, as far as in us lies, so that we may the better and more wholly rest in and delight ourselves with the Lord.

In endeavouring to bring our souls into a fit frame for the duties of the Lord’s Day, the evening before we should engage our

thoughts with meditations suitable thereto. This is a fitting time to consider the lost Sabbaths of our unregenerate days, and which we have to account for or repent of. This is the time to review the week now nearly ended, and put right with God our sad failures therein. Then is the time to meditate upon the wondrous patience of God, which has so long borne with our waywardness and slackness, and who notwithstanding has spared us to approach another Sabbath. This is the time to ponder the vanity of worldly things and how utterly contemptible they are when compared with communion with God. This is the time to give ourselves up to confession, to prayer, to praise.

As our eyes open upon the light of the Sabbath we should most earnestly pray that we may be preserved from trifling away its holy hours, and seriously should we ask ourselves how we may most profitably improve them. We ought to be very importunate with God that He will graciously banish from our minds everything which would distract and turn us away from Him, that He would so sanctify our hearts that from the beginning to the end of His day we may be entirely given up to those ends and exercises for which He has consecrated the Sabbath. We ought also to be equally importunate in praying that He will grant His ministers the assistance of the Holy Spirit in preparing a message which will glorify Him and edify His people. So, too, we should ask the Lord for the same spiritual mercies to be bestowed upon our fellow-saints as we have craved for ourselves. This will serve to prepare us to engage in family devotions, before we wait upon the public worship of the day.

Throughout the Sabbath we are to abstain from everything that would impede its spiritual observance. Under no circumstances must there be any buying or selling on that Day, or the encouraging of those who do so. Sunday newspapers and all secular literature is to be then strictly banned by us. The paying of social calls and the making of unnecessary visits whereby the worship of God in families is interrupted and worldly conversation is introduced are desecrations of the Sabbath. All unnecessary work in providing for our dining tables on that day is to be avoided: a cold meal with God's blessing is infinitely better than a

hot one with His frown. Great watchfulness must be exercised against idle conversation. “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers” (Eph. 4:29)—that holds good at all times, but doubly so on the Sabbath.

All needless taking of journeys on the Lord’s Day are sinful. In this connection we would earnestly remind the reader of that exhortation of Christ’s, “But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath Day” (Matt. 24:20). This was plainly a prophetic warning against that species of Sabbath desecration which has, alas, become so rife. It is rendered the more striking inasmuch as it is the only warning He gave to His disciples against any particular kind of encroachment on the Day of Rest. And for what does He here teach them to pray? Not that they may be kept from travelling for pleasure or for purposes of commerce, but that in a time of calamity and danger events might be so ordered by God that they should not be obliged to preserve their lives and flee for safety by travelling on *that* day. How He wished to impress upon us the unique sanctity of the Sabbath!

Turning now to the positive side: the reading and pondering of the Scripture should have a prominent place in the occupations of this Day. In our strenuous age there are comparatively few who have many leisure hours through the week, and often they are too weary to use those they do have for serious study. But it is far otherwise on the Day of Rest: special opportunity is then afforded for seeking *spiritual* nourishment. At least one hour in the early morning, another in the afternoon, and one more before retiring, ought to be spent in the Word of God and devotional literature. As six days have been directed mainly to providing for the needs of the body, the seventh is to be improved by seeking food for the soul: thereby is our strength renewed and we are fitted for the duties of the ensuing week.

In addition to seasons of private prayer and feeding on the Word, all our spare moments on the Lord’s Day should be employed in spiritual meditations. Then is our golden opportunity for serious reflections and delightful contemplation: to turn our thoughts from things temporal to things spiritual, and to project

our minds into that eternal state to which we are constantly approaching. We should meditate on God as Creator and delight ourselves afresh in all His wondrous works. We should consider how we lost our original rest in God by sin, and how He might justly have abandoned us to eternal restlessness. We should meditate upon the *recovery* of our rest in God by the great atonement of Christ and His triumphant emerging from the grave. This is indeed the principal duty of this day: to dwell upon and rejoice in this recovery of a rest in God and of a rest for God in us. This is the fruit of infinite wisdom, amazing grace, and incomprehensible love: then let us give glory to God and His Christ for the same. We are also to remember that the Sabbath is a pledge of our everlasting rest with God.

Let it also be observed that this Day affords the most favourable opportunity for *training children* in the fear and nurture of the Lord. Family instruction is one of the most important duties thereof. How many thousands owe their conversion, under God, to Sabbath catechising, Scripture reading, and religious instruction, and the simple but fervent prayers of a pious parent or relative! The heads of families should do all they can to promote the spiritual and eternal good of those under their care. No Christian parent should entrust the instructing of his children in the things of God to only Sunday School teachers, but ought to *personally* discharge much of this responsibility. Let portions of the Word be read together, simple explanations and practical applications be made: verses should be allotted for memorizing during the week, with a hearing of the same on the Sabbath. Such books as Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, the life of some Missionary, etc., may also be profitably read to the children.

This is also a season eminently suitable for works of *charity*. All possible doubt on this score has been removed by the specific teaching and personal example of Christ. He affirmed that it is lawful to do well on the Sabbath Day. It is both our privilege and duty, especially of those without family responsibilities, to seek after and minister unto those who are cut off from the public means of grace: to visit the sick and the aged, to read the Word to those who cannot read it for themselves, to engage in acts of

mercy and compassion unto those needing our help. The more we endeavour to brighten the lot of others, the more will we enter into the joy of Him who ever went about doing good. It is always the self-centred who are the most discontented and miserable.

We heartily endorse the following observations from the Puritan, Owen. "There is no such certain standard or measure for the observance of the duties of this day, as that every one who exceeds it should by it be cut short, or that those who on important reasons come short of it should be stretched out thereunto. As God provided in His services of old that he who was not able to offer a bullock might offer a dove, with respect unto their outward condition in the world, so here there is an allowance also for the natural temperaments and abilities of men. Only whereas if persons of old had *pretended* poverty to save their charge in the procuring of an offering, it would not have been acceptable, yea, they would themselves have fallen under the curse of the deceiver; so no more now will a pretence of weakness or natural inability be an excuse for any neglect or profaneness. Otherwise, God requires of us and accepts from us according to what we have, and not according to what we have not.

"We see it by experience that some men's natural spirits will carry them to a continuance in the outward observance of duties much beyond, nay, doubly perhaps to what others are able, who yet may observe the holy Sabbath to the Lord with acceptance. And herein lies the spring of the accommodation of these duties to the sick, the aged, the young, the weak, or persons any way distempered. God 'knoweth our frame and remembereth we are dust,' so also that the dust is more discomposed and weakly compacted in some than others. As thus the people gathered manna of old, some more, some less, 'every man according to his appetite,' yet he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack' (Exod. 16:17-18). So is everyone in sincerity, according to his own ability, to endeavour the sanctifying of the name of God in the duties of this day, not being obliged by the examples or prescriptions of others, according to their own measures."

Commenting on the cautions of Isaiah 58:13 Owen said, "I no

way think that here is a restraint laid on us from such words, ways and works, as neither hinder the performance of any religious duties belonging to the due celebration of the worship of God on His day, nor are apt in themselves to unframe our spirits or divert our affections from them. And those whose minds are fixed in a *spirit of liberty* to glorify God in and by this day of rest, seeking after communion with Him in the ways of His worship, will be to themselves a better rule for their words and actions, than those who may aim to reckon over all they do or say, which may be done in such a manner as to become the Judaical Sabbath much more than the Lord's Day.

“Although the day be wholly to be dedicated to the ends of a sacred rest before insisted on, yet duties in their performance *drawn out* to such a length as to beget wearisomeness tend not to edification, nor promote the sanctification of the name of God in the worship itself. Regard therefore in all such performances is to be had unto *the weakness* of the natural constitution of some, the infirmities and indisposition of others who are not able to abide in the outward part of duties as others can. And there is no wise shepherd who will rather suffer the stronger sheep of his flock to lose somewhat of what they might reach to in his guidance of them, than to compel the weaker to keep pace with them to their hurt, and it may be to their ruin. Better a great number should complain of the shortness of some duties, who have strength and desires for a longer continuance in them, than that a few who are sincere should be really discouraged by being overburdened, and have the service thereby made useless to them.”

We cannot do better to close this article than by giving the prayer of the godly Baxter:—“O most glorious and gracious Creator and Redeemer, I humbly return my unfeigned thanks for the unspeakable mercies which I have received on Thy Day; and much more, for so great a mercy to all Thy churches and the world: and craving the pardon of the sins which I have committed on Thy Day, I beseech Thee to continue this exceeding mercy to Thy churches and to me, that its blessed privileges and comforts may not be forfeited and lost; and let me serve Thee in the life and light and love of Thy Spirit in these Thy holy days on earth, till I

be prepared for and received into the everlasting rest in heavenly glory. Amen.”

9. Its Opposition

We now turn to the least pleasant part of our subject and contemplate the attacks which have been made upon this Divine ordinance. It has been fiercely assailed both in doctrine and in practice, and this by the professed friends of the Lord as well as by His open enemies. Yet this should not surprise us, for since the carnal mind is enmity against God, that enmity ever manifests itself against whatever is of His special ordering—and the more so in proportion as His honour and glory are bound up with any particular appointment. It is at just such a point that the hostility of Satan rages most furiously, seeking with all his might and arts to stir up his subjects to overthrow the same, knowing full well that if *that* can be accomplished his own evil cause will be greatly furthered and the kingdom of darkness more firmly established in the world.

Just as in carnal warfare there are certain strategic centres—“key positions”—on which the security of the whole “line” depends, and just as such a strategic centre is made the “military objective” by the opposing army, who are determined to capture it at all costs, so it is in connection with the great forces of good and evil. There are certain bulwarks (Isa. 48:12, 13) which are of vital importance, the maintaining of which is essential for the furtherance of true piety, for once *they* be captured the way is wide open for the hordes of wickedness to wreak their evil will. Such a “bulwark” is the Sabbath: on the strict observance of it depends the well-being of Church and State alike. To keep the Sabbath holy secures the blessing of the Most High, but the desecration thereof most assuredly calls down His curse upon a land and people.

After what has been pointed out in previous articles there is little need now for us to enter upon a lengthy proof that the Holy Sabbath is one of the principal bulwarks of Zion. Or that it constitutes one of the most vital of all “strategic centres” in the defences of Truth and godliness, spirituality and morality. It is like

a mighty fortress which guards the entrance to a pass that gives access to a vast industrial centre: once that fortress be captured the millions of people living behind it in the cities are then at the mercy of the advancing foe. And just as in a military campaign the attacking general makes the demolition of that fortress his main aim, concentrating the strength of his forces against it, so it is in connection with Satan's fight against the kingdom of God upon earth: he knows full well that the overthrow of the Sabbath would mean for him a "major victory."

To employ a rather different figure. The blessings which God has promised unto men—blessings both temporal and spiritual—flow most freely along the particular channels which He has Himself appointed. Contrariwise, if those channels be forsaken, then the blessings will also be forfeited. Now since the Sabbath is the day which the Lord has set apart for the communication of special blessing, then it is obvious that those blessings will be enjoyed in greatest measure by those who are the sincerest and strictest in its sacred observance. This is a fact which is capable of the clearest verification. Organized Christianity has been here for 1,900 years and during that lengthy span it has experienced many vicissitudes, passing through periods of prosperity on the one hand and of adversity on the other, of light and purity and darkness and impurity, of spiritual energy and of spiritual torpor.

Now it can be plainly shown from the chronicles of history that there has been to a very striking degree an unmistakable correspondence in those periods between the observance of Sabbath sanctity and the spiritual prosperity of the churches on the one hand and the neglect of the Sabbath's sanctity and spiritual declension of the churches on the other. In this we may also see parallels with the varied experiences of the nation of Israel in Old Testament times—compare our article No.5. Its Pollution (booklet part two). While it is true that only fragments have survived the flight of time of what was recorded in the first two or three centuries A.D., yet sufficient is extant to show that in those centuries the Lord's Day was faithfully kept by His people in caves and catacombs, surrounded by every form of peril—as witness the testimonies of Eusebius, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, etc.

How far, then, was the state of the Church a flourishing one in those early days?

In seeking the answer to our last question it must be distinctly borne in mind that the prosperity of Christianity is not to be gauged by the esteem in which it is held by the world in general. Very much to the contrary. "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:19). Unless that Divine pronouncement be held steadily before us we are certain to arrive at an entirely wrong answer to our inquiry. The world's hatred and opposition and not the world's love and co-operation are the surest index to the spiritual prosperity of Christianity. What the early Christians suffered at the hands of Nero and others of the Roman emperors which followed him, is too well known to need any description of ours. Thousands of Christ's followers sealed their testimony with their blood, yet despite the fierce persecution encountered, the Gospel continued to be diffused far and wide.

During the course of time Satan has resorted to a great variety of tactics in his efforts to stamp out the observance of the Sabbath, employing widely different measures and methods in his determination to choke this channel of Divine blessing. He employed a strange but effective instrument in his first onslaught. The fidelity and courage of the first martyrs evoked the deep esteem of the suffering but prospering Church. But alas—such is man—the praising of the *martyrs* soon took the place of the praising of Him who had sustained them, and ere long the places where they had suffered and the graves in which their mangled remains had been interred began to be regarded with superstitious veneration. It was not long until the *days* on which they had been martyred were regarded as comparatively sacred for their memories and were set apart as holy festivals hallowed by their death.

Not only were the virtues of the martyrs eulogized, but gradually it became popular to offer up prayers—at first *for* the souls of these Christians heroes, and later *to* the martyrs *themselves* as to a species of subordinate mediators. The efforts of

the Enemy proved only too successful: the calendar of the Church soon became so filled with these “saints” days that the solitary dignity of the Lord’s Day was crowded out and thus the channel of Divine blessing was choked. That holy veneration which had been accorded unto the Sabbath alone was now divided and extended to a multitude of human appointments, and even before the power of pagan Rome to suppress the public observance of the Christian Sabbath had passed away, its sole sanctity had disappeared before a legion of these spurious “holy days.”

Constantine framed statutes requiring the inhabitants of cities to suspend their ordinary business and mechanics to abstain from their common labour on the Sabbath, and closed the courts of justice and all other public offices on that day—clear proof of how the early Church had been desirous to observe it. But the laws drawn up by this strange character who espoused Christianity introduced a most pernicious element: the Sabbath and the “holy festivals” of human invention were placed on the *same level*. The sequel may easily be imagined: those other “days” not being of Divine authority quickly degraded the sanctity of the Lord’s Day from its sole supremacy over the consciences of the worshippers. An attempt to raise any human innovation in matters of religion to an equality with what is of *Divine* institution inevitably results in the lowering of the Divine and in the elevation of the *human* above the Divine.

What the Scriptures designate as “will worship” (Col. 2:23) is *false worship*, devised by the depraved heart of man to minister to his corrupt inclinations—under the pretence of exalted piety. Not only is this “will worship” a false one, but in proportion as it flourishes, true worship is defiled. From the days of Constantine onwards the progress of error and departure from the Truth went on with ever accelerating pace and power, until in a short time the whole year was overrun with saints’ days and festivals and the Lord’s Day was entirely set aside, or where it was still professedly regarded was degraded into one of recreation, amusement and festivities, of such kinds and degrees of debasement to be too sinful and shameful to describe.

It is needless to inquire whether or not the churches flourished

spiritually during that time, for God cannot be mocked with impunity. The fourth and fifth centuries A.D. witnessed a sad lowering of Christian standards: the Law was no longer faithfully enforced, the Gospel was grievously corrupted, and worship became more and more paganised. It was not long ere a faithless Christendom was made to reap what it had sown, for the judgments of God ever fall upon the ecclesiastical sphere before they reach the civil (see 1 Peter 4:17). Where the Truth is rejected professors are given up by God to believe a lie. The setting up of saints' days and the degradation of the Lord's Day paved the way for the rise of the great anti-Christian power. The Roman Catholic apostasy was both the fully developed offshoot of the evils to which we have alluded, as she was also suffered by God to assume dominion as a mark of His displeasure upon an adulterous generation.

The growth and domination of the Papacy supplied a vivid demonstration of the spiritual adversity and desolation which had overtaken Christendom, and rightly have the centuries which followed been designated "the Dark Ages." No longer was the Word of God preached to the people, no longer was the Sabbath Day kept holy, no longer was the simplicity of Christian worship observed. Priestcraft poisoned every spring and the Water of life was no longer obtainable. And where was the true Church of Christ to be found during this dark season: for even then God left not Himself without true witnesses on earth. The answer is, among the Vaudois valleys of the Alps—among that poor and despised people known as the Waldensians. No sooner did the degenerate system of Popery rise to power than the humble dwellers of the Piedmont become distinguished for their firm adherence to the standards of primitive Christianity, refusing to adopt any other rule of faith than the written Word of God, and exemplifying its precepts in their daily walk to an extent that few have done since.

Those possessing any acquaintance of Church history are familiar with the tragic but glorious sequel. The rage of Rome knew no bounds against this people who witnessed so faithfully and valorously for Christ, many of whom were given the great honour of suffering severely even unto death rather than yield to

the demands of the Mother of Harlots. Even though most of their writings perished in the devastating persecution which they experienced, by which Rome strove might and main to exterminate them root and branch, yet sufficient have survived to furnish proof that the Waldensian Christians were characterized by *Sabbath observance*. In "The Noble Lesson," of date about 1100, there is not only a clear avowal of the binding nature of the Moral Law—and consequently of the Fourth Commandment—but an enunciation of an important principle which shows their conception of the relation of the Law to the Gospel: "Christ did not change it that it should be abrogated, but renewed it that it might be better kept."

In the Confession of Faith of the same Church, the feasts and vigils of saints are denounced as "an unspeakable abomination." In an "Exposition of the Commandments" the following occurs, "They that will keep and observe the Sabbath of Christians, that is to say, will sanctify the day of the Lord, must be careful of four things. The first is to cease from all earthly and worldly labours: the second, not to sin; the third, not to be idle in regard to good works; and fourth, to do those things which are for the good of the soul." And in another Confession, drawn up at a later period, the following article appears: "That on Sundays we ought to cease from our worldly labours, through zeal for God, and love towards our servants, and that we may apply ourselves to hearing the Word of God." These notices are enough to prove that the Waldensian Church was definitely distinguished by its sacred observance of the Lord's Day.

And what was the religious prosperity of Christianity in the Alps in those perilous times? Most pertinent is such an inquiry after what we have affirmed above. But again we must be careful not to employ a wrong standard of measurement, as we are so liable to do in a day when it is very common to estimate values wrongly. That prosperity is not to be looked for in numbers, in social prestige, or in anything which is highly esteemed among men; but rather in those *spiritual fruits* which are to the praise of God, because produced by the gracious operations of His Spirit. If to endure persecution as good soldiers of Jesus Christ without

murmuring; if to suffer the acutest afflictions without wavering; if to experience continual persecution with an invincible patience and victorious faith be the marks of spiritual well-being, then the Waldensian Church certainly flourished spiritually.

“If to continue steadfast through a long agony of centuries, glorifying God in the midst of the furnace of persecution, even when it was heated seven times, maintaining still imperishable life and heavenly hope triumphant over all, be religious prosperity, that Church in the wilderness was marvellously prosperous. And if, in the midst of all its fiery trials, to strive to its power, and beyond its power, to act as a missionary Church, not only upholding its own testimony to the Truth, but striving to diffuse around it that priceless blessing, thus both continuing and extending true Christianity in spite of all the deadly efforts of anti-Christian Rome be religious prosperity, the faithful and zealous Waldensian Church was gloriously prosperous.

“The teaching of that Church pervaded the south of France and became instrumental there in winning many souls to Christ. Its living truths ran along the Rhine, communicating spiritual life to numbers, and preparing a way for future Gospel progress. Bohemia caught some rays of the sacred light, which in later age became the day-spring of heavenly brightness to suffering martyrs. The distant British Isles obtained some powerful life-germs, destined in due time to put forth a mighty and growing energy, not only for the protection of the suffering of the Waldenses themselves, but for the diffusion of Gospel Truth throughout the world. Such was the religious prosperity of the Bible-loving and Lord’s-Day keeping Waldensian Church; and no true Christian will deny that it was a kind and measure of prosperity which God alone could have given, and the world could not take away—the full amount and value of which only the Day to come will reveal” (W. M. Hetherington, to whom we are indebted for the above quotations).

Popery succeeded at length in well nigh wearing out the saints and exterminating all who had borne testimony against her pernicious errors. The Waldensian Church was almost wholly destroyed or silenced. A reformation was attempted in Bohemia,

but it was ruthlessly suppressed. Long had the Scriptures been a sealed book, not only to the masses, but because of their gross ignorance, to many of the priests as well. There had ceased to be any Christian Sabbath in the sense of a holy rest in the lands where Romanism dominated. The Lord's Day had been degraded into a day of special recreation, amusement, public shows and exhibitions—in short, of anything and everything to the utmost possible degree distinct and remote from the very appearance of sacredness. Thus the Devil seemed to have triumphed completely.

But a mighty change was impending, one which made manifest the Lord's supremacy. As it is in the material world, so it is in the moral and spiritual realms. As the Creator has given to the sea His decree, saying, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed" (Job 38:11), so as Governor of this world He has limited the triumphs of the wicked. In the early part of the 16th century Satan received a check from which his kingdom has never fully recovered to this day. Under the Reformation the distinctive truths and principles of Christianity were once more publicly proclaimed and anti-Christian errors and practices boldly denounced.

In our day there are few who perceive the immensity of the task which confronted the Reformers, the difficulties they had to overcome, or the perils to which they were exposed. Papal despotism had to be encountered in the very heyday of its pride and power. Her monstrous fictions, superstitions, and idolatrous rites had to be swept away before a true and pure Christianity could appear. The vital truths of Divine revelation had to be virtually re-discovered. First to be rescued and preached was the cardinal doctrine of justification by faith. Then the Bible had to be translated from the dead languages into the living tongues of many lands, and given to the people as the alone Standard of faith and sole Rule of character and conduct. Then came the tremendous task of rescuing the Lord's Day from the obscurity to which it had been consigned, when buried beneath the multitude of festival days of human invention.

The work of the Reformers was so vast, so difficult, and so arduous, and was executed under such unfavourable conditions

that we need not be surprised if parts of it were not so well done as were others, or that they never themselves erred. Rather must we marvel and be thankful that so much good was accomplished under their instrumentality. In regard to the Lord's Day they failed to give a sufficiently clear and decisive exposition. While they rightly adopted the principle that the whole of the Old Testament economy was typical and had its fulfilment in the New Testament dispensation—thus disposing of the Romish figment of an official priesthood with sacrifices in the Christian Church—yet they misapplied the same principle in connection with the Sabbath. Or perhaps it would be more correct to say, they applied it in such a way as to fail in establishing the right foundations on which the sacred obligations of that day now rests.

While it is quite clear that the Reformers themselves contended for the necessity and obligation of the Christian Sabbath, maintaining the same in their own personal examples, yet it must also be admitted that they employed language and uttered sentiments which were only too susceptible of being perverted and misapplied. This in fact quickly took place, especially in the Lutheran churches. Never so sound doctrinally as the Calvinists, they soon became lax in their Sabbath observance. So much so was this the case that one reliable writer tells us, "To such a degree was this the case, that many pious men among the ministers of the Lutheran churches seem to have been in doubt whether the fierce wars which so long desolated Germany were to be regarded as the cause of the extreme Sabbath profanation which prevailed, or as judgments inflicted on the community on account of that profanation."

The most striking and extensive demonstration of the connection between Sabbath observance and religious prosperity was seen in the British Isles in the 17th century. All who are acquainted with the history of that period know that the Puritans were particularly distinguished by their strict adherence to the sacred rest of the Lord's Day. Nor was this characteristic confined either to the Scots or to those who separated themselves from the Established Church, but pertained also to those who remained within her pale. It is not generally known that the Westminster

Confession of Faith, which contains the strongest assertion of the Divine authority and inviolable sanctity of the Christian Sabbath ever produced, was framed by a body of about 120 divines of whom only four were Scottish and five were Independents—all the rest having received Episcopal ordination.

Now the very times when the sanctity of the Sabbath was most diligently maintained in England were those in which pure and spiritual religion was in its highest state of freedom and prosperity; and the men under whose instrumentality this obtained are the ones whose writings are still the most precious treasure of English religious literature. Never was the smile of Heaven more apparent, never did true piety flourish so extensively, never has the power of the Holy Spirit been so manifest since the days of the Apostles, yet never was a season of Divine blessing so abruptly terminated. As the restoration of Charles the Second marked the overthrow of English Puritanism, so it brought in a flood of licentiousness which soon swept over the country, for unregenerate courtiers and commoners united together in throwing odium on Sabbath observance as a product of Puritanical fanaticism.

The awful effects of widespread Sabbath desecration were soon evident, for the judgments of God fell heavily upon both the religious and social life of the nation. The first half of the 18th century was marked by the most awful errors in the pulpit, spiritual death in the pew, and infidelity and profligacy amongst the masses, who were only too glad to be freed from the righteous restraints which pious legislators had placed upon them. Once again Satan had won a notable victory. But not for long was he suffered to enjoy the spoils of the same. Under the fearless preaching of George Whitefield and his fellows, revival was granted and true godliness given fresh life, and the Lord's Day was once more restored unto its rightful place.

During the 19th century the great Enemy of God and man entered upon a new campaign, seeking to undermine the foundations of this Divine institution, attacking it from the doctrinal side. He blinded the minds of those who professed to be the ministers of Christ, and alleged champions of the Truth,

causing many of them to believe that the Sabbath was obsolete, pertaining not to this dispensation—and leading others to suppose that the observance of the Sabbath in this Christian era is mainly a matter of individual option, and that a much wider latitude in what they term “Christian liberty” is now permissible. In consequence thereof, Satan succeeded in banishing all witness to the Sabbath from thousands of pulpits, and caused the standard to be grievously lowered in most of the remaining ones. This acted like a poisonous leaven, the effects from which spread widely, until the rank and file of church-goers had no conscience on the subject: so long as they attended service once or twice, they felt they had fully discharged the obligations of the Lord’s Day.

Little sagacity is required to foretell the effect upon the masses of such a poisoning of the ministry. To use a military figure: the muzzling of the pulpit on this vital truth was like the silencing of the guns on a fortress. “Once its cannons are put out of action, the capture of the citadel quickly follows.” When those who were looked up to as the expounders of the Divine Law discredited the Sabbath, then who was left to offer real resistance to godless politicians playing fast and loose with those statutes of the realm which had once been framed for the purpose of preventing Sabbath profanation? If the rank and file of professing Christians considered they had discharged the obligations of the Sabbath merely by attending one or two religious services on that day, then need we be surprised if the irreligious masses clamoured louder and louder for a “brighter Sunday” and that those in governmental authority more and more yielded to their demands!

We shall now consider some of the arguments made use of by those who have insisted that the Sabbath pertains not to this dispensation. First, it has been asserted that the Ten Commandments were never given to anyone but the Jews. Such a postulate is most absurd. If the Moral Law be not binding upon Gentiles, then by what standard will God judge them? “Where no law is, there is no transgression” (Rom. 4:15). The erroneousness of such a postulate is made clearly manifest by, “Now we know that what things soever the Law saith, it saith to them who are under the Law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the

world may become guilty before God” (Rom. 3:19). Nothing could be plainer than that: the whole human race is “under the Law” and every member of it is brought in guilty by the same.

Second, it has been asserted that, whatever be the status and state of the unregenerate, yet Christians are “not under the Law, but under grace” (Rom. 6:14). Those who have read this magazine for any length of time will not be misled here by the mere *sound* of words. We have often explained their *sense*, and shown that the believer is no longer “under the Law” as a Covenant of Works, nor is he any more under its awful curse and condemnation—but as 1 Corinthians 9:21 definitely declares, he is “under the Law to Christ”—under it as a Rule of conduct. The Christian is required to “so walk even as He (the Lord Jesus) walked” (1 John 2:6), and *Christ* ever walked in perfect accord with the Moral Law (Psa. 40:8). The Holy Spirit has been given to the Christian for the express purpose of enabling him therein, the love of God being shed abroad in his heart for its fulfilment (Rom. 5:8 and 13:8-10).

It has been objected by others that the Sabbath precept in the Old Testament was entirely of a typical and ceremonial nature, looking forward to that spiritual rest which Christ should provide, and that when the substance was brought in, the shadow was done away. But were *that* the case, then the Moral Law consists of only nine and not “Ten Commandments” as Deuteronomy 4:13 specifically declares. The very fact that the Sabbath statute was incorporated into the Decalogue unequivocally denotes its essential moral character, and therefore, its lasting nature—the Fourth Commandment was, like the other nine, written by the finger of Jehovah upon the tables of stone, but no part of the ceremonial law was. Moreover, the Sabbath was instituted *long before* any part of the ceremonial law was given to Israel, before there were any types or shadows, before any promise of Christ was made. The Sabbath was appointed in Eden before the Fall, *before* there was any need for sacrifices!

Appeal has been made unto Galatians 4:10, 11 by those who are determined to banish the Sabbath from this dispensation: “Ye observe days and months and times and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.” The reference there

is to the Judaizing of the Galatian saints—to their being brought under bondage to the ceremonial law of Israel. False teachers had gone so far as to insist they must be circumcised in order to salvation: see Galatians 5:2, 6; 6:15. The “days” and “months” were those connected with the Jewish festivals, which were now obsolete: the very fact that the Holy Spirit here designated them, “the weak and beggarly elements” (Gal. 4:9) is clear proof that the Christian Sabbath was *not* there included, for it could never be described in such a way.

Appeal has also been made to, “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” (Col. 2:16). This is the favourite verse of those who insist that the Sabbath is not binding on Christians. That they refer to such a passage shows how untenable is their position. The Greek word here for “Sabbath” is in the plural number (as the translators denoted by adding “days” in italics), which intimates it is not the weekly Sabbath or the Moral Law that is in view. Moreover, there is no definite article before “Sabbaths,” which is proof positive that the weekly Sabbath was not before the Apostle’s mind. It was to things connected with the *ceremonial law* against which the Colossians were being warned, as the “meat,” “drink,” and “new moon” show.

Some have raised a silly objection drawn from the difference made by the meridian, from which it is argued it is impossible that all men could observe precisely the *same* day, and therefore God never intended they should. Now if men sailing either eastward or westward did not continually have seven days succeeding one another there would be some force in this trifle, but since the Sabbath statute simply requires from men one seventh of their time, or a seventh day, separated unto God and sanctified to His service, the objection is quite pointless. That the observance of this rest day should in all parts of the earth begin and end at the same minute, the Scriptures nowhere enjoin nor does the creation of God permit. It is sufficient that whether living in the northern or the southern hemisphere that all men observe the same *proportion* of time.

After all that was said on the Christianization of the Sabbath,

especially the exposition of Hebrews 4:8-10, there is little need for us to refute seriatim the errors of those who insist that the Sabbath should, even now, be kept on Saturday rather than Sunday. The essential feature to be noted is that God requires us to set apart *one seventh of our time* and consecrate the same unto His worship. Nowhere in the Scriptures is it specified that the Lord ever commanded any people to observe the *seventh day of the week*—rather six days of work (without defining which days) followed by one of rest. Nor does the transference of the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday involve any alteration in the Law, but merely a change in its *administration*.

It is true that the Apostles for a season, while their ministry had a special regard for the Jews (Rom. 1:16), for the conversion of that remnant among them according to the election of grace, went frequently into their synagogues on the seventh day to preach the Gospel (Acts 13:14; 16:13, etc). Yet it is evident they did so only to take opportunity of their assemblies, that they might preach to greater numbers of them, and that at a time when they were prepared to attend unto sacred things. Upon the same ground and for the same reason we find Paul endeavouring to be at Jerusalem at the feast of Pentecost (Acts 20:16). But we nowhere read that *Christians* at any time assembled together on the seventh day for the worship of God.

And now our task is completed, very imperfectly so, we are fully conscious. But if the Lord is pleased to own these feeble efforts unto a stirring up of His people for a stricter observing of this Divine ordinance and in using their influence to protest against its awful profanation, we shall not have laboured in vain.

**“A Sabbath well spent brings a week of content,
And strength for the toils of the morrow:
But a Sabbath profaned, whate’er may be gained,
Is a certain forerunner of sorrow.”**

The fourth of four booklets.

