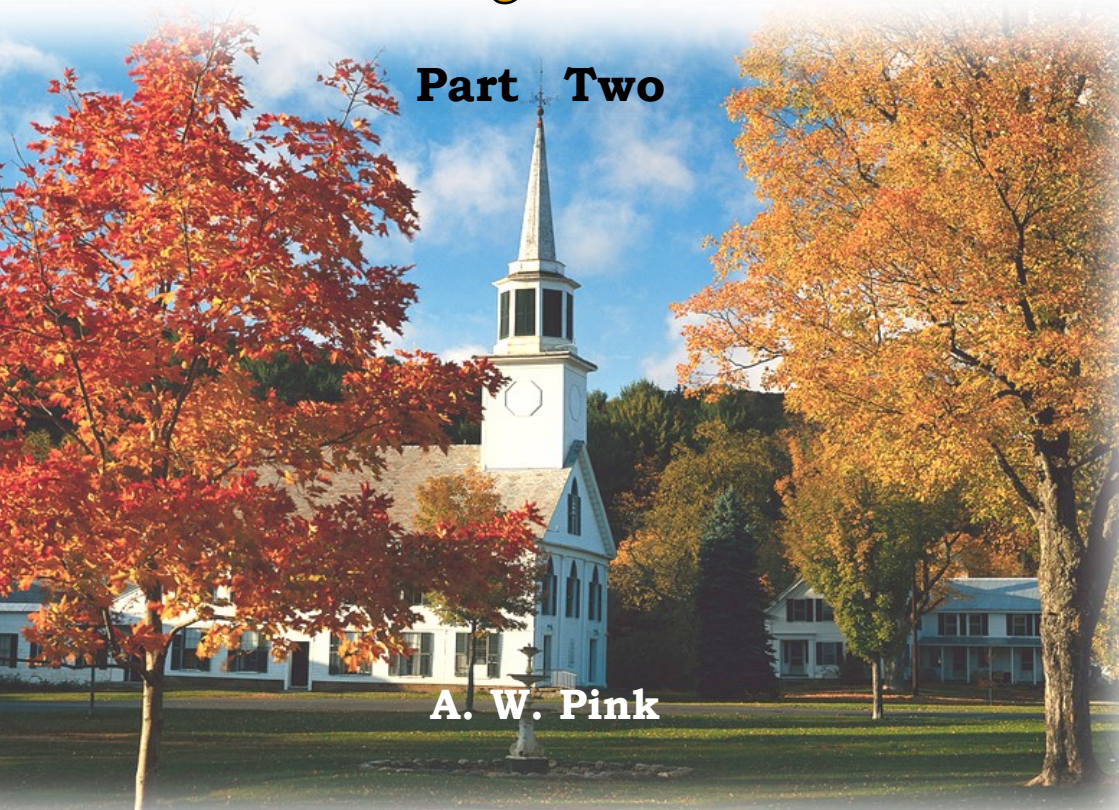




# The Holy Sabbath

**Part Two**



**A. W. Pink**

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### **5. Its Pollution**

### **6. Its Perpetuation**

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The importance and value of the Sabbath is evidenced by the many, varied, and precious objects which, from the dawn of its institution, it was designed to accomplish. Under the Patriarchal dispensation it was a real and powerful witness for the existence of God, His creative power, His sovereignty over His creatures, and their responsibility to Him—truths which lie at the very foundation of all true religion. Under the Mosaic economy the Sabbath not only bore continued testimony to those truths, but also to the providential and moral government of God in the preservation and renewal of the Holy Day and His indisputable title to the worship of His people. It bore testimony to His gracious concern for their temporal and spiritual welfare—it taught them to look, through its hallowed use, for blessings on themselves and their nation—it pointed to a future period of richer blessing and purer worship. Under the Christian era, while all these fundamental truths are still inculcated by the Sabbath, it has become also a memorial of redeeming love, a witness for the establishment of the better covenant, a remembrance of Him who was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification.

It has often been pointed out that the Sabbath is not secured from man's pollution by any natural fences. The winter prevents much labour; obliging employers in many cases to reduce the tasks of their employees. Night is still more obstructive of toil, and consequently, still more conducive to needful repose. In the absence of light, the fields cannot be ploughed, the crops harvested, nor homes built; and thus darkness serves to protect the couch of the heavy laden. But the Sabbath has no such bulwarks.

It comes without any cosmic herald of its advent, and all nature fulfils its functions on that day as on any other day. The weather may be so inclement as to present no temptation to engage in outdoor sports; on the other hand, the day may be one of cloudless sunshine, alluring into the wide open spaces. Thus the Sabbath is like a vine when bereft of its hedges, which any boar out of the wood may waste, and any beast of the field devour.

While the institution of the Sabbath is itself a fence to the general interests of religion and a Divine bulwark thrown up to repress the floods of ungodliness, yet the Sacred Day is not secured from profanation by any defences furnished by the natural world. Thus we may perceive how admirably the Fourth Commandment serves *as a trial* of the attitude of the creature toward his Creator. There are few, if any, of the Divine ordinances that more definitely operate as a moral and religious test of the children of men than the one we are here considering. The conduct of men with reference to the Lord's Day most clearly discovers either their love or their hatred, their loyalty or their rooted enmity to Jehovah, their sovereign Lord. In proportion as nations, churches, or individuals increase in spirituality and morality, they venerate and improve this holy day; and to the degree in which they decline from the love of God and belief of His Truth, they despise and pollute it. The whole of human history forcibly illustrates that fact.

Allusion has been made by us to the natural obstacles which the seasons present to labour, and the protection they are designed to afford the labourer, yet these have been forced to yield to the pressure of greed and the merciless grind of commerce. During winter, at any rate in "civilized" (?) countries like our own, labour is never given a prolonged holiday, but instead its tasks are *varied*. And now the night (still more indispensable to our feeble frames) is disturbed and abridged, till it inadequately suffices for its gracious purpose. As the day comes to a close, artificial light is requisitioned, and in numberless instances the artisan is compelled to work "overtime"—and what compensation for the undermining of his health, and what is far worse, the degrading of

his soul, is the extra wages he draws? How far the transportation of the workers and the noise of the “night shifts” interfere with the slumbers of other toilers, it is impossible to estimate—no wonder that institutions for nervous wrecks and mental cases are multiplying.

If, then, the protected seasons of nature have been ruthlessly invaded and trampled upon by graspers after gold, then much more is the unprotected Sabbath exposed to very special and imminent jeopardy. But the very fact that it is so exposed only serves to make more real the *test* it furnishes for the state of our hearts. Private gardens are railed off, and thus are secured from the carelessness and vandalism of the rank and file of the people; but those parks and downs which are open to the general public, furnish a criterion to the manners and conscientiousness of those who use them, or abuse them—as the litter they leave behind bears witness. Thus it is with the Holy Sabbath. The righteous call it “a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable,” and they honour Him by not “doing their own ways, nor finding their own pleasure, nor speaking their own words” (Isa. 58:13). But the ungodly say, “When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the Sabbath, that we may set forth wheat?” (Amos 8:5).

At no one point has the depravity of fallen men been more conspicuously, more blatantly, and more constantly displayed, than by their profanation of the Sabbath. From earliest times they have discovered their awful rebellion against their Creator and Governor by trampling upon His holy institution. As we have pointed out earlier, there is good reason to believe that one of the principal grievances which the Lord had against the antediluvians was their disregard for and desecration of this primitive ordinance. So, too, with the descendants of Jacob after they settled in Egypt—as the language used by Jehovah in Exodus 16:28 so plainly implies. For centuries past the Hebrews had despised His Law and dishonoured His Sabbaths; and for that very reason His anger waxed hot against them and they were made to suffer His sore judgments (Ezek. 20:8, etc.) And as we shall now see, there was little or no improvement in the later

conduct of the Nation as a whole.

After the Lord had acted with such wondrous grace toward His refractory people, and by His mighty power delivered them from the house of bondage, one would have thought their hearts would have been so affected that their subsequent ways were amended. Moreover, the awe-inspiring display which Jehovah gave of His majesty on Sinai and the covenant which He there entered into with the Nation, ought surely to have resulted in a radical change of their behaviour. But alas, neither the goodness nor the severity of God makes any real and lasting impression upon men until they are born again. No matter what mercies they may be the recipients of, no matter how wondrously God deals in providence with them, and no matter how solemnly He makes known to them His sovereignty and holiness, they continue unchanged, unmoved, till they be renewed in their *souls*. Clear and awful proof of this was furnished by them in the Wilderness.

In order to obtain a complete picture of Israel's conduct in the Wilderness, not only must we attend diligently to the historical accounts furnished by the Pentateuch, but we must also search for the additional information supplied by the Prophets, for in many instances their retrospective statements supplement the former. Here, as everywhere, Scripture must be compared with Scripture. It is to Ezekiel that we are again indebted for fuller light on the point now before us. Reviewing the past, the Lord said through him, "I wrought for My name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, among whom they were, in whose sight I made Myself known unto them, in bringing them forth out of the land of Egypt. Wherefore I caused them to go forth out of the land of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness. And I gave them My statutes, and showed them My judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them. Moreover, also *I gave them my Sabbaths*, to be a sign between Me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD that sanctify them" (20:9-12). And what was their response to such grace on His part?

Here is the sad answer to our question, "But the house of Israel rebelled against Me in the wilderness: they walked not in My

statutes, and they despised My judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them; and *My Sabbaths they greatly polluted*: then I said, I would pour out My fury upon them in the wilderness, to consume them. But I wrought for My name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, in whose sight I brought them out. Yet also I lifted up My hand unto them in the wilderness, that I would not bring them into the land which I had given them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands. Because they despised My judgments, and walked not in My statutes, but *polluted My Sabbaths*” (Ezek. 20:13-16). What a tragic picture does that present to us of the generation of Israel which came out of Egypt! How it discovers to us the inveterate wickedness of the human heart. Unaffected by the Divine goodness, they now despised God's statutes and polluted His Sabbaths. And how heavily punished were they for their disobedience? They were excluded from the land of promise and condemned to die in the wilderness. Ah, my reader, God is not to be mocked with impunity; and remember, this Divine judgment of Israel is recorded as a warning for us today.

And what effect did that fearful deprivation have upon their children? Did *they* profit from the warning? Did they turn from the evil ways of their fathers, which had so sorely displeased Jehovah? Surely, surely, with such a solemn judgment before their eyes, they would turn it to good account. Every opportunity to do so was then given to them: “Nevertheless Mine eye spared them from destroying them, neither did I make an end of them in the wilderness. But I said unto their children, in the wilderness, Walk ye not in the statutes of your fathers, neither observe their judgments, nor defile yourselves with their idols: I am the LORD your God: walk in My statutes, and keep My judgments, and do them; and *hallow My Sabbaths*; and they shall be a sign between Me and you, that ye may know that I am the LORD your God” (Ezek. 20:17-20).

Alas, the younger generation were no better than the old: no more amenable to Jehovah's exhortations, no more restrained by fear of His judgments. “Notwithstanding, the children rebelled

against Me: they walked not in My statutes, neither kept My judgments, to do them, which if a man do, he shall even live in them; *they polluted My Sabbaths*: then I said, I would pour out My fury upon them, to accomplish My anger against them in the wilderness. Nevertheless, I withdrew Mine hand, and wrought for My name's sake, that it should not be polluted in the sight of the heathen, in whose sight I brought them forth. I lifted up Mine hand unto them also in the wilderness, that I would scatter them among the heathen, and disperse them through the countries; because they had not executed My judgments, but had despised My statutes, and had *polluted My Sabbaths*, and their eyes were after their fathers' idols" (verses 21-24). It is to be duly noted that in each of these passages the Lord, while making the general complaint that Israel rebelled and walked not in His statutes, specifically singles out for mention the heinous crime that they had "polluted His Sabbath," for *that* is something which He will by no means tolerate, and fearful indeed are His judgments upon those who are guilty of such a high offense.

Nor was there any improvement after Israel entered and was established in Canaan. To the people of Ezekiel's own day, the Lord complained, "Thou hast despised Mine holy things and, hast *profaned My Sabbaths*" (22:8). The order of those two things is solemn: it is because we despise the things of God that we pollute them. But still worse is what we read of in verse 26 of this chapter: "Her *priests* have violated My Law, and have profaned Mine holy things . . . And have hid their eyes from My Sabbaths." Not only was the general public guilty of this sin, but the ministers of God were offenders too. They turned a blind eye to the requirements of the Sacred Day, conniving at the joining in of its profanation. Those religious leaders esteemed not those who kept the Sabbath, and winked at those who did servile work therein.

So, too, we find the Lord saying through Jeremiah, "Hear ye the word of the LORD, ye kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that enter in by these gates: thus saith the LORD; Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the



Sabbath Day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem; neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath Day, neither do ye any work, but hallow ye the Sabbath Day, as I commanded your fathers” (17:20-22). Note this message was addressed first to the “king’s of Judah,” the heads of the Nation, for the heaviest weight of responsibility ever rests on those in the chief places of governmental power; and second, to the people at large. And what was Israel’s response to this Divine call? This: “But *they obeyed not*, neither inclined their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear, nor receive instruction” (verse 23). Alas, what is man? The same in every age, under all circumstances: self-willed, defiant, refusing to be in subjection to his Maker; blind to his own interests, forsaking his own mercies, deaf to all reproof and admonition.

Patiently and faithfully did the Lord expostulate with His wayward people, setting before them the certain alternatives of their conduct: “And it shall come to pass, if ye diligently hearken unto Me saith the LORD, to bring in no burden through the gates of this city on the Sabbath Day, but hallow the Sabbath Day, to do no work therein; then shall there enter into the gates of this city kings and princes sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they, and their princes, the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: and this city shall remain forever. And they shall come from the cities of Judah, and from the places about Jerusalem, and from the land of Benjamin, and from the plain, and from the mountains, and from the south, bringing burnt offerings and sacrifices, and meat offerings and incense, and bringing sacrifices of praise unto the house of the LORD” (verses 24-26). What inducements were these to render loyal and loving allegiance to their King! The Lord is no Egyptian taskmaster. Not only is His yoke easy and His burden light, but He gives most liberal wages to those who serve Him. True is this for individuals and communities alike. Here is another Scripture which makes it abundantly clear that the chief thing on which *national prosperity turns* is its careful observance of the Sabbath.

If on the one hand Israel would not be moved to obedience by



promises of rich reward, perhaps they might be deterred from disobedience by threats of terrible judgment. Accordingly, Jehovah concluded by saying, "But if ye will not hearken unto Me to hallow the Sabbath Day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath Day; then will I kindle *a fire* in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched" (verse 27). Alas, Israel was as indifferent to the latter as they had been to the former. How strictly God made good His threat appears from, "came Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem: and he burnt the house of the LORD, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man's house burnt he *with fire*" (2 Kings 25:8, 9). This was a national calamity in consequence of national pollution of the Sabbath. Following upon the destruction of the Temple and the raising of Jerusalem, the people were carried into Babylon.

Seventy years later, God, in His mercy, opened a way of escape for the people from their captivity, and thousands of their descendants returned to Jerusalem. Had they *at last* learned their lesson? Did they now hearken to the voice of God's rod and mend their ways? No, they were incorrigible. Hardly had they arrived back in the holy land than Nehemiah had to complain, "In those days saw I in Judah some treading winepresses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and laden asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath Day: and I testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals" (13:15). And then he added, "Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? Yet ye bring *more wrath* upon Israel by *profaning the Sabbath*" (verse 18).

Thus it was all through the long centuries of Israel's history. Nor has the conduct and career of Christendom been any better. While today it is far worse than for generations past. Here, in Great Britain, Sabbath desecration is now almost as rife as it is on the Continent, and only here and there is a feeble voice raised in protest. Sad to say *the heads* of the Nation often set a bad

example by travelling on the Sabbath Day. The flood of Sunday newspapers which deluges the land, the irreligious rubbish which is being broadcast over the air, the increasing number of public places open for sport and entertainment, and the millions of people who turn the Holy Day into one of pleasure and “joyriding” is surely heaping up for us wrath against the Day of wrath unless we, as a people repent and reform.

## 6. Its Perpetuation

We now approach what is to us, upon whom the ends of the ages are come (1 Cor. 10:11), the most pertinent and important aspect of our subject. It is therefore necessary to proceed slowly and enter more into detail, especially as there is so much confusion and error at this point. In seeking to open up this branch of our theme, we feel that we cannot do better than follow more or less closely the lucid and helpful writings of P. Fairbairn thereon. We would like to quote him at length, but this would occupy too much space, so we content ourself by summarizing his able exposition thereof, intermingling and adding some remarks and conclusions of our own.

First, a Christian Sabbath was clearly anticipated by Old Testament prophecy: or to put it another way, the Prophets plainly intimated that the Holy Sabbath would be perpetuated throughout the Christian dispensation. Thus we have a natural bridge which connects the Old and New Testaments together. A wide field is here opened for investigation, but for the sake of brevity and clarity, we shall confine our attention to two predictions: the first one enunciating the basic general principle, the second furnishing more explicit details. We have discussed the former passage under the Covenant articles in our *Studies in the Scriptures*, but for the sake of new readers, and particularly as it bears upon our present theme, we must again look at it.

Before turning to those ancient evangelic testimonies, it should be pointed out that a considerable portion of the prophetic writings pertains rather to the New, than to the Old Testament dispensation. They were designed to deliver the Jews from

dwelling too exclusively in their thoughts on their present regime; on which they were ever prone to settle with a carnal and exclusive regard; and to direct the eye of faith forward to those better things which were to come, and which were to be disclosed in “the dispensation of the fullness of times” (Eph. 1:10). It was of those very things, the prophecies we are to consider, spoke. They were “the testimony of Jesus,” witnessing beforehand of the work He was to do, the nature of that kingdom which He would establish, and the character of those blessings He should confer.

In proof of our contention that the Sabbath obtains for the Christian dispensation, we appeal first to, “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the (spiritual) house of Israel, and with the (spiritual) house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My covenant they break, although I was a husband unto them, saith the LORD. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: After those days, saith the LORD, I will put My Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sins no more” (Jer. 31:31-34). That the new covenant here mentioned is that brought in by Christ is expressly affirmed in the eighth chapter of Hebrews, so that there can be no doubt of this being one of those prophecies which had immediate reference to the Gospel economy.

Now the leading characteristic of this New Covenant, as contradistinguished from that which was made with carnal Israel at Sinai, is that God’s Law is now written on the hearts of His people, whereas it was formerly written on tables of stone: in this the Law is transmitted internally, in that, the Nation had it externally. Yet, let it be said emphatically, it is identically *the same Law*: the moral Law, not the ceremonial, for so far from that

being exalted into a higher place by Christ, it was in Him abolished, passing away like the shadow when the substance comes. Nor is the ceremonial law ever designated absolutely “the Law of God,” and least of all could that be meant when the Law and the Covenant are viewed (as they are here) as in great measure identical. That which is pre-eminently called “*the Law*” in the Pentateuch and which formed exclusively the old covenant, was simply the Ten Commandments—those wholly and those alone.

It was the Ten Commandments, then, which the Spirit of Prophecy (through Jeremiah) foretold should one day, namely, in the Gospel dispensation—be inscribed by the finger of God upon the hearts of His people. By a miracle of grace being wrought in them, they would, after the inward man, delight in and serve God’s Law (Rom. 7:22, 25). It could not be otherwise, for God has predestinated them to be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29)—initially so now, fully so in Glory. If then the Head could say, “I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy Law is within My heart” (Psa. 40:8), so in their measure can the members of His mystical Body say the same. Yet there is this great difference—for in all things He has the pre-eminence: Christ was born (“that Holy thing:” Luke 1:35) with God’s Law in His heart, whereas it is only written in ours at the new birth.

Now if the Ten Commandments as a whole be written upon the hearts of Christians it must be true of each individual part—the *Fourth* as well as any of the rest. That Commandment was most certainly included as an essential part of the Law or Covenant which was formerly written without and set before the Nation of Israel, but is now written within and infused with living power in the affections of the souls of God’s people. And is not that very fact attested by Christian experience? How uniformly do they who are admitted into the privileges of the New Covenant love and delight in the Day of God! Nay, the more deeply anyone drinks into the spirit of the Gospel and experiences the grace of God writing the Law of holiness on the tablet of his heart, the more invariably does he count the Sabbath “the holy of the Lord

and honourable.”

So far from a renewed soul chafing at the restraints which the Day of Rest throws upon his conduct, and hankering after a larger freedom amid the pleasures and business of the world, he gladly hails its hallowed employments, and finds its weekly returns as so many “spring days” in his spiritual nature. He thinks and feels with the poet:

**“Sweet day of rest! for thee I’d wait,  
Emblem and earnest of a state  
Where saints are fully blest!  
For thee I’d look, for thee I’d sigh.  
I’d count the days till thou art nigh  
Sweet day of sacred rest!”**

The second passage to which we appeal for proof of the Sabbath in this dispensation is, “Neither let the son of the stranger that hath joined himself to the LORD, speak, saying, The LORD hath utterly separated me from His people; neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree. For thus saith the LORD unto the eunuchs that keep My Sabbaths, and choose the things that please Me, and take hold of My covenant: Even unto them will I give in Mine house and within My walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off. Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve Him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be His servants, everyone that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of My covenant; even them will I bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon Mine altar: for Mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all people” (Isa. 56:3-7).

Now it should be unmistakably evident to all that the above prediction does and could not refer to Jewish but must relate to *Gospel times*. First, this is clear from the place it occupies in the chain of prophecy, and of which it is a part—i.e., beginning at 54:1 immediately after the atoning death of Christ in chapter 53.

Second, it is directly connected with the revelation of “God’s righteousness” and the “coming near of His salvation” (56:1), which can only be understood of Gospel times (see Rom. 1:16, 17), and is so regarded by all sound interpreters. Third, express mention is here made of the keeping of the Sabbath as a characteristic mark of godliness on the part of the “strangers” (Isa. 56:6) that is, *the Gentiles* who should join themselves to the Lord—“To the Lord,” and not to the Nation of Israel!

It is also to be noted that the duty and blessedness of observing the Sabbath are spoken of in Isaiah 56:4 as belonging to the “eunuchs,” who under the Mosaic dispensation were *excluded* from the congregation of the Lord, as also were the “strangers” as a body. Now the calling of the Gentiles and the removal of all outward, personal disabilities in God’s sight, are emphatically marks of the New Testament Church; yet of such a Church it was definitely predicted that the observance of *the Sabbath* would form a distinctive characteristic. Finally, not only is the observance of the Sabbath three times repeated with singular emphasis, but it is coupled with laying hold of the Covenant, doing justice, and loving the name of the Lord—clearly importing that the Sabbath has its place with the most important and permanent appointments of God’s kingdom.

Ere passing on, perhaps it will be well for us to anticipate an objection which some may be inclined to make against what has just been advanced. The dispensationalists, who are so fond of allocating to a Jewish “millennium” those prophecies which receive their fulfilment under this Christian economy, are likely to say Isaiah 56:3-7 cannot be understood as receiving its accomplishment in Gospel times, but must be regarded as describing conditions under a future and restored Judaism, because verse 7 says, “their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon Mine altar.” From this and other passages the grotesque conclusion is drawn that an era yet to come is to witness a revival of the ancient Levitical ritual—a thing which is not only without a vestige of New Testament support, but which is expressly refuted by the entire contents of the Hebrews’ Epistle,

the special design of which is to show that the Aaronic priesthood has been forever set aside, superseded by the more excellent priesthood of Christ after the order of Melchizedek.

Surely only those who are blinded by prejudice could fail to see that so far from Isaiah 56:7 containing anything in favour of a future restored Judaism, the whole passage in which that verse occurs makes dead against such a preposterous view. Why, if there be any one thing more than another which outstandingly characterized the exclusiveness of Judaism, it was that the priestly functions were rigidly confined *to the family of Aaron*. “Therefore thou (Aaron) and thy sons with thee shall keep your priest’s office for everything of the altar, and within the veil; and ye shall serve: I have given your priest’s office unto *you* as a service of gift: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death” (Num. 18:7 and cf. 3:10, 38). In passage after passage “death” is threatened the “stranger” (Gentile) who dared to approach that altar. So strict was Jehovah in the enforcement of this restrictive statute, that even when one of Israel’s own kings dared to usurp sacerdotal functions by burning incense upon the altar, He smote him with leprosy (2 Chron. 26:16-20)!

What shall be thought, then, of those “renowned Bible teachers,” who are supposed to have so much more light than the rank and file of ministers, when they display such ignorance of one of the most elementary principles of Judaism, and give forth such a carnal and absurd interpretation of the prophetic Scriptures? Why, to put it as charitably and mildly as possible, that they are unsafe guides in spiritual things, and that though they may be able to amuse the curious, they cannot edify those seeking a closer walk with God. This childish and slavish “literalism” is so far from honouring God, that it brings His Holy Word into disrepute among sober-minded people. Anyone who possesses spiritual discernment and who is at all acquainted with the New Testament, should at once perceive that the “burnt offerings” of Isaiah 56:7 are the same, as the “*spiritual* sacrifices” of 1 Peter 2:5, expressed in the terminology of the Old Covenant.

What a blessed picture does Isaiah 56 furnish of the distinctive



and special blessings of Gospel times! New Covenant privileges are portrayed under the figures of Old Covenant institutions, yet such remarkable contrasts are drawn that there is no excuse for mistaking their purport. Both eunuchs and strangers were expressly excluded from the sacred precincts of Israel's tabernacle and temple, and to here affirm that the Lord would give them a "place in His house," is only the Old Testament way of saying that the "middle wall of partition" would be broken down. When in verse 6 it says, "the sons of the stranger that join themselves to the LORD, to serve Him," the same Hebrew word is used as signifies the service *of the altar*: in other words, it was a prophetic announcement that the redeemed from the Gentiles were made "a royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:9) to offer no material and outward sacrifices, but spiritual and inward ones, the holy exercises of renewed hearts. The wild idea that it is "millennial" blessings which are here portrayed, is conclusively discountenanced by, "I will give them an everlasting name" (Isa. 56:5).

But to proceed: that the Sabbath should be continued throughout our own dispensation is just what might be expected, for the merciful nature and tendencies of the weekly Day of Rest is in perfect accord with the character and genius of Christianity. If a day of stated rest, on which all labour was forbidden as unlawful, and nothing permitted save what ministered to the life and well-being of the soul (with the exception only of works of necessity and mercy), was appointed by God for the good of His creatures under the Old Covenant, then certainly such a gracious provision is equally suited to the character and design of the New Covenant. If there be any feature of Christianity in its connection with human society, more prominent than another, it is the tenderness it breathes toward the poor and needy, and the beneficent influence it is fitted to exert on the conditions of those who require most of sympathy and kindness.

Christ Himself gave it as the leading characteristic of His work on earth that thereby the objects of deepest compassion were relieved, and that the poor had the Gospel preached unto them

(Matt. 11:4, 5). There was in His heart an infinite tenderness and fellow-feeling for such, even in regard to temporal evils, which often excited the wonder of His immediate followers and rebuked their comparative indifference. And is not a weekly Sabbath, bringing a periodical release from the toils and burdens of life, permitting the most weary and oppressed a season of repose in the bosom of their families, and to attend to what they must otherwise neglect, namely, the higher interests of their being—is not *such* a Day an unspeakable boon to the great bulk of mankind? Has not the Sabbath been one of the most wise and benevolent gifts the Creator has bestowed upon His creatures, testifying His care both for their bodies and their spirits, by providing relaxation for the one and refreshment for the other?

Undoubtedly that is the real character of the Sabbath. And if Christianity has done anything to destroy the foundations on which such a blessed institution rests, it must surely in this particular, be strangely inconsistent with its general tendency and design. In its care for the poor and oppressed—it must then actually rank lower than Judaism, and be chargeable with removing one of the noblest bulwarks of the weak against the strong—of the labouring classes of society against the greed and grind of the monopolists. That the Gospel of the grace of God was intended to produce such an unfavourable effect, or can be made to do so otherwise than by some gross perversion of its meaning, will not readily be believed by any who know what the spirit of the Gospel is. The benevolent character of the Gospel, viewed in connection with the equally benevolent character of the Sabbath, amounts to a strong presumption that so far from subverting, the one must rather establish and support the other.

Let the reader ponder carefully the following questions. Does a weekly return of a day, separated from ordinary employment and consecrated to the immediate service and worship of God, seem to run contrary to the evident scope and tendency of the Gospel, or rather to harmonize with it? Does it tend to promote or hinder the end which Christianity has avowedly in view? Is it relished or disrelished by those who have drunk most deeply into the spirit of

the Gospel? And when it is allowed, more or less, from whatever cause, to fall into neglect, does the cause of Christ appear to gain or to lose in consequence? These are very important and most pertinent inquiries, and are not to be summarily dismissed by a prejudiced shrug or sneer.

It is neither fair nor fitting that such questions as the above should be disposed of by a general and unsupported objection that such an ordinance as the Sabbath is not in keeping with the spirit of the Gospel. We ask, in what respect is it not in accord? Does it beget a temper which the lessons of the Gospel are meant to subdue, or to check the growth of feelings which it calls us to cherish and manifest? If this *were* the case, it would go far to prove the unsoundness of any defence which might rather be raised for the Sabbath in this dispensation. But is it so? Wherein lies the supposed contrariety between the design and spirit of Christianity and the strict observance of a weekly Sabbath? To reply that the one promotes freedom while the other makes for bondage, is to confound liberty and license and is to mistake necessary restraint for serfdom.

It is almost universally acknowledged in Christendom that the Gospel, considered in its lowest aspect, is pre-eminently a scheme of benevolence, and that it looks with a kindly and friendly countenance on the condition of those who most stand in need of sympathy and care. But we ask, is not a weekly Sabbath, withdrawn from worldly employments, bringing to the very busiest the liberty, at least, of relaxing their bodies and refreshing their spirits, one of the highest boons that can possibly be conferred on the poor? Certainly God Himself claimed it as one of His special acts of kindness toward Israel that He gave to them the privilege of knowing and keeping such a day. Are, then, the artisans of this materialistic, strenuous, and avaricious age, in less need of such a merciful furlough from their weekly toil? Then has the Gospel less concern for man's temporal well-being than had the Law?

But the Gospel has another, a higher, a far more prominent and peculiar characteristic than this, namely, its *spiritual* and *holy*

tendency being pre-eminently designed to beget those who embrace it to a pure and heavenly life. In this respect it not only equals, but far surpasses Judaism. True it is, blessedly true, that the Gospel is not so much a revelation of law as of grace, nevertheless grace abounds only that believers may proceed to higher exercises of faith and godliness. Every doctrine it reveals, every privilege it confers, is avowedly designed to have its present fruit unto holiness, as well as its final end unto everlasting life. To be conformed unto the pure image of the Son of God, to have our affections set upon things above and not on things of the earth, to glorify God and not gratify self is the character at which the Gospel aims—which all its truths and ordinances are calculated to produce, and without which its great end is practically annulled. Hence the covetous, the lovers of pleasure, the earthly-minded, no less than the grossly impure, are expressly declared to be unfit for a place in the kingdom of God as now constituted.

Now as real Christianity is thus identified with a spiritual and heavenly character on the part of its professors, it is pertinent to ask, What relation has the institution of a weekly Sabbath, dedicated throughout to the worship and service of God, to such an object? Does it tend to promote, or rather to hinder and retard, this high design? The question is not whether men may not strictly adhere to the observance of a proper Sabbath, and yet resort to unhallowed practices on other days of the week, for hypocrisy can counterfeit a regard to this as to any other ordinance of God. No, it is, Is the Sabbath calculated to be a handmaid to the Gospel in producing the purifying effects at which it aims? Does a weekly returning day, divorced from all ordinary labour and devoted to religious exercises, tend to help forward true piety, or to mar and kill so desirable a fruit.

The question when thus directed to its proper object, admits of a speedy answer: not only is a day of holy rest greatly conducive to the end in view, but it is scarcely possible to conceive how, without such a day, the end could, among the bulk of mankind, be accomplished at all. Even under the Mosaic economy, when the

standard of spirituality was confessedly lower than it ought to be now, the Sabbath was found necessary for the same purpose, and on this account especially did God set it to be “a sign between Him and His people throughout their generations, that they might know that He was the Lord that sanctified them.” How much more, then, is it required now, when His people are called to live so much by the faith of what is spiritual and Divine, and to cultivate that elevated frame of mind and course of life which is indispensable to a close communion with God.

While it is true that the Gospel requires this heavenly mindedness and holy living to be common to every day of the week, and does not allow it to be confined only to one, yet take away the wholesome and hallowing influences of that one, constantly coming round with its sacred exercises, and what is likely to become of the rest? How soon will the bulwarks of piety give way, and the whole spirit and character of Christianity become secularized, if the Sabbath were practically abolished and every day of the week were alike devoted to worldly pastime or business. If the cause of Christ on earth is to prosper, and the great end of the Gospel to be promoted in the souls of men, then assuredly this day of holy rest to the Lord cannot be dispensed with, nor can it be too jealously guarded against the encroachments of worldly occupation, for it is through the sacred leisure and holy exercises of that day men are especially to familiarize themselves with the things of God.

Another way of ascertaining the relation which the Sabbath holds to practical Christianity is to inquire how they who have drunk most deeply into the spirit of the Gospel usually feel toward such a day. If we might entertain any doubt as to the proper connection between a Sabbath and the great ends of the dispensation of grace, we ought surely to have that doubt removed, if we find the general pulse of the saints beating, as it were, in unison on the subject. We would seldom fail to gather aright the bearing of any particular measure on the constitution of a country, if we heard one and the same sentiment expressed regarding it by those who were most conversant about and

imbued with the spirit of that constitution. So with the Sabbath. Can any such testimony be produced in its favour? Yes—in every generation of this era, the most pious have espoused and promoted its observance, and that not only in one country, but in every land where the Gospel obtains a footing. Pages might be filled with testimonies from one and another, but we will content ourselves with one only, who lived in the palmy days of Puritanism.

“For my part, I must not only say, but plead whilst I live in this world, and leave this testimony to the present and future ages, that if ever I have seen anything in the ways and worship of God, wherein the power of godliness hath been expressed: anything that hath represented the holiness of the Gospel, and the Author of it; anything that hath looked like a prelude to the everlasting Sabbath and rest with God, which we all through grace to come unto, it hath been there and with them where and amongst whom the Lord’s Day hath been had in highest esteem, and a strict observation of it attended unto, as an ordinance of our Lord Jesus Christ. The remembrance of their ministry, their walking and conversation, their faith and love, who in this nation have most zealously pleaded for, and have been in their persons, families, and churches, the most rigid observers of this day, will be precious with them that fear the Lord, whilst the sun and moon endure” (John Owen).

We bring these arguments to a close by pointing out that it adds much to the force and conclusiveness of all that has been advanced above for the necessity of a Sabbath to the life and prosperity of Christianity, that whenever the observance of such a day falls into practical neglect the consequence to the cause of Christ are most disastrous. Ministers of the Gospel, and teachers and guardians of youth have often proclaimed the melancholy result of what they have witnessed in many lands, that neglected or ill-spent Sabbaths infallibly carry in their train declining spirituality and decreasing morality. Chaplains of prisons have in like manner borne witness that the vast majority of offenders brought under their notice have been notorious Sabbath-breakers,

and that many of them acknowledge their downward course began with neglecting its holy duties and privileges.

Thus far have we sought to show that the presumption in favour of the Sabbath being perpetuated during this Christian era amounts virtually to a demonstration. We now proceed to prove this presumption grows into *certainty* when we contemplate the personal conduct of the Lord Jesus Christ in connection with it, and ponder some of His declarations. Take first the former: “And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and, as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day” (Luke 4:16). Thus it is clear that the Saviour honoured this Divine institution. During the quiet years which preceded His public ministry, He had regularly attended the synagogue’s services on that day specially set apart for sacred solemnities. It is striking to note that this statement occurs not in Matthew (the most Jewish of the Synoptists), but in Luke, where He is portrayed as the Son of man.

At the beginning of His public ministry, one of Christ’s first announcements was, “Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the Prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil” (Matt. 5:17). Here the Lord asserted in most unequivocal language, that His mission in this world was not designed in any respect to abolish or relax, but to verify and confirm what had previously been declared by God. The Redeemer accomplished what was required by the Law and the Prophets, first, by personally fulfilling in Himself that righteousness which they demanded; and second, by imposing the same upon His people as the measure of that obedience to which through His grace they were to be ever growing. To have ignored the demands of the Law or the Prophets in either of those respects, would manifestly have been to destroy and not to fulfil them.

Now the force of Christ’s solemn assertion in Matthew 5:17 and its pertinence to our present inquiry is at once apparent if we pause to ask this specific question: was the ordinance of the Sabbath equally recognized and enforced in the Law and the Prophets? Surely the question answers itself. In that solemn and



comprehensive revelation of Law which was promulgated from Mount Sinai and which in Scripture is usually denominated “*the Law*,” it had a definite, an honourable place, occupying the very centre of the Ten Commandments. So, too, in the Prophets: not only when they spoke of Jewish, but also when they referred to Gentile times, there is (as we have shown) a testimony both explicit and authoritative in favour of the Sabbath. Thus, when Christ declared He came to fulfil the Law and the Prophets, He can only be fairly understood to mean that He definitely adopted the testimony they delivered concerning the day of Sacred Rest.

“And He said unto them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27, 28). The Sabbath was designed for man’s blessing. It was given because he needed it, both in his body and in his soul. It was appointed that he might be *man* in the highest sense of the word—something better than a beast of burden, something nobler than a cash register. Observe the force of, “*Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath:*” because the Sabbath is made not merely for Israel, but for man, and because in becoming incarnate the Son of God touched all humanity, as “Son of man” He is “Lord also of the Sabbath.” And mark well His relation thereto: He is not the Destroyer of the Sabbath, but its “Lord;” not the Repealer of it, but its Sovereign.

There are a number of passages in the Gospels (like Matt. 12:1, 2, 10) which record the criticisms that the Saviour met with from His enemies regarding His conduct on the Sabbath, and it is most instructive and important to note the different answers He gave in self-vindication. That which is of chief moment for us to observe is that His utterances on these occasions made it unmistakably clear that both works of real necessity and works of mercy on the Sacred day are permissible and lawful. Thus we discover that the words, “in it thou shalt not do any work” (Exod. 20:10) are *not* to be understood *absolutely*, but are to be interpreted in the light of these modifications of Christ. All Sabbath labour which is not imperative for the well-being of man and beast is Divinely forbidden, but whatever be essential for their true good is

sanctioned by the Lord's own example.

Though Christ ignored all the rabbinical regulations which had been superimposed upon the Divine Law, He never did one thing or uttered one word which to the slightest degree undermined or relaxed the requirements of the Fourth Commandment. There is evidence that the Sabbath law had been encumbered and perverted by Jewish interpretations and traditions. They permitted a man to fill a trough with water for beasts to come and drink, but forbade him carrying water to them. According to one school it was not allowable to minister unto the sick on the Sabbath. Consequently we find our Lord going to considerable pains to expound the Fourth Commandment, and rescue it from these accretions. It was *not* that Christ modified the exactions of the Divine Law or granted man an indulgence for secularizing the Sacred Day, but that He freed it from the arbitrary injunctions of the Jewish teachers.

In what has just been pointed out, we discover another proof for the continuance of the Sabbath in this dispensation. If the Sabbath had been on the brink of being repealed, why should Christ have been so careful to explain its requirements, and make clear that works of mercy and of necessity were allowable on that day? Read carefully the various vindications which He gave them when attacked on that point, and where is there the slightest hint that He was about to abrogate the Sabbath? So far from it, His defences, one and all, were simply to the effect that He was delivering it from the errors of the Pharisees, and thereby He settled a point which would afterwards be of great service to His Church. "Suppose you saw a man taking pains to restore a defaced inscription on a pillar, to remove from it the rubbish which had been heaped around its base, and to tear away the ivy that surrounded its summit, would you not infer it was his intention that its inscription should remain for the information of future ages? Such was the conduct of our Lord in reference to the Sabbath Law" ("The Sabbath Not a Mere Judaical appointment" by Andrew Thomsom).

"But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day" (Matt. 24:20). These words were uttered by Christ at

the close of His public ministry. “The earliest possible period to which this direction can refer, is the siege of Jerusalem—a period at least 40 years after the ascension of Christ, that is, after the full establishment of the Gospel dispensation, and after ‘the Gospel of the kingdom had been preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations’ (verse 14 and cf. Col. 1:6). At such an advanced period in the Gospel age, and in a season, too, of unparalleled distress, the disciples were, by the direction of their Lord, to make it a matter of special prayer that they might not need to take their flight on the Sabbath day . . . . It is impossible to entertain due respect to Christ as an infallible teacher, without admitting it to be His clear intention in this passage that the weekly Sabbath should continue after the Gospel dispensation was fully set up” (F. Fairbairn, from which much in the latter part of this chapter is taken almost *verbatim*).

The second of four booklets.

