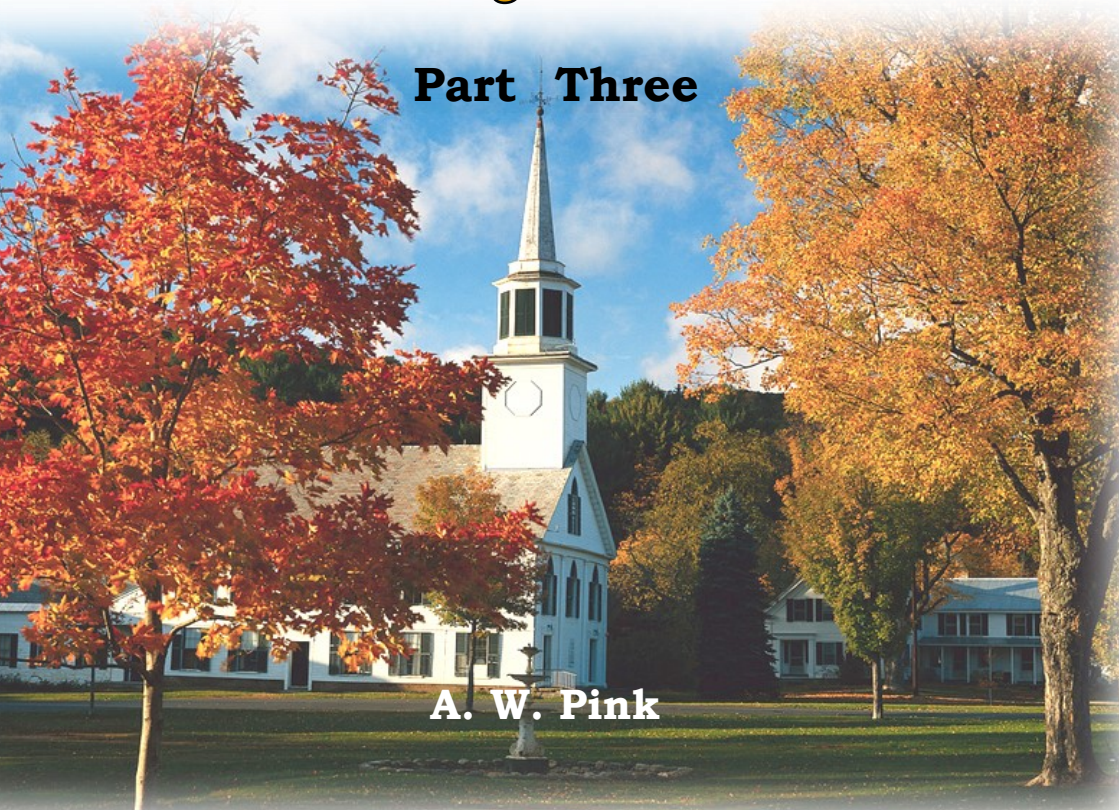




The Holy Sabbath

Part Three



A. W. Pink

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7. Its Christianization

That the Judaical Sabbath, as such, has been abolished, we unhesitatingly affirm; but to conclude from this that there is now no “Sabbath” in the strict and proper sense of that term, we emphatically deny. Serious errors have been committed at either extreme. On the one hand there has been an insignificant company who have vigorously contended that God has given no command for any change to be made in the weekly Day of Rest, and therefore that we, in this dispensation, are required to observe the *seventh* day. On the other hand, another class has insisted that the “Sabbath” has been completely abolished, though they allow that it is the privilege of Christians (any *law* requiring the same, they deny) to honour Christ in a special manner on the *first* day of the week. The Truth lies between these two extremes: the Sabbath remains, though it has undergone some noticeable changes in its Christianization.

A thorough inquiry into the precise differences between the Judaical Sabbath and the Christian Sabbath (deeply important as such an inquiry is)—differences as to its significance, its penal sanction, its day of observance, etc.—would require a full exposition of the Siniatic covenant; but as we recently went into that subject at length, it is not necessary for us to traverse the same ground again. But a brief summary of its salient and distinctive features seems unavoidable. Originally, the Sabbath was “made for man” (Mark 2:27); it being required of him naturally, the light and law of nature suggesting that some time be set apart and dedicated to God for the observance of his solemn worship in the world. Man in his creation, with respect to the ends of God therein, was constituted under a covenant: the law of his obedience being attended by promise and threatening, reward and punishment.

During the interval which elapsed between the fall of Adam and the Lord's deliverance of Israel from Egypt, the nations had completely apostatised from God, and had been given up by Him to a spirit of blindness (Rom. 1:21-28). The dealings of God with the Hebrews marked a fresh and distinctive departure in the Divine ways with mankind. At Sinai the descendants of Jacob were taken into special covenant relationship with Jehovah. As the Sabbath had been originally annexed to the covenant between God and man (Adam, and the race in him), the renovation of the covenant (at Sinai) necessarily required an especial renewal of the Sabbath, and the change of the covenant as to the nature of it, necessarily introduced a change of the Sabbath. In what respects, we shall endeavour to point out.

When God erected His Church in the wilderness (Acts 7:38), renewing the knowledge of Himself and of man's duty toward Him, in the posterity of Abraham, He gave unto them afresh the precepts of the Law and the Covenant of Works, for the rule of their obedience, reducing the same to Ten Commandments written on tables of stone. As thus delivered by Him, it was the same for the substance of it with the law of our creation or the original rule of our covenant obedience unto God. Yet as thus inscribed, there was an innovation in it, both as to its form and the principle of obligation. In form it was now made objective and external; and the immediate obligation unto its observance was prefaced by motives peculiar to their state and condition (Exo. 20:2). Later, its observance was continually pressed upon them by reasons taken from their peculiar relation to God, with His love and benefits unto them. It was now no more a moral command only, equally regarding all mankind, but had a *temporary* regard given to it, which was afterwards to be abolished.

The law was renewed as an ingredient in that economy under which God placed His Church at Sinai, though He did not bring His people under the Covenant of Works, in all the rigour of it—relief being found, for those betaking themselves to it, in the promise of grace in Christ. Nevertheless, there was begotten in the minds of the people such a sense of the demands of the Law and their obedience thereto, that it “gendereth to bondage” (Gal.

4:24). Annexed to the Law was the promise of, “Do this, and live;” and the threat, “cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the Law to do them.” Consequently, the Covenant form given to the Law at Sinai rendered the obedience of the people to it in a great measure servile. The death sentence was pronounced upon those who desecrated the Sabbath (Exo. 35:2, 3).

The moral Law, to which was attached many statutes of both a civic and ceremonial nature, was made the rule of the government of Israel, as a holy nation under the dominion of God Himself as their King. Thus the whole Decalogue as given at Sinai had a *political* use, that is, it was made the principal instrument of the polity or government of the Nation as peculiarly under the rule of God. Their polity, as to the kind of it, was a theocracy, over which God in a special manner presided as their Governor, and this was peculiar to that people. Hence the Sabbath amongst them came to have an absolute necessity accompanying it, of an outward carnal ordinance, under pain of death if they neglected the same.

Again—the Sabbath was made a part of their law for religious worship in their temporal Church state, in which and whereby the whole dispensation of the covenant which Israel was under, was directed to other ends. Thus it had the nature of a shadow, representing good things to come, whereby the people were to be relieved from the rigour and curse of the whole law as a Covenant. Hence, new commands were given for the observance of the Sabbath, new motives advanced, new ends and uses formulated, so as to accommodate it to the dispensation of the Covenant then in force, but which was afterwards to be removed and taken away, and with it the Sabbath itself so far as it had relation thereto. Therefore we have no hesitation in subscribing to the following words of Owen:

“All these things in the law of the Sabbath are Mosaic: namely, the obligation that arose to its observance, from the promulgation of the Law unto that people at Sinai; the limitation of the day to the seventh or last of the week, which was necessary to that administration of the Covenant which God then made use of, and had a respect to a previous institution; the manner of its

observance, suited to that servile and bondage frame of mind, which the giving of the law on Mount Sinai did generate in them, as being designed of God so to do; the engrafting of it into the system and series of religious worship then in force, by the double sacrifice annexed to it; with the various uses in, and accommodation it had to the rule of government in the commonwealth of Israel; in all which respects it is abolished, taken away.”

If, then, noticeable changes were made in connection with the Sabbath when God took the people of Israel into covenant relationship with Himself, need we wonder that other changes were made when the Siniatic covenant and constitution were abolished? In order to distinguish the Christian Sabbath from what had obtained for 15 centuries, was it not expedient, might we say, *essential*, that under the era of the new Covenant, it should be observed on a new and different day? But alas, the perversity of men has led not a few of them to argue from that very change of the day from the last to the first of the week, that the Sabbath itself is completely done away with under the Christian dispensation. They insist that an entirely new institution has displaced it, an institution which consists in a certain pre-eminence of the first day

Once again we avail ourselves freely of the writings of P. Fairbairn, and point out, first, even if we could assign no adequate reason for the seventh day being dropped and the first substituted in its place, a mere change of that kind would certainly not outweigh, with any serious-minded believer, the arguments we have produced in support of a Sabbath reaching from the creation of the world to the destruction of Jerusalem. This is a chain which links together Moses and Christ, the patriarchal, Levitical, and Christian times. We should certainly be the less disposed to set aside the large amount of evidence, and to view the change in question as in itself conclusive against the existence of a proper Sabbath, when we know that the *first* day, on being appropriated to acts of worship, received the name of “the Lord’s Day” (Rev. 1:10). Why called emphatically *His*, but to intimate that He now claimed the same propriety in it that he had hitherto done in the

seventh?

If the first day, as a day—that is, as a whole, and not some particular portion of it—is *the Lord's*, in a sense in which other days of the week are not, how can it possibly be so, except in being set apart for employments and services peculiar to itself, and more immediately connected with His own glory? Was not this very feature the distinctive characteristic of the seventh day: that it was *God's* day, because specially separated by Him for sacred purposes? And does not this very character appear plainly in the appellation, “the Lord's Day,” as transferring to the first day of the week that which had, essentially, marked the seventh day from Adam until Christ?

The principal feature which had distinguished the Sabbath from the very first, as designed for all classes and generations of men, is that a *seventh portion* of our time should be specially devoted to the worship of God, rather than the precise day of the week being the thing on which attention was to be fixed. It is the remembrance of a seventh day, as distinguished from the other six constantly going before and coming after it, which formed the substance of the Fourth Commandment, and that the seventh day was to be regarded as the last, rather than the first day of the week, appears only in what is assigned to the original ground of the appointment. We have no reason, but rather the contrary, to think that the Lord intended it to be always and solely connected with His own procedure in the work of creation.

At the giving of manna in the wilderness, when the Sabbath was restored after a period of oblivion, caused by the hard bondage of Egypt, the seventh day was counted from the time of God's beginning to bestow the manna. And instead of bidding them to keep it as a mere memorial of creation, He more frequently enforced it on their regard as a sign of the Covenant which He had with them, and a memorial of His goodness in delivering them from the land of bondage. After all this, is it not preposterous to suppose that the mere change of the day from the last to the first of the week, so as more distinctly to connect it with another and better Covenant and render it the fitting memorial of a higher and more glorious work, should utterly

destroy its obligation or alter its character?

Again—let it be duly considered that the change was not made capriciously but for weighty and important reasons connected with the new work and covenant of God as distinguished both from that to which it stood immediately opposed in Judaism, and from that to which more remotely, but still more essentially, it stood opposed in creation. The observance of the last day of the week, as peculiarly set apart for God's service, though belonging like circumcision to an earlier state of things, had yet come, in great measure, to be connected with the Covenant made at Sinai. It was appointed to be a sign of that Covenant, and the reason for the day as a memorial of creation ceasing in course of time to be maintained among the Gentiles, the observance of it came ultimately to be regarded as a public testimony on the part of the Israelites of their adherence to the Covenant made with their fathers.

The need for a *change of day* in connection with the Sabbath under Christianity should now be the more apparent. The worship of God on the *seventh* day had been so blended with and merged into Judaism, that it could not serve as a proper sign and testimony to the world of the faith of the Gospel, and therefore without such a change as was actually made, one important end of this Divine institution and ordinance must otherwise have been lost. For the same reason that God abolished circumcision as the outward mark of His covenant people, He set aside the Judaical Sabbath as such; and for the same reason that He appointed baptism as the distinctive uniform of the Christian (Gal. 3:27) has He signalized the first day of the week as the Christian Sabbath.

But if we go beyond Sinai right back to the Divine work of creation, a yet stronger reason will be found for this change in the Day of Rest. As a memorial of that work, the Sabbath cannot be now what it originally was, for sin has entered with its destroying power, and laid creation, as it were, in ruins. The once beautiful and glorious inheritance is now given up a prey to the spoiler; and a memorial of it, while it tells us indeed of God's first designs of goodness toward His creatures, tells us at the same time how those designs have been opposed, and nature's life and glory have

been brought down within the gulf of death. We need then, for our peace and welfare, another work and covenant of God to repair the ruin of the first, and lay the foundation of a higher—even an imperishable glory.

A grander and more blessed production than the making of this material world has been achieved, even the bringing forth of a new creation, which cannot be marred by sin or Satan. The work of redemption immeasurably transcends in importance and value the work of the first creation, and hence it is most fitting that it should be signaled by a change in the Day of Rest to commemorate the rest of the Saviour from all His arduous and costly labours in the putting away of the sins of His people and His bringing in an everlasting righteousness for them. The transcendent work of Christ is therefore memorialized in the Sabbath by transferring it from the last to the first day of the week, for it was on *that* day the Redeemer rose triumphant from the grave as the Head of the new creation, the firstfruits of them that sleep, the prototype and pledge of a glorified humanity.

By the very act of His glorious exodus from the tomb, the Lord Jesus begets all who believe on His name unto an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away (1 Peter 1:3, 4). How appropriate, how delightful, then, the change made in connection with the Holy Day! Instead of seeking to take occasion from that change to impair or destroy the Sabbath, it should endear to us that blessed institution all the more. For it tells now, not so much of a paradise that has been lost, as of a better paradise that has been won; not so much of a covenant broken and a heritage spoiled, as of a covenant forever ratified by the blood of Christ and a kingdom that cannot be moved. If the corruptible work and covenant of nature had by Divine appointment its Sabbatical sign and memorial, must not this higher work and covenant much rather have it?

“If we refuse now to enter into the fellowship of Christ’s rest by hallowing the day which He has set apart in His Church for spiritual rest and blessing, what is it in effect but to cut ourselves off from the hope of His redemption and declare our light esteem of His finished work? We conclude, therefore, that it is now, as it

ever has been, the will of God that one whole day in seven should be kept holy to Himself; that since the resurrection of Christ, this has been Divinely appointed to be the first day of the week; and that this change, while it could do nothing to weaken the obligation of a proper Sabbath, was both necessary to make the observance of a Sabbath conducive to some of the ends for which it was appointed, and also gives to it the character which cannot fail greatly to enhance and endear its sacredness to every child of God” (P. Fairbairn, from whom much in the second part of this section is taken *verbatim*).

In the first section of our remarks upon the Christianization of the Sabbath we confined our attention mainly to two things. First, in pointing out that the many arguments advanced for the perpetuation of the Sabbath in this dispensation cannot possibly be rendered invalid by the mere fact of a change in the Day of Rest—that it most certainly does not follow from the first day of the week now being the one specially hallowed for Divine worship, a proper Sabbath as such no longer obtains. Second, we sought to show that a change of economy required a change in the day of Sabbath observance: if the New Covenant was to stand out with clear distinctness from the Old, then a new Day of Rest best accorded with and testified to the establishment of the same.

We are now to dwell more particularly on the fact that the first day of the week is the one ordained of God for the Christian Sabbath. We must ask our friends to kindly remember that these pages are read by people of varied shades of thought, some of them having been brought up under quite different teaching from what others have received, and as we desire (under God) to help one and all, we often feel obliged to take up an aspect of a subject which will not appeal to the majority, yea which may seem to them quite needless. Some of our readers have been influenced by “Seventh Day Adventism,” and we must confess that in our wide reading we have come across very little indeed which was calculated to solve their difficulties; and therefore we deem it well to enter carefully and with some detail into this point.

The old creation comprised in it the law of obedience of man unto God, this being implanted in his moral nature, which gave

inclination unto the observance of it. The law of creation had a covenant inseparably annexed to it, as had also the Siniatic constitution. The immediate end of those covenants was to bring men by due obedience unto the rest of God, and as a pledge thereof and also a means of attaining it, the Day of Rest was instituted. All these things therefore must have a place also in the New Covenant belonging unto the new creation, the immediate end of which is our entrance into the rest of God, as the Apostle proves at length in Hebrews 4. But therein we are not absolutely to enter into God's rest as a Creator and Rewarder, but to God in Christ as *Redeemer*, the foundation of which is the work of God in the new creation, and the complete satisfaction or complacency which He finds in Christ's atonement.

Thus it should be apparent that the particular day of the week on which the Sabbath is to be observed, resolves itself into *what Covenant* we walk under before God. If the Siniatic covenant has been annulled, then of necessity the Day of Rest has been changed. On the other hand, to insist that the Sabbath as given to the Jews is not abolished requires us to perpetuate the whole system of Mosaic ordinances which stood on the same bottom with it. That this is not simply an inference or dogmatic assertion of ours, that it is actually a Scriptural proposition is clear from the whole argument of Hebrews 7-10. "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (Heb. 7:12). "The covenant being changed, the rest which was the end of it being changed, and the way of entering into God's rest being changed, a change of the day of rest must of necessity thereon ensue" (John Owen). With these introductory remarks we now proceed to offer further proofs for the *first* day of the week being the Christian Sabbath.

First, it was *plainly adumbrated in Old Testament times*. This change in the weekly Day of Rest from the last to the first day of the week, that is, from the seventh to the eighth, as everything pertaining to the Christian era, was intimated under various types and shadows. The work of creation was finished in six days, and on the seventh God rested from His work, which completed a week, or the first series of time. The eighth day, then, was the first

of a new series, and on that day Christ rose as the Head of the new creation. The eighth day is accordingly signaled in the Old Testament, pointing in a manner the most express to the day when Christ entered into His rest, and when in commemoration thereof His people are to rest.

Circumcision was to be administered unto children on the *eighth* day (Gen. 17:12). On the *eighth* day, but not before, animals were accepted in sacrifice (Lev. 22:27). On the *eighth* day the consecration of Aaron as high priest, and his sons, after various ceremonies, was completed (Lev. 9:1). On the *eighth* day was the cleansing from issues, emblematic also of sin (Lev. 15:29). On the *eighth* day atonement was made for the Nazarite who was defiled (Num. 6:10). When the sheaf of the firstfruits was brought to the priest, it was to be accepted on the *eighth* day (Lev. 23:11)—a distinctive type of the resurrection of Christ. The *eighth* day was sanctified at the dedication of the Temple (2 Chron. 7:9), and in its sanctification at the time of Hezekiah (2 Chron. 29:17).

Now, can any spiritual mind suppose for a moment that this repeated use of the eighth day, in connection with the most solemn services of God's ancient people and in a manner so conspicuous, was without a special purpose? Did not the wisdom of God single out that day for some very important end? intimating thereby an antitypical new beginning? The *eighth* day corresponds with the first day of the week, on which according to all those appointments, Christ was received as the Firstborn from the dead, His sacrifice accepted, and on which, as the great High Priest He was "consecrated for evermore," having made atonement for His people, by which they are cleansed from all sin. That purpose of God is fully developed in the New Testament, where He who is Lord of the Sabbath, without in the slightest degree changing the obligation to observe a seventh day, appropriated to Himself the first instead of the last day of the week.

Second, this change is clearly *intimated by what is recorded of the first day in the New Testament*. The alteration in the day of Sabbath rest and worship was emphasized by Christ's personal

visitations to His assembled disciples on the first of the week. After His appearing to the travellers to Emmaus, the Saviour was seen no more until His mysterious and blessed manifestation in the upper room. "Then the same day at evening, being the first of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you" (John 20:19). What is the Holy Spirit's object here in mentioning the particular day of the week? Was it not to inform us that this was now a *particular* day? Jews would understand at once what was signified by the notice that a religious "assembly" occurred on the *seventh* day, and Christians are to equally understand what is denoted by such an allusion to the *first* day.

The next detail to be noticed in the above passage is, "the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for *fear of the Jews*." What is indicated by those words? Let it be remembered that the Lord had already "opened their understandings that they might understand the Scriptures" (Luke 24:45), which must mean that, in a measure at least, they now knew the types had given place to the reality. We also know that, "He through the Holy Spirit had given *commandments* unto the Apostles whom He had chosen, to whom also He showed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs" (Acts 1:2, 3). What other conclusion, then, can be drawn, but that the disciples now observed the Sabbath on the first day of the week, and that they therefore took the precaution of fastening the doors because they knew how incensed the Jews would be for their departure from the ancient observance of the Sabbath on the seventh day?

Thomas was absent on the above occasion, and when he learned of its marvels, expressed strong unbelief. Throughout that week the Lord Jesus did not reappear. But when the disciples assembled again on the *first day* of the next week, Thomas being present with them, He once more stood in their midst and said, "Peace be unto you" (John 20:26). Is there nothing marked by that interval of time? His other interviews with them are not thus dated! Surely the fact that Christ was not seen by His disciples for a whole week, and that He then appeared to them again on the first day

when they met for special worship, clearly signifies His definite sanction *of this* as the appointed day of meeting with His disciples? And is not this most expressly confirmed by the Holy Spirit's advent at Pentecost? Most assuredly the Spirit's descent on the first day of the week crowned this ordinance and ratified the newly instituted Christian Sabbath.

Third, the first day of the week was *celebrated by the early Church*. That this was how the Apostles understood the matter appears from their custom, for they assembled together for the breaking of bread and the preaching of the Word "on the first day of the week" (Acts 20:7). Are we not compelled to conclude that what the Apostles did, and what the churches did under their supervision, must have been done in accord with the revealed will of their Divine Master? But, it will be objected, If God requires the Sabbath to be duly observed on the first day of the week during this Christian dispensation, why has He not given a definite command through His Apostles to that effect in the Epistles? To this question we make three replies. In the first place, it savours strongly of impiety: a taking it upon ourselves to say *how* God is to make known His pleasure to us—He has other ways of declaring His will besides through express precepts.

In the second place, such a question loses sight altogether of the situation in which many of the early Christians found themselves—a situation very different from that which generally obtains today. In the first generation of the Christian era it was quite impossible for the Sabbath to be kept with the same sacred strictness with which the Jewish Sabbath had been observed. So long as the Christian Church was confined to the boundaries of Palestine, and its members were made up of Jewish believers and proselytes, as it was for some time, it was required of all the converts to continue in an exact observance of the Jewish Sabbath in compliance with the law of the land. They did, in addition, observe the Lord's Day, so far as that was possible privately; but they had it not in their power to render the first day one of holy rest for all their fellows.

When the Christian Church enlarged her borders and converts from the Gentiles added thereto, the Christian Sabbath had to

encounter most formidable obstacles and was met by almost constant opposition. Let it also be carefully borne in mind that many of the early Gentile converts were the slaves of heathen masters, and it will at once appear how impossible it was for the Church to secure anything approaching Sabbath observance, so far as that implies the setting apart of the first day from all secular interests and the devoting of it solely unto Divine worship. It was therefore most merciful on God's part to lay not upon them a burden which they could not have borne. Nevertheless there is clear evidence that those early Christians devoted at least a part of the first day to special worship so far as their distressed and persecuted state rendered possible.

But in the third place, we ask, Is it true that no Divine command for the sanctification of the first day is to be found in the Epistles? And we reply, No, it is not. "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 everyone of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come" (1 Cor. 16:1, 2). "I have given order," is certainly the language of authority, and cannot be regarded as anything less than an apostolic command. It is to be duly noted that Paul "gave order" concerning not only the principle of systematic Christian giving (for the relief of indigent saints), but also stipulated the time when such collections were to be made, that being appointed for "the first day of the week." Nor was such a regulation peculiar to the church at Corinth, as is intimated by his, "so I teach everywhere in every church" (4:17), "so ordain I in all churches" (7:17). Moreover, he expressly tells us, "the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord" (1 Cor. 14:37).

"In view of this important verse, we may remark: there is here clear proof that the *first* day of the week was observed by the church at Corinth as holy time. If it were not, there can have been no propriety in selecting that day in preference to any other in which to make the collection. It was the day which was set apart to the duties of religion, and therefore an appropriate day for the exercise of charity and the bestowment of alms. There can have

been no reason why this day should have been designated except that it was a day set apart to religion, and therefore deemed a proper day for the exercise of benevolence towards others. This order extended also to the churches in Galatia, proving also that the first day of the week was observed by them, and was regarded as a day proper for the exercise of charity towards the poor and afflicted. And if the first day of the week was observed, by apostolic authority in those churches, it is morally certain that it was observed by others. This consideration, therefore, demonstrates that it was the custom to observe this day, and that it was observed by the authority of the early founders of Christianity” (A. Barnes).

It is abundantly clear, then, from this passage that the *first* day of the week was by Divine authority appointed for Divine worship—for this “collection” was an act of Christian fellowship. Ere passing on, it should be pointed out that the Greek which is here rendered “the first (day) of the week” is the very same expression that is employed by the four Evangelists in connection with the resurrection of Christ (Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:1; Luke 24:1; John 10:1), also in John 20:19 when He appeared to the disciples in the upper room. The word used is “Sabbaton,” which means both “week” and “Sabbaths.” Literally, then, it reads, “the first of *the Sabbaths*,” the Holy Spirit using this particular term to denote the beginning of a new series. Thus we need not have the slightest hesitation in speaking of “The Christian Sabbath.”

The Christian Sabbath was most strikingly honoured by Christ Himself in His glorious appearing on the isle of Patmos and the Prophetic revelation which He there made to His servant John. In narrating the wondrous visions which he there received, the Apostle describes the time when they were given to him as, “on the Lord’s Day” (Rev. 1:10). Now all the days of the week are the Lord’s, but that one of them should be singled out and thus designated to distinguish it from the others, shows that *this* day is His in a *peculiar sense*, as specially devoted to His honour. It is called “the Lord’s Day” for precisely the same reason that the holy feast is called “the Lord’s Supper” (1Cor. 11:20)—the one as a memorial of His death, the other of His resurrection. This

particular designation supplies further proof that He is “Lord of the Sabbath” (Mark 2:28).

A number of testimonies are still extant that the Christians in the first three centuries observed the Sabbath on the first day of the week. “On the day which is called Sunday, all, whether dwelling in the towns or in the villages, hold meetings, and the memoirs of the Apostles and the writings of the Prophets are read, as much as the time will permit; then the reader closing, the president in a speech exhorts and incites to an imitation of those excellent examples; then we all rise and pour forth united prayers” (Justin Martyr, in his Apology: A.D. 150). Another witness of the same era is Eusebius, “All things whatever that it was duty to do on the Sabbath, these we have transferred to the Lord’s Day, as more appropriately belonging to it, because it has a precedence, and is first in rank, and more honourable than the Jewish Sabbath. It is delivered to us that we should meet together on this day,” (Comments on Psalm 92).

From the beginning God determined that the ruination of the old creation should be followed by the producing of a new creation, with a new law of that creation, a new covenant, and a new Sabbath rest, unto His own glory by Jesus Christ. The renovation of all things by the Mediator was Divinely foretold (Acts 3:21): it was to be a “time of reformation” (Heb. 9:10). From the Epistles we learn that this renovation of all things has been accomplished by Christ: “old things are passed away,” etc. (2 Cor. 5:17)—the old covenant, the old order of worship, the Judaical Sabbath. “That in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, which are in Heaven and which are on earth; in Him” (Eph. 1:10): only those things pertaining to the Mosaic economy remain which are useful to our living unto God, and they abide not on their old foundation, but on a *new disposition of them in Christ*: cf., 1 Corinthians 9:21.

Thus it is with the Holy Sabbath: it remains, yet it has undergone a decided renovation. As the incarnation of God’s Son affected the chronology of the world (for all civilized time is, by common consent, dated from the year of His birth!), so His death

and resurrection terminated the old covenant and ratified the new, and this necessarily resulted in a change of the weekly day of rest. Earlier we pointed out that the *first* day of the week as now being the one Divinely appointed for Sabbath observance was, first, adumbrated in the Old Testament types, where “the *eighth* day” is so conspicuous. Second, that it was clearly intimated by what is recorded in the New Testament: the first day being that of our Lord’s resurrection and the day of meeting with His disciples. Third, that it was so celebrated by the early Church: Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2.

We are now to consider, fourth, that this change was *conclusively demonstrated in Hebrews 4*. We will first call attention to the fact itself as there stated, and then endeavour to indicate and elucidate the course of the Apostle’s argument in that chapter. In Hebrews 4:8 it is expressly affirmed, “for if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of *another* day.” What this other “day” is, may be unequivocally ascertained from the context: it is the Holy Sabbath—“God did rest the seventh day from all His work” (verse 4). So, too, immediately after mentioning “another day” (i.e. another or different one from the “seventh”) the Apostle went on to say, “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God” (verse 9). In proof of this and also to identify this “*another* day” he declared, “For He (not “they,” but “He,” which is Christ) that is entered into His rest, He also hath ceased from His own works, as God did from His” (verse 10).

What has just been pointed out is quite simple and easy to understand, but in order to grasp the force of the Apostle’s argument we need to gird up the loins of our minds and attend very closely to his chain of reasoning. First, we must observe that here in chapter 4 he is *continuing* what he had said in chapter 3. There he gave an exhortation unto faith, obedience, and perseverance (3:1-6), and this he enforced by a quotation from Psalm 95, which contained a pointed exhortation and a solemn warning taken from the case of those who fell under Divine wrath because they were guilty of the sin contrary to the duties of faith, obedience, and perseverance (3:7-11). This he at once follows by

making application of the warning unto the Hebrews, and by expounding certain expressions in this quotation which he had made from the Psalmist (3:12-18).

Because the words of Psalm 95 contain not only a warning applicable to New Testament saints, and more especially because those words also had interwoven in them a prophecy (note “promise” in Heb. 4:1) concerning the rest of God in Christ by the Gospel and our duty thereon, Paul proceeded to enlarge upon and confirm his exhortation in 3:12, 13, still using the language of Psalm 95 for that end. First, he propounds the duty which he aimed to press on the Hebrews (4:1, 2). Second, he established the foundation of his exhortation, by showing that the “rest” mentioned by David was still future when he wrote Psalm 95 (Heb. 4:3). Third, he enters into a careful discussion of and differentiates between the various “rests” of God (verses 4-10). Fourth, he concludes by returning to and repeating his original exhortation (verse 11).

Let it be clearly grasped at this stage that the Apostle’s design in Hebrews 4:4-11 was to *confirm* what he had laid down in verses 1-3, which we paraphrase thus: There is under the Gospel a promise of entering into the rest of God left or remaining unto believers, and they *do enter* into that rest by mixing the promise of it with faith. It was the more necessary to press this upon the Hebrews: that notwithstanding their ancient and present enjoyment of the land of Canaan, yet their fathers fell short of entering into God’s rest because of their unbelief, and that now they (their children) were under a new trial or test, a new rest being proposed unto them in the promise. This he proves by a testimony out of Psalm 95, whereof he had previously treated in Hebrews 3.

Now the application of Psalm 95 to the case of the Hebrews was liable to a serious objection: the “rest” mentioned there by David seemed to be one *long since past*. If that *were* the case, then these Hebrews could have no new or fresh concern in it, and therefore could be in no danger of coming short of it. It was to remove such an objection, and to confirm what he had previously advanced, that the Apostle occupied himself in what follows, and

this he does by a direct appeal to Psalm 95, showing from the proper signification of its words, from the time when it was written, and from the persons there addressed, that no other “rest” was there intended than what was here being proposed by him unto them, namely, the rest of God and His people in the Gospel.

The general argument insisted upon by the Apostle to support his design and establish his purpose, consists in an enumeration of all the various “rests” of God and His people mentioned in the Old Testament. From the consideration of them all, he proves that none other rest could be intended by the language of David in Psalm 95 than the rest of the Gospel, whereinto all who believe do now enter. This he arrives at, most logically, by a process of *elimination*. First, the rest “promised” (Heb. 4:1) in Psalm 95 was neither the rest of God from the works of creation, nor the Sabbath rest which ensued thereon (Heb. 4:4-6). Second, nor was it the rest of Canaan, which Joshua brought the people into (Heb. 4:7, 8). No, it was a spiritual rest which remained or subsisted for believers to enjoy now (verses 8-10). We are now prepared to enter into detail.

In verse 3, three things are laid down. First, an assertion, which comprises the whole intendment of the Apostle in this passage: “For we which have believed do enter into rest.” Second, a proof of that assertion from the words of the Psalmist: “As He said, As I have sworn in My wrath, if they shall enter into My rest,” or as the Psalm reads, “They should not enter into My rest” (95:11). Third, an elliptical entrance into a full confirmation of his assertion and the due application of his proof produced unto what he had designed: “although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.” Now that “rest” which believers enter through faith in Christ (cf. John 16:33) is first and primarily the spiritual rest of God, and is not to be restricted unto the eternal rest in Heaven, though that will be the fruition of it. God rests in Christ (Isa. 42:1) and in His people (Zeph. 3:17).

“As I have sworn in My wrath, If they shall enter into My rest” (Heb. 4:3), or “that they should not enter into My rest.” How did those words contain a *confirmation* of what has been affirmed in the preceding clause? Two ways. First, by an axiom of logic. It

is a well-known rule that unto immediate contraries contrary attributes may be certainly assigned, so that he who affirms the one at the same time denies the other, and he who denies that one affirms the other. For instance, if I say it is “day,” I also affirm it is *not* “night.” If, then, those who believed not entered not into God’s rest, then it logically follows that those who believe *do* enter into it. Second, theologically: according to the analogy of faith—every threatening also includes a promise, and every promise has also the nature of a threat in it.

“Although the works were finished from the foundation of the world” (verse 3). In those words the Apostle began his answer to an anticipated objection against what he had asserted of the Gospel rest. Now all “rest” presupposes *labour*, consequently each several “rest” of God must have some work preceding it. So it was, first, with His rest in Genesis 2:2 that was preceded by the six days of creation. This the Apostle at once refers to in verse 4, “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.” Now as Owen so convincingly pointed out, God’s rest here is not spoken of absolutely, with respect to Himself only, but rather with reference to an appointed rest that ensued thereon for His creatures to rest in with Him, for this is the Apostle’s scope all through this passage. Hence he refers us back to the whole passage from which he quotes (Gen. 2:2, 3): and there we learn that God not only rested on the seventh day, but “blessed” it for the rest of man. Thus he first treats of the Sabbath in relation to the state of man under the law of nature.

“And in this place again, If they shall enter into My rest” (Heb. 4:5). The “in this” has reference to Psalm 95, which he is here expounding and applying to the case of the Hebrews. The word “again” emphasizes the fact that the Apostle is now alluding to the *second* “rest” of God and the proposal He made unto His People of their entering into it. At the finish of His work, God rested the seventh day and blessed it for a day of rest unto His creatures. And “again,” on another occasion, He spoke of “My rest.” What that “other occasion” was, Psalm 95 tells us: it was when Israel was in the Wilderness (Psa. 95:8). God had finished

another series of miraculous works when He brought His people out of Egypt and conducted them through the Red Sea. Then He took them into covenant relationship with Himself (at Sinai), renewed the Law, and set before them the rest of Canaan. That a spiritual rest was then proposed unto Israel is clear from the Apostle's changing the Psalmist's, "they should not enter into My rest" (95:11) to, "If they shall enter"—the exclusion of some definitely implied the entrance of others into God's rest if they complied with His terms.

At the risk of being wearisome, but for the benefit of those desiring to really understand this passage, we will here summarize the force of the Apostle's reasoning so far as we have yet gone. God's rest was tendered unto and entered into by some (viz., believers) from the foundation of the world. It must therefore be another rest which the Psalmist (so long after) spoke of, and which the descendants of Abraham were afresh invited to enter into, as later in his discussion the Apostle more clearly proves. And they who deny any Sabbath rest from *the beginning* remove all foundation for Paul's discourse: had there been no rest from the foundation of the world what need for him to prove that the "rest" mentioned in Psalm 95 was *not* the original one, if there had been none such? The very object of the Apostle in again referring to Psalm 95 was to show that the "rest" mentioned by David was not that which was appointed from the beginning of the world, but a much *later* one.

What that second and later "rest" was, we have defined in the last paragraph but one, as the rest of Canaan—not merely external relief from their wilderness wandering, but an entrance into the spiritual rest of God. Ere proceeding further we give proof of this, for we will take nothing for granted. There was a rest of God under the Mosaic economy. The prayer about it was, "Arise, O LORD, into *Thy rest*, Thou and the ark of Thy strength" (Psa. 132:8)—the ark being the symbol and pledge of God's presence and rest. This "rest" of God followed upon the completion of His mighty works in bringing Israel into Canaan. After the establishment of His worship therein, He said of it, "This is *My rest* forever: here will I dwell" (Psa. 132:14)!

God having entered into His rest in like manner as formerly (upon the finishing of His glorious work), two things ensued thereon. First, the people were invited and encouraged to enter into the rest of God. This the Apostle treats of in Hebrews 3 and 4: their entrance into that rest being conditioned upon their faith and obedience. Although some of them came short of it, because of their unbelief, yet others entered into it under the leadership of Joshua. Second, this rest, both of God and of His people, was expressed by appointing a day of rest which was a token and pledge of God's present rest in His instituted worship, and was designed as a means in the solemn observance of that worship to further their entrance into His rest eternally. Hence the seventh day was to Israel a special sign that He was their God and they His people.

While it is true that the Day appointed in connection with this second rest of God was the same as the first one, viz., the seventh, yet it was now established upon new considerations and unto new ends. The time for the change of the day of rest was not yet come, for the work of God in bringing Israel into covenant-relationship with Himself, conducting them into Canaan, and instituting His worship among them, was but preparatory to yet another work and rest. The Covenant of Works, to which the original Sabbath was annexed, being not yet abolished (but only modified), therefore the Day of rest was not then changed.

Now to proceed. The Apostle goes on to show that Psalm 95 prophetically intimated that there was yet to be a *third* rest of God—which His people were to enter into—an especial rest under the Messiah, which he here proposed unto the Hebrews and exhorted them to enter into (Heb. 4:11). In this third state there was to be a particular condition of rest, distinct from and superior to each of those which had gone before. To the constitution thereof, three things were required: some signal work of God completed, whereon He entered into His rest. Second, a spiritual rest ensuing therefrom, for them that believe to enter into. Third, a new day of rest to express this rest of God, and to be a pledge of our entering therein. These things we now further inquire into.

“Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and

they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief” (verse 6). Here the Apostle draws a conclusion which is incisive, but observe carefully it is based on the principle that a promise is included in every conditional threatening, for unless the word of the Psalmist, “they should not enter into My rest” may also be (deductively) understood as, “if they shall enter,” that is, they shall providing they meet the conditions, there would be no force whatever in saying, “that some *must* enter.” They who entered not in because of unbelief or “disobedience” were the adult Israelites who came out of Egypt. The rest of Canaan which they missed was typical of the present rest of believers in Christ.

“Again, He limiteth a certain day, saying in David, *Today*, after so long a time; as it is said, Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts” (verse 7). In this verse the Apostle confirms what he had just affirmed about a new rest and a new Day of Rest remaining for the people of God to enter into, and which rest he proposes unto them. After the institution of the Sabbath rest at the beginning, and after the proposal of the rest of Canaan to Israel in the Wilderness, God, in addition (“Again”), limited or designed and determined another particular rest and “day,” which was neither of the former, namely, that of *the Gospel*. It is to be carefully noted that in this verse the Apostle expressly *changes his terms*: God had “limited” or “defined” not only a “certain” or “particular” *rest*, but a DAY, because, it was Paul’s design to show that God had determined not only another (a third) “rest,” but also *another* “day” as a pledge of this new rest.

The force of his argument in verse 7 is taken from *the time when* this “day” was limited or determined. Had those words of David (in Psa. 95) been uttered by Moses just before Israel entered the typical rest of Canaan, they might have been thought to pertain thereunto and to have contained in them an exhortation unto Israel at that season. But instead, it was “after so long a time,” namely, 500 years after Moses, that God gave this message through the Psalmist. Consequently it *must* have related and referred to some other “rest” than Canaan, and some other “day” than the Jewish Sabbath. Therefore, there is still a promise

remaining of entering into this (third) rest of God, unto which we must take heed that we come not short of it by unbelief and disobedience.

“For if Jesus [Joshua] had given them rest, then would He not afterward have spoken of *another day*” (verse 8). In this verse the Apostle removes a possible objection and gives further confirmation of his argument, by a particular application of it unto the point before him. That which he still insists upon is, his principal assertion from the words of David, namely, the rest prepared and proposed in the Gospel unto believers. To this the Hebrews might object: Although the people who came out of Egypt entered not into the promised rest of God, yet the next generation did so under Joshua—why then propose this rest unto us, and warn against our danger of missing it? This objection is conclusively set aside by showing that God in David proposed “*another day*” of rest unto Israel centuries *after* Joshua, and as no new Sabbath was appointed in David’s time, his words must be understood prophetically. Hence there *was* a rest proposed unto the Hebrews (and so us) and “another day” to memorialize it.

“There remaineth therefore a rest [keeping of a Sabbath] unto the people of God” (verse 9). The Apostle here shows, in a brief summary, what had been conclusively established in his whole disquisition: three things indubitably followed. First, that a Divine and spiritual rest remains for the people of God to enter into and enjoy with Him. Second, that a Sabbath day to memorialize it, and be a means of entering into that rest, abides under the Gospel. Third, that it must of necessity be “*another day*,” a different one from that which obtained under the old covenant. It is to be duly noted that the Apostle did not say “there awaiteth” or “there is yet to be a Sabbath keeping,” but “there remaineth.” The reference is not to something future, but what is present. This word is used in the same sense when applied negatively to the system of sacrifices: “There *remaineth* no more sacrifice for sins” (Heb. 10:26). How striking that this occurs in Hebrews! The Levitical priesthood has been set aside, the temple is no more, Judaism is abolished: but a Sabbath remains!

We wish to call special attention to the fact that in verse 9 Paul

again deliberately *changed his terms*. The word for “rest” here in verse 9 is an entirely different one from that used in verses 1, 3, 5, 8, 10. It is “Sabbatismos” which speaks for itself: the Revised Version has, “There remaineth therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God.” It was a word coined by the Apostle to express the whole sense of that with which he was treating: that is, to denote both the rest itself and the appointment of “another day” as a token of it—it signifies our rest in God and the Day which is the pledge of it. And this Sabbatismos remaineth—the word “remaineth” signifies to be left after others have been withdrawn (as the primitive and Judaical Sabbaths have), to continue unchanged, as the Christian Sabbath will unto the end of the world. Here, then, is a plain, positive, unequivocal declaration by the Spirit of God: “there *remaineth* therefore a Sabbath keeping.” Nothing could be simpler, nothing less ambiguous, for this is addressed to the “holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling” (3:1). Hence, we solemnly and emphatically declare that the man who says there is no Christian Sabbath takes direct issue with the New Testament Scriptures.

In this booklet upon the Christianization of the Sabbath we are seeking to establish (from Scripture) two things. First, that there is a *Sabbath* appointed by God for this dispensation—a *Christian Sabbath* for His people to keep holy and enjoy. Second, that this Christian Sabbath is to be observed upon “*another day*” of the week than the one celebrated throughout the Old Testament era. The one passage in the New Testament which above all others most conclusively proves both of these points is Hebrews 4:8-10, and therefore are we seeking to give a careful exposition of these verses and their setting.

Now to consider Hebrews 4:9 which expressly declares, “There remaineth therefore a rest [keeping of a Sabbath] to the people of God.” Nothing could be simpler, nothing less ambiguous than that verse. The striking thing is that it occurs in the very Epistle whose theme is the superiority of *Christianity* over Judaism—a theme developed by showing the superiority of Christ (the Centre and Life of Christianity) over angels, Adam, Moses, Joshua, Aaron, and the whole Levitical economy. It is an Epistle addressed to

“holy brethren partakers of the *heavenly* calling” (3:1). Therefore it cannot be denied that Hebrews 4:9 is referring directly to *the Christian Sabbath*. Hence, we solemnly and emphatically declare that the man who says that there is *no* Christian Sabbath takes direct issue with the *New Testament Scriptures*.

“There remaineth therefore a rest [keeping of a Sabbath] to the people of God” (Heb. 4:9). In this, and the following verse, the Apostle evidences the perfect analogy between the several rests of God and His people discoursed of in this chapter. First, at the beginning there was the creative work of God and His resting therefrom, which made way for a rest for His creatures in Himself and His worship by the contemplation of the works He had made. A day was specially assigned for that purpose—that was the primitive Sabbatismos. Second, there was a great work of God in bringing Israel out of Egypt and the establishing of His people in Canaan, which made way for their entering into His rest and worship, a Sabbath day being appointed to express both the one and the other—this was the Mosaic Sabbatismos.

So now, under the Gospel, there is a Sabbath comprised of all these. As we shall see there was another and greater work of God, and a rest of His own ensued thereon. On that work is founded the promise of rest spiritual and eternal to those who do believe, and the determination of a new day expressive of the one and the other. This is the Christian Sabbatismos. That the redemptive work of Christ has not only secured this spiritual rest to His people, but has also necessitated and resulted in *a new Sabbath* to celebrate it appears from two things in the Apostle’s discourse. First, by his referring to our Gospel rest by the name of DAY (verse 8). Second, from his coining of this term “Sabbatismos” to express both our spiritual rest and the Sabbath-keeping which memorializes the same.

“For He that is entered into His rest, He also hath ceased from His own works as God did from His” (verse 10). Plain and simple as these words are, yet they have been grievously wrested by most of the commentators. They are generally regarded as referring to *believers* entering into the rest of God, through their believing of the Gospel. But there are two considerations which expose the

error of this view. First, the verse does *not* read, “*they* who enter into His rest,” but “He that is entered into.” Second, if the reference was to believers, *what* are the “works” from which they cease? Their sins, say some; their legalistic efforts to win God’s approval, say others; their sorrows and sufferings, from which they shall rest in Heaven, say yet others. But *how* could they be said to rest from any such works, “AS God from His” own? It is utterly impossible to satisfactorily answer such a question. No, the verse speaks not of believers, but of *Christ*.

“For He that is entered into His rest, He also hath ceased from His own works, as God did from His.” Here the Apostle concludes his argument by declaring that the “rest” which remains for believers to enter into (4:3), and the new day appointed by God for this dispensation (4:9), have a new and special foundation, which the previous rests and days had no interest or concern in, namely, that the Author of it ceased from His own works and entered into His rest. Proofs that this verse refers *to Christ* are many. First, its opening “For,” which denotes that the Apostle now indicates whence it is there is a new Sabbatismos remaining for the people of God. He had before shown there could be no such rest but what was founded upon the works of God. Such a foundation this new rest must have, and does have. It is the work of Him by whom the Church is builded: Hebrews 3:3, 4.

Second, the change of number in the pronoun from the plural to the singular intimates the same thing. In Hebrews 4:1-3 the Apostle had used “us” and “we,” but here, verse 10, he says, “*He* that is entered.” This is the more noticeable because in the verse immediately preceding he had mentioned “the people of God.” That it is *not they* who are here in view further appears from the fact that they never cease from their works while left in this world. No other reason can possibly be given for this change of number except that a single person is here expressed. Third, note it is not simply said of this person that, “He that is entered into rest” (as in verses 3 and 8), but “into *His* rest” absolutely. God spoke of “My rest;” here He mentions “His rest”—Christ’s rest!

Fourth, there is a direct parallel supplied by this verse between

the works of the old creation and those of the new, which the Apostle is openly comparing together. 1. In the *Authors* of them: of the former it is said of God the Creator, He did “rest from all His works” (4:4). So “He (Christ) also hath ceased from His own.” 2. The *products* of the One and of the Other are mentioned: Their respective “works,” and there is a due proportion between them, each being creative and “very good.” 3. There is the *rest* of the One and of the Other, and these also have a proportion to one another. It should now be unmistakably plain to every impartial reader that it is the Person of Jesus Christ who is the subject spoken of in verse 10.

The blessed Person referred to, then, in verse 10 is the Lord Jesus, and none other—the Author of the new creation. This alone gives meaning to the causal conjunction: there is a Sabbatismos now for the people of God, FOR Christ is entered into His rest. What is denoted by His “rest” we must now inquire. This was certainly not His being in the grave. His body indeed rested there for a brief season, but that was no part of His *Mediatory* rest, as He is the Builder of His Church; and that for two reasons. First, His entombment was part of His *humiliation* (Isa. 53:9). Second, the separation of His soul and body was *penal*, a part of the sentence of the Law which He underwent, and hence Peter declares, “The pains of death” were not loosed until His resurrection (Acts 2:24).

Nor did Christ first enter into His rest at His ascension, rather was that an entrance into His *glory*, as in the full public manifestation of it. No, Christ’s entrance into rest was in, by, and at His resurrection from the dead. For it was then and thereon He was freed from the power and service of the Law, being discharged from the debts of our sins. It was then and thereon that all prefigurations and predictions concerning the work of redemption were fulfilled. It was then and thereon that He received “the promise of the Spirit” (Acts 2:33), and the whole foundation of the Church of God was laid upon His Person. It was then and thereon that He was “declared to be the Son of God with power” (Rom. 1:4). God manifesting unto all that this was He of whom He said, “Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten

Thee” (Acts 13:33).

“Thus did the Author of the new creation, the Son of God, having finished His works, enter into His rest. And this was, as we all know, on the morning of the *first* day of the week. And hereby did He limit and determine the day for a sacred Sabbatical rest under the New Testament. For now was the old covenant (the Siniatic) utterly abolished, and therefore the day which was the pledge of the rest of God and man therein, was to be taken away. As the rest from the beginning of the world had its foundation from the works of God, and His rest which ensued thereon, which was determined unto the seventh day, because that was the day wherein God ceased from those works—which day continued under the legal administration of the covenant by Moses—so the rest of the Lord Christ is the foundation of our rest, which, changing the old covenant, and the day annexed unto it, He hath limited unto the *first* day of the week, whereon He ceased from His works and entered into His rest.

“Wherefore when the Lord Christ intended conspicuously to build His Church upon the foundation of His works and rest, by sending the Holy Spirit with His miraculous gifts upon the Apostles, He did it on *this day*: which was then among the Jews the feast of Pentecost. Then were the disciples gathered together with one accord, in the observance of the day signalized to them by His resurrection (Acts 2:1). And by this did their obedience receive a blessed confirmation, as well as their persons a glorious endowment with abilities for the work which they were immediately to apply themselves unto” (John Owen, to whom we are indebted for much in the second half of this booklet).

It remains for us to point out that the rest into which Christ entered is proposed unto His people in the Gospel. This is asserted in the previous verse and is here made manifest. “There remaineth therefore a rest [keeping of a Sabbath] to the people of God,” (Heb. 4:9) *because* Christ has entered into His rest. As the other rests—the one at the beginning of human history and the other at the beginning of the commonwealth of Israel—had their foundation in the works and rests of God, whereon a Day of rest was appointed for them to keep, so has this new rest a foundation

in the works and rest of Christ—who has built all things and is *God* (Heb. 3:3, 4), determining a day for our use in and by that whereon He entered into His rest, which is the first day of the week.

Before giving a brief word on verse 11, let us refer to what may present a difficulty unto a few. It should be quite clear there is a Christian Sabbath, a Sabbath appointed for this dispensation. Some may be ready to say, Yes, “for the people of God” (verse 9), but how about unbelievers? First, we answer, we know of nothing in Scripture which intimates that God requires unbelievers to celebrate the first day of the week as a memorial of our Lord’s resurrection, for Christ means nothing to them. But second, they *are* commanded to keep the Sabbath holy unto God their Creator and Ruler. The original Covenant of Works has never been repealed, and all out of Christ are under it. Though the day of Sabbath observance is changed, God requires all alike, believers and unbelievers, to abstain from all secular employment on the Sabbath and keep the day holy unto Himself.

“Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief” (Heb. 4:11). First, it is to be noted that the Apostle does not here use the term “Sabbatismos” (as in verse 9), but, “katapausis” as in verses 1, 3, 5, etc. This shows that he now returns to his principal exhortation—the reader will be helped on the passage as a whole if he places verses 4-10 in a parenthesis, thus connecting verse 11 with verse 3. In the opening verse of the chapter Paul has said, “Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it,” and here he now makes known how that “fear” is to exert itself. It is not a “fear” of dread or doubt, but is such a reverential respect unto the Divine threatenings and promises as would stir up its possessors unto all diligence to avoid the one and inherit the other.

The utmost of our endeavours and efforts are required in order to our obtaining an entrance into the rest of Christ. We are to “labour” or give the greatest possible diligence thereto. Men are in real earnest and spend their strength in striving after the bread which perishes; the same intentness and zeal are required in our

seeking the Bread of Life. He who teaches men that an entrance into spiritual and eternal rest is a thing plain, easy, and suited to nature, does but delude and deceive them. To mortify sin, deny self, cut off right hands, endure all sorts of afflictions and persecutions—are painful, difficult, and attended with many hardships. The future state of the Christian is one wholly of rest, but his present state is a *mixed* one, partly of rest and partly of labour—labour against sin, rest in the love and grace of God.

Having now gone carefully through our passage let us see what we have learned from it. First, Hebrews 4 opens with a pointed warning taken from the case of the unbelieving Israelites of old (Heb. 3:16-18). Second, but though those Israelites failed to enter into it, yet there is a rest of God proposed unto us in the Gospel, and which believers enter into (verse 3). Third, this led the Apostle to take up the different “rests” of God and His people: the Edenic, Mosaic, and Messianic (verses 4-10). Fourth, in leading up to his climax the Apostle throws the emphasis not so much on the “rest “ as on the DAY appointed to celebrate it. In verse 7 he declares that God (prophetically) limited or determined “a certain day.” In verse 8 he expressly refers to “*another* day” which supplies proof that a *different one* from the old seventh day is now instituted. In verse 9 this other day and the rest it memorializes is definitely designated a “Sabbatismos” or “keeping of a Sabbath.” In verse 10 he shows *why* the Sabbath day had been changed: because it was on that day Christ entered into His rest.

Well, then, may we with the utmost confidence exclaim with the Psalmist, “*This is* the day which the LORD hath made: we will rejoice and be glad in it” (118:24). “We observe the day as henceforth our true Sabbath, a day made and ordained of God, for the perpetual remembrance of the achievements of our Redeemer” (C. H. Spurgeon). It should be pointed out that the passage we have last quoted is part of a remarkable prophecy, which set forth both the humiliation and exaltation of the Lord Jesus—“the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow.” The passage is quoted in the New Testament no less than six times, being expressly applied to the Saviour. First, He is seen as “the Stone which the builders refused,” and then as “became the

Head of the corner” (Psa. 118:2).

And how could that “Stone,” contemptuously trodden underfoot by men, become “the Head of the corner?” How indeed except by *being raised!*? It was by His triumph over death that Christ became the Head of the corner—a “corner” is when two walls meet together, and in resurrection Christ became Head of both believing Jews and believing Gentiles! The Psalmist added, “This is the LORD’S doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes” (Psa. 118:23). And then follows, “*This is the day* which the LORD hath made.” What could be clearer? How perfectly it accords with Hebrews 4:9, 10! That “day” was Divinely “made” to memorialize Christ’s victory over the grave: God has “made it remarkable, made it holy, has distinguished it from all other days: it is therefore called the Lord’s Day, because it bears His image and superscription” (Matthew Henry).

And so it is: the Christian Sabbath is specifically designated “the *Lord’s Day*” in Revelation 1:10. It is called such because it owes its pre-eminence to the Lord’s institution and authority. By taking to Himself the title of “the Lord of the Sabbath” (Mark 2:28), Christ clearly intimated His authority to determine which day of the week a Sabbath rest was to be observed by His people, and by ceasing from His works and entering into His rest on the *first* day of the week, He has “limited” this one for us. Those who are determined to close their eyes to all this evidence and get rid of the first-day Sabbath at any price, wrest these words in Revelation 1:10 by saying they signify “the Day of the Lord” when He comes in judgment. But the immediate context is dead against them: all that follows from 1:10 to the end of chapter 3 shows that this opening vision respected present and *not future* things. Moreover, the Greek is different from 2 Peter 3:10! “The Lord’s Supper” (1 Cor. 11:20) memorializes His death; “the Lord’s Day” celebrates His resurrection.

Here is a summary of the reasons why Christians should observe the Sabbath on the first day of the week. First, because that day was clearly anticipated by Old Testament typology—the striking things connected with “the *eighth* day.” Second, because the New Covenant necessitated a new Day of rest to signify the

old covenant was abrogated. Third, because the honour and glory of *Christ* required it: on the day specially appointed for Divine worship, God would now have us occupied with His risen and exalted Son. Fourth, His own example bears witness thereto: His repeated meetings with His disciples (John 19) and His sending the Spirit on that day (Acts 2:1) set His imprimatur upon it. Fifth, because the early Church so celebrated it (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1, 2). There is not a single recorded instance in the New Testament of the saints meeting together for worship, after Christ's resurrection, on any other day but on the *first* of the week! Sixth, because we are expressly told that God has "limited" or determined "*another* day" (Heb. 4:9) than the old one, and that, because Christ then rose from the dead (verse 10). Seventh, because we are Divinely assured that, in view of the raising up of the rejected Stone to be the Head of the corner, "This is *the day* which the Lord hath made" (Psa. 118:24), and therefore is it called "the *Lord's Day*" in the New Testament (Rev. 1:10).

The third of four booklets.

