

PRESENT DAY TRACTS.

THE DAY OF REST

IN RELATION TO  
THE WORLD THAT NOW IS  
AND  
THAT WHICH IS TO COME.

BY

SIR J. WILLIAM DAWSON, C.M.G.,  
LL.D., F.R.S.

*Principal and Vice-Chancellor of McGill University, Montreal.*

AUTHOR OF

*"Points of Contact between Revelation and Natural Science," etc.*



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## Argument of the Tract.

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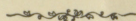
AFTER showing that the creative days of Genesis are days of God, Divine periods or ages, the Tract goes on to show the true nature of the Sabbath Law of the Old Testament, as a commemoration of God's finished work of Creation and entrance into His Sabbatism, of the loss of this Sabbatism by man at the Fall, and of the promise of its restoration by a Redeemer. In this way it is proposed to explain the position of the Sabbath law in the Decalogue, the importance attached to it in the Old Testament, and its necessary change into the Lord's Day as the memorial of the finished work of Redemption which fulfils the promise of the Old Testament Sabbath. Certain practical deductions from these considerations, bearing on the obligation and use of the Lord's Day, are stated in the concluding portion.



# THE DAY OF REST

IN

RELATION TO THE WORLD THAT NOW IS,  
AND THAT WHICH IS TO COME.



HERE are wonderful links of connection between the ways of God in creation, in providence, and in grace, which are always deserving of study, more especially when they are pointed out by the Word of God itself. This is eminently the case with the Sabbath law. Placed in the middle of the Ten Commandments, between the precepts that relate to God and those that relate to man, it must have a moral and spiritual significance. Providing for a weekly day of rest from labour for all men, good and evil, and even for the animals under their control, it should have a direct relation to our external well-being. Enforced by a reason carrying our minds back to the original creation of the world, it should be connected in some way with the great work of constructing the earth for man, and with his own earliest relations with his Creator. I desire in this Tract to direct attention more par-

Links of connection between creation, providence, and grace.

The place of the Sabbath law.

The provision it makes.

The reason of it.



ticularly to this last aspect of the Sabbath law, and to its bearing on the others.

The days of creation.

At first sight it seems a very simple explanation of the reason annexed to the commandment, that God made the world and things therein in six natural days, and rested on the seventh, and that He enjoins on us the following of His example. But the more we think of this the more unsatisfactory it becomes. The parallel does not hold good. If it pleased God to make the world in six of our ordinary days and to rest on the seventh, this was a work done once for all, and bears no analogy to our recurring weeks of toil and days of rest. Nor is there any apparent need for our thus seeming to imitate God's procedure, if that were the only reason. Still less does one see any inherent moral obligation resting on us to give up one-seventh of our time on account of such imitation. This incongruity is only increased by the evident intention of the Lawgiver to represent the Sabbath not as a new institution but as a primitive practice, to be remembered and continued. He says "remember" the Sabbath day, as if speaking of an old institution. There is also in the six days of labour an implied reference to the curse incurred by man at the fall, and in so far as the seventh day is concerned, a partial relaxation of this eating of bread with the sweat of the brow.

No inherent moral obligation to give up one-seventh part of our time.

The implied references of the fourth commandment.

It has long appeared to the writer that the



proper significance of this command is reached only when we bear in mind that the creative days of the first chapter of Genesis are really days of God, Divine periods—*olamim*, or ages, as they are elsewhere called<sup>1</sup>—or, which amounts to the same thing, that they are intended to represent or to indicate such ages of God's working. This conclusion I desire to rest not so much on the discoveries of modern science, though these fully vindicate it, as on the usage and statements of the Bible writers and their contemporaries, and of the early Christian Church. The writer of the introduction to Genesis sees no incongruity in those early days which passed before natural days were instituted; "ineffable days" as Augustine well calls them. He does not represent the seventh day as having an evening and morning like the others, nor does he hint that God resumed His work on the eighth day. In chapter second he represents the world as produced in one day, evidently using the word in an indefinite sense. Further, in the succeeding literature of the Old Testament, while we have no actual statement that the creative days were natural days, or that the world was made in a short period, we find the term *olam* or age applied to God's periods of working, and in the 104th Psalm, which is a poetical narrative of creation, the idea conveyed is that of lapse of time, without

The days of creation Divine periods or ages.

The seventh day in Genesis has no evening and morning.

The word day indefinitely used in the second chapter of Genesis.

The term "olam" in the later books of the Old Testament.

<sup>1</sup> Psalm xc.



The teaching of our Lord and the Apostles.

division into days. We shall find in the sequel that the same idea is contained in the teaching of our Lord, and of the Apostolic Epistles, and was familiar to the primitive Church. That we may fully understand the bearing of these facts on the Sabbath question, it will be necessary for us to consider in some detail a doctrine common to the teaching of the Word of God, and of natural and physical science, and which we may designate as the doctrine of "*time-worlds*," or of worlds existing in ages of time as distinguished from "*space-worlds*," or worlds considered merely as of certain dimensions, and existing in space.

The doctrine of "*time-worlds*" common to revelation and science.

When we speak of the world or the universe, the ordinary hearer has perhaps before his mind merely the idea of bodies occurring in space; and the vast discoveries of modern times as to the distances and magnitudes of the heavenly bodies have contributed to fill the minds of men with conceptions of the immensity of space, perhaps to the exclusion of another direction of thought equally important. Worlds must, however, exist in time as well as in space. This idea is very familiar to the mind of the geologist, who traces the long history of the earth through successive periods, and also knows that each succeeding age has seen it different from its condition on those which preceded it. This consideration is also before the mind of the physical astronomer, who

Worlds exist in time as well as in space.



thinks of suns and planets as passing through different successive conditions, and as actually presenting different stages in the present.

This point is curiously illustrated by a controversy which raged some time ago as to whether the planets and other heavenly bodies may be inhabited worlds, and especially whether they may be inhabited by rational beings.

The question as to whether other worlds may be inhabited.

If we look at this question with reference to our own world, we shall find that each successive stage of its existence whether as a vaporous mass, as a heated molten globe, as the abode of merely inferior animals, has been of vast duration as compared with the time in which it has been inhabited by man. Farther, it is gradually approaching the condition in which it will no longer be habitable; and unless some renovating process shall be applied to it, this desolate condition may be of indefinite duration. Thus, if we imagine ourselves to be beings not resident on the earth, and that we could visit it only at one period of its history, the chances would be vastly against our seeing it at that precise stage of its existence in which it is fitted for the residence of rational beings. On the other hand, if we were capable of taking in its whole duration, we would comprehend that it has its particular stage for being the abode of intelligence, and that it has a definite and intelligible history as a world in time,

The world before man appeared.

The approaching condition of the world.

Its history parallel to that of other worlds.



which may be more or less parallel to that of all other worlds.

The moon. This truth also appears if we consider other planetary bodies. The moon may have been inhabited at a time when our earth was luminous and incandescent, but it has passed into a state of senility and desolation. Mars. The planet Mars, which seems physically not unlike the earth, may be in a condition similar to that of our world in the older geological periods. Jupiter and Saturn are probably still intensely heated and encompassed with vaporous "deeps," and may perhaps aid in supporting life on their satellites, while untold ages must elapse before those magnificent orbs can arrive at a stage suitable for maintaining life like that on the earth. Long after all these ages have passed, and when all the planets have grown old and lifeless, the sun itself, now a fiery mass, may arrive at a condition suited for living and rational beings.

All worlds  
not capable  
of support-  
ing life.

Thus the physical conditions of our planetary system teach that if we suppose all worlds capable of supporting life, all are not so at one time, and that as ages pass, each may successively take up this rôle, of which in greater or less degree all may at some time or other be capable. So when we ascend to the starry orbs, those suns may have attendant worlds, some in one stage, some in another. There may also be stars and nebulae



still scarcely formed, and others which have passed far beyond the present state of our sun and its planets. Thus the universe is a vastly varied and progressive scene. At no one time can all worlds be seats of such life as we know; but of the countless suns and worlds that exist, thousands or millions may at any one time be in this state, while thousands of times as many may be gradually arriving at it or passing from it. Such are the thoughts which necessarily pass through our minds when we consider the existence of worlds in time.

The universe a varied and progressive scene.

Now these ideas, though rendered more definite by modern discoveries, are very old, and they impressed themselves on the mind of antiquity before men could measure the vastness of the universe in space. They are also present in Divine revelation, and it is necessary to have them before our minds if we would enter into the thoughts of the writers of the Old and New Testaments when they treat of time and eternity. The several stages of the earth in its progress from chaos, the prophetic pictures of its changes in the future, as stated in the Bible, alike embody the idea of time-worlds, or ages of God's working. It is in this aspect that the universe is compared to a vesture of God, which He can change as a garment, while He Himself remains ever the same.<sup>1</sup> It is in contrast to the eternity of truth that the heavens

These ideas ancient.

They are present in Divine revelation.

The past and future stages of the earth according to the Bible embody the idea of time-worlds.

<sup>1</sup> Psalm cii. 26.



and earth are said to be passing away, but the words of the Redeemer shall never pass away.<sup>1</sup> It is with the same reference that we are told that "the things which are seen are temporal, the things which are unseen are eternal."<sup>2</sup>

The Hebrew and Greek words *olam* and *aion* bring before us the idea of time-worlds.

The use made of the Hebrew word *olam* and the Greek *aiōn* in the sense of age, or even of eternity, brings before us still more clearly this Biblical idea of time-worlds. In that sublime "prayer of Moses the man of God" which we have in the 90th Psalm, God, who is the "dwelling-place of man in generation to generation," who existed before the mountains were brought forth, with whom a thousand years are "as a watch in the night," is said to be from "olam to olam," from "everlasting to everlasting," as the English version has it,<sup>3</sup> but more properly from age to age of those long cosmic ages in which He creates and furnishes successive worlds. So when God is said to be the "High and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity,"<sup>4</sup> it is not abstract eternity, but these successive olams, or time-worlds, which are His habitation. In the Old Testament, God as revealed to us in His works, dwells in the grand succession of worlds in time, thus continuously and variously manifesting His power, a much more living and attractive view of divinity than the mere abstract affirmation of eternity.

God dwells in the succession of worlds in time.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxiv. 25.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 18.

<sup>3</sup> This is retained in the Revised Version, which I think unfortunate.

<sup>4</sup> Isaiah lvii. 15.



The same thought is taken up and amplified in the New Testament. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, who treats very specially of the relations of the Old Testament to the New, speaks of Christ as God's Son, "whom He hath appointed Heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds,"<sup>1</sup> more literally "constituted the aïōns or ages." He does not refer, as one might conceive from the English translation, to different worlds in space, but to the successive ages of this world, in which it was being gradually prepared and fitted up for man. So Paul, in his doxology at the end of the third chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, ascribes to the Redeemer glory in "all generations of the ages or aïōns;"<sup>2</sup> and in the ninth verse of the same chapter he speaks of the gospel as "the mystery which from all ages hath been hid in God who created all things." So, also, in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, we are told that by faith we understand that "the ages were constituted by the Word of God." Another fine illustration of this idea is in Paul's familiar and business-like letter to Titus, where he says that he lives "in hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began, but hath in due time manifested His word."<sup>3</sup> The expression "the world began" here represents the

The same thought in the New Testament,

Christ constituting the ages.

St. Paul ascribes glory to Christ in all generations of the ages.

The ages constituted by the Word of God.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. i. 2, R.V. margin.

<sup>2</sup> R.V. margin.

<sup>3</sup> Titus i. 2.



The life of  
the ages.

The relation  
of the whole  
duration of  
God's  
working  
to us.

The light  
thrown on  
the day of  
rest by the  
creative  
days of  
geology.

“ages of time,” and the “eternal life” is the “life of the ages.” Thus what the Apostle hopes for is life through the unlimited ages of God’s working, and this life has been promised, before the beginning of the time-worlds of creation. So the whole past, present, and future of God’s working has its relation to us, and is included under this remarkable idea of ages or time-worlds, and is appropriated by faith and hope as the possession of God’s people. God, who cannot lie, has pledged Himself to us from the beginning of those long ages in which He founded the earth; He has promised us His favour in all the course of His subsequent work; He has sealed this promise in the mission of His Son, that same glorious Being through whom He arranged all those vast ages of creation and providence; and in the strength of this promise we can look forward by faith to an endless life with Him in all the future ages of His boundless working.

The long creative days of geology may thus be shown to throw a most important light on the institution of the weekly Sabbath and its continuance as the Lord’s day. If it is true that the seventh or Sabbath Day of creation still continues, and was intended to be a day of rest for the Creator and for man made in His likeness, we find in this a substantial reason for the place of the Sabbath in the Decalogue. Further, by means of our Lord’s



declaration in reply to the Pharisees, "My Father worketh even until now, and I work," though God has finished His work of creation and now only works in providence and redemption, as well as by the argument in the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, we can carry this idea forward into the Christian dispensation. But these facts are so important to the right understanding of our subject, that it seems necessary to examine them in some detail, and in a humble and earnest spirit, ready to receive new light and to relinquish old prepossessions, if found to be contrary to the testimony of Scripture.

The idea of the Sabbath as a day of rest for the Creator and man carried further.

At first sight, as already hinted, the place of the fourth commandment in the Decalogue, and the vast importance attached to this law by the Hebrew writers, strike us as strange and anomalous. The Sabbath stands as the sole example of a ritual observance, in those "ten words," which otherwise mark the most general moral relations of man to God and to his fellow-men. Farther, the reason given seems trivial. If it is meant that God worked on six natural days, and rested on the seventh, the question arises, what is He doing on the subsequent days? Does He keep up this alternation of six days' work and one day's rest; and if not, how is this an example to us? If it is argued that the whole reason of God's six days' work and the seventh day's rest was to give an

The place of the Sabbath law at first sight strange and anomalous.



The sup-  
position that  
justifies it.

How the  
Sabbath  
becomes the  
central  
point of all  
religion.

The  
Sabbath  
the Gospel  
in the  
Decalogue.

example, this conveys the absurdity of doing what is infinitely great for an end comparatively insignificant, and which might have been attained by a command without any reason assigned. But let us now suppose that when God rested on the seventh day He entered into an æon of vast duration, intended to be distinguished by the happy Sabbatism of man in an Edenic world, and in which every day would have been a Sabbath; or if there was a weekly Sabbath, it would have been but a memorial of a work leading to a perpetual Sabbath then enjoyed. Let us farther suppose that at the fall of man the Sabbath Day was instituted, or obtained a new significance as a memorial of an Edenic Sabbatism lost, and also as a memorial of God's promise, that through a Redeemer it would be restored. Then the Sabbath becomes the central point of all religion, the standing and perpetual memorial of an Eden lost, and of a paradise to be restored by the coming Seed of the woman, as well as a time to prepare ourselves for this future life. The commandment, "Remember the Sabbath Day," called upon the Israelite to remember the fall of man, to remember the promise of a Saviour, to look forward to a future Sabbatism in the reign of the Redeemer. It is thus the Gospel in the Decalogue, giving vitality to the whole, and is most appropriately placed, and with a more full explanation than any



other command, between the laws that relate to God and the laws that relate to man.

The argument in the Epistle to the Hebrews (ch. iv.) may help us to understand this; and it is the more valuable that it is not an argument about the Sabbath, but introduces it incidentally, and that it seems to take for granted the belief in a long or olamic Sabbath on the part of those to whom it is addressed. It may be freely rendered as follows:

The argument in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

“For God hath spoken in a certain place (Gen. ii. 2) of the seventh day in this wise: ‘And God did rest on the seventh day from all His works;’ and in this place again: ‘They shall not enter into My rest’ (Psa. xcv. 11). Seeing, therefore, it still remaineth that some enter therein, and they to whom it (God’s Sabbatism) was first proclaimed, entered not in because of disobedience (in the Fall, and afterward in the sin of the Israelites in the desert), again He fixes a certain day, saying in David’s writings, (long after the time of Joshua,) ‘To-day, if ye hear His voice, harden not your hearts.’ (Psa. xcv. 8.) For if Joshua had given them rest in Canaan, He would not afterward have spoken of another day. There is therefore yet reserved a keeping of a Sabbath for the people of God. For He that is entered into His rest (that is, Jesus Christ, who has finished His work and entered into His rest in heaven), He Himself also rested from His own works, as God did from His own. Let us therefore earnestly strive to enter into that rest.”

A free rendering of it.

It is evident that in this passage God’s Sabbatism, the rest intended for man in Eden, and for Israel in Canaan, Christ’s rest in heaven after finishing His work, the rest which may now be enjoyed by Christians, and the final heavenly rest of Christ’s people, are all indefinite periods mutually related, and are all Sabbatisms of which the weekly Sabbath is a continuous reminder and token.

The various Sabbatisms indefinite periods mutually related.



Another reason for the fourth commandment.

In the repetition of the decalogue, in the fifth chapter of Deuteronomy, another reason is annexed to the fourth commandment:

“Remember that thou wast a slave in the land of Egypt, and Jehovah thy God brought thee out thence.”

Perfect harmony between the reasons.

This is in perfect harmony with the reason in Exodus, and merely a further development of it. The first reason refers to the rest of the Creator, the second to the rest from Egyptian bondage and the promised rest of Canaan. Both are referred to by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, who clearly sees the connection between them. The mistake of supposing them to be mutually contradictory is peculiar to a certain stage of modern hypercriticism.

The supposition that they are contradictory hypercritical.

If this is a correct view of the relation of the Jewish Sabbath to the Creation and the Fall, it enables us to appreciate the force of the injunction to “remember” the Sabbath day to keep it holy, for in this case the Sabbath must have been no new institution, but one of primitive obligation, and dating from the fall of man at the latest. It also enables us to understand the prevalence of Sabbatical ideas among nations independent of Hebrew influence, and more especially among the Chaldeans, from whom Abraham came. With them, as recent investigations have shown, the seventh day had a certain sacredness attached to it from very early times.<sup>1</sup>

The primitive obligation of the Sabbath.

The sacredness of the Sabbath among the Chaldeans and other nations outside of Hebrew influence.

<sup>1</sup> Sayce, *Fresh Light from the Ancient Monuments*.



But what evidence does the Bible itself offer as to this? We have no Sabbath law till the time of the Exodus, and there is scarcely any reference previously to other religious ordinances than those of sacrifice and circumcision. Still there are indications of a Sabbath. We need not perhaps attach much importance to the expression "in process of time," or more literally, "at the end of days,"<sup>1</sup> applied to the time when Cain and Abel offered their sacrifices, as we do not certainly know whether a weekly, monthly, or yearly interval is intended. We find, however, Noah reckoning by weeks in sending out birds from the ark.<sup>2</sup> Laban and Jacob also reckoned by weeks.<sup>3</sup> In Joseph's time also, the Hebrews reckoned by sevens in the division of time.<sup>4</sup> So in the early part of the Exodus before the giving of the law, the Sabbath is incidentally mentioned, in connection with the gift of the manna, and in terms which show that it was already known as "a solemn rest, a holy Sabbath unto the Lord."<sup>5</sup> It is interesting, however, to observe that there seems to have been no pre-intimation of the day, except the gathering of a double quantity of manna on the sixth day, and that the rulers reported the fact to Moses, as if asking instruction. This would seem to imply either that the day of rest had fallen into disuse in Egypt,

Bible evidence.

Early indications of a Sabbath.

The Sabbath and manna.

Moses' interpretation of the injunction with reference to the gathering of a double portion of manna on the sixth day.

<sup>1</sup> Genesis iv. 3.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* viii. 12.    <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* xxix. 27.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* i. 3, 12.    <sup>5</sup> Exod. xvi. 23, R.V.



or that its occurrence had not at first seemed to the people likely to be recognised as interfering with the gathering of necessary food; but Moses at once interprets the fact as God's recognition of His own day.

The early notices of the Sabbath few and casual; but sufficient when taken in connection with other passages.

These early notices of the Sabbath are, it is true, few and casual, and remind us of the informal way in which the Lord's Day is introduced in the New Testament. But when taken in connection with the statement as to God's hallowing the day at the close of His creative work, and with the word "remember" in the commandment, they are sufficient to show the Patriarchal origin of the rest of the seventh day, and to carry it back to the gate of Eden. We may further note here that the Israelites when enslaved in Egypt must have been, to a great extent at least, deprived of the Sabbath rest. The Egyptians, even if they had themselves some notion of a Sabbatism, whether on the tenth or the seventh day, were not likely to have consulted the scruples or the comfort of their foreign slaves in such matters, any more than modern pleasure-seekers are disposed to regard those of railway employés or museum curators. The Hebrews had thus known the bitterness of ceaseless labour, and so are reminded in Deuteronomy of those past sufferings as a reason for their holding fast to the privilege restored to them in their newly-found freedom. It would be well if those

Israel in Egypt.

The Hebrews' experience of ceaseless labour in Egypt.



modern nations which neglect the Lord's day could see it in this light, and receive it as a part of that liberty with which Christ makes His people free.

The post-Mosaic stages of Jewish history show that the ideas of the connection of the Sabbath with the primitive promise of redemption and with the liberation of the chosen people, are carried onward to the time of Christ. At some periods of Jewish history the Sabbath no doubt fell greatly into neglect, but these were times of general decadence and of lapse into idolatry, and every prophetic or priestly revival of religion exalted the obligations of the Sabbath. Isaiah laments the misuse and neglect of the day, and promises even to the eunuchs and the strangers in Palestine that if they will "keep the Sabbath, and hold fast by God's covenant" implied in it, He will give them

The Sabbath in the post-Mosaic stages of Jewish history till the time of Christ.

"a memorial and a name better than of sons and of daughters . . . an everlasting name." "I will bring them to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer."<sup>1</sup>

In the time of Isaiah.

It is the same prophet who intensifies its blessings, while connecting it with the patriarchs and with the covenant of God, in the grand words :—

"If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath,  
From doing thy pleasure on my holy day ;  
And shalt call the Sabbath a delight  
And the holy of Jehovah honourable,  
And shalt honour it, not doing thine own ways,  
Nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words ;

<sup>1</sup> Isa. lvi. 4-8.



Then shalt thou delight thyself in Jehovah,  
 And I will make thee ride upon the high places of the earth,  
 And I will feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father,  
 For the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it."<sup>1</sup>

Jeremiah's  
 view of it.

Ezekiel's  
 view.

The  
 significance  
 of prophetic  
 doctrine.

The effect  
 of prophetic  
 statements.

The con-  
 sistency of  
 Bible  
 history on  
 the subject  
 throughout.

Jeremiah connects in the strongest manner its observance, as an efficient cause, with God's blessing, and with prosperity, and regards the keeping of the Sabbath as an essential condition of national welfare.<sup>2</sup> Ezekiel expressly calls the Sabbath a sign or pledge that God would sanctify His people.<sup>3</sup> The profound significance of this prophetic doctrine becomes evident only when we connect the Sabbath with God's olamic rest, with man's fall and with the promise of a final and eternal Sabbatism, in the manner explained in the passage already quoted from the Epistle to the Hebrews. There can be no doubt that these strong statements of the prophets were influential with the Jews in the captivity, and were important means of preserving them from idolatry and forgetfulness of their God, and that when they were again delivered from bondage they would return with enhanced ideas of Sabbath obligation, akin to those of their fathers at the time of the Exodus. We see this in the legislation of Nehemiah, and in a debased and ritualistic form in the Pharisaic strictness of the time of Christ.

Let us further note here that there is a strict consistency throughout in the Biblical history of

<sup>1</sup> Isa. lviii. 13, R.V.    <sup>2</sup> Jer. xvii. 24, 25.    <sup>3</sup> Ezek. xx. 12.



the Sabbath, from the first announcement of the rest of the Creator in the second chapter of Genesis till the advent of the promised Redeemer, and no room is left here for attributing a late origin to the Sabbath law, without throwing the whole history into confusion. The Sabbath of Exodus is meaningless without the Creative days, the Fall, and the promise of Redemption. The testimony of the Psalms and Prophets pre-supposes the Sabbath law, and its spiritual relations. The attitude of the post-exilic Jews pre-supposes and results from the law and the prophets. Among the sectaries of the time of our Lord, the Sabbath had only experienced the fate of other spiritual elements of the old dispensation which they had "made void by their traditions," substituting form for substance.

The pre-suppositions of the Sabbath of the Exodus and of the Psalms and Prophets.

The Sabbath in our Lord's time.

These considerations not only give a high and spiritual significance to the Sabbath and the Lord's Day, and connect them with God's great working in the universe, and with the fall and redemption of man, but they give us practical information respecting the manner of keeping the Lord's Day and its relation to Christian doctrine and practice.

The Sabbath in its various relations.

We can thus understand the attitude of Christ Himself with regard to the Sabbath. While He denounced that Pharisaical rigidity which made the day a burden rather than a privilege, and which

The attitude of Christ to the Sabbath.



directed attention to minute details of its observance rather than to its higher significance, neither His example nor His teaching took away from its sacredness or diminished its obligation, except when opposed to works of necessity or mercy, or of direct service to God. The Sabbath was made for man as—

“a means, and not an end; worth nothing unless it conduced to the end—man’s welfare, man’s refreshment in body, mind, and spirit.”<sup>1</sup>

How the  
Lord’s Day  
is to be  
kept.

Thus if we ask how the Lord’s Day should be kept, we are referred at once to the examples of God the Father and of God the Son. The Creator’s rest with reference to this world, is one of contemplation, and of beneficent and merciful attention to its interests. He regards His work and pronounces it good, and then enters into His rest. So the Redeemer entered into His rest when He could say, “It is finished.” God in His Sabbath sustains and nourishes all His creatures, and relieves their wants. This is the force of our Lord’s reply to the Pharisees: “My Father worketh even until now, and I work,” and they seem so to have understood the reference to the creation and to Divine providence, that they had no rejoinder to make. God occupies His Sabbatism, lost to man by the fall, in that work of redemption by which it is to be finally restored. The rest

How God  
occupies His  
Sabbatism,  
and how  
Jesus  
occupies  
His.

<sup>1</sup> *Sunday*, by Plumtre, 1866.



into which Jesus entered is occupied in preparing a place for us, and in acting as our great High-Priest in the most holy place on high. In like manner our Sabbath should be a time of communion with God, and a time for acts of love and mercy to our fellow-men. There is a Divine activity which is not incompatible with, but a fulfilment of the Sabbath law, and the examples given by Christ, as that of the ox fallen into a pit, the healing of diseases, and the Temple service, all point with perfect consistency to the ultimate and higher benefit of man.

Our Sabbath should be a time for communion with God, and for acts of love and mercy to man.

This was the ground of the often-recurring conflict between the Christ, who knew what the Sabbath really means, and the Pharisees, whose tradition had turned it into a day of mere austerity and unmeaning ritualism. Surely if this was true of the Jewish Sabbath, it is true of the Lord's Day. It is to be observed in this connection that when Christ claims the Lordship of the Sabbath, He does this in the capacity of the Son of Man, "the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath," for it is essentially as Redeemer that He is the Fulfiller of the Sabbath law, and so its Lord. May we not also see in this a prescience on the part of Christ of that change in the day which would be a necessary consequence of His resurrection on the first day of the week, and which would mark the commencement of the new dispensation by a day com-

The ground of conflict between Christ and the Pharisees as to the Sabbath.

Christ as Son of Man claims the Lordship of the Sabbath.



memorative of this rather than of the work of creation.

The connection between the Old Testament Sabbath and the Lord's Day of Christians.

How the Lord's Day comes to occupy the place formerly occupied by the Jewish Sabbath.

What it links together

The right understanding of the Old Testament Sabbath aids us in comprehending the connection of the Lord's Day of Christians with the Jewish Sabbath. If the latter had a reference to a Sabbatism lost by the fall and restored by the Redeemer, the Son of Man must be "Lord of the Sabbath," in the sense of fulfilling and realizing its prophetic import. Therefore, the day on which He finished His work and entered into His rest must of necessity be that to be commemorated by Christians, until the time when the return of Christ shall inaugurate that final and eternal Sabbatism which remains to His people. Thus the Lord's Day comes to occupy the same important place formerly occupied by the Jewish Sabbath. In this as in other things, the Old Testament saints without us are not complete, for our Lord's Day is the completion of their Sabbath. It links together God's creative work and Christ's work of redemption; the Sabbatism lost in the fall and restored in the Saviour; the imperfect state of the militant Church, still having only a pledge of a rest to come, and the Church triumphant, which will enjoy this rest for ever. If the Sabbath that carried with it the mournful memory of the first sin was holy, much more that which points forward, through Christ's finished work and present rest, to a



heavenly paradise. If the obligation to remember it was to the Hebrew equal to that of the most binding moral duties, still more must the Lord's Day be a day to be remembered by the Christian, as the memorial of Christ's finished work, and of our heirship of all the divine ages, past, present, and to come. Thus we see that the moral and spiritual dignity and obligation of the Lord's Day rise far above those of the Jewish Sabbath, and we can understand how naturally the apostles and primitive Christians, almost without note of the change, and without requiring any positive enactment, transferred their allegiance from the seventh to the first day of the week.

The enhanced obligation of the Lord's Day.

It may be useful to mention in this connection the strong statement in relation to the Jewish Sabbath contained in the Epistle to the Colossians (ii. 16). The Christians of Colossæ had apparently been urged by some of their teachers to keep the Jewish Sabbath as a matter of legal obligation, either along with or instead of the Lord's Day. Paul repudiates this in the words,

The statement in the Epistle to the Colossians.

"Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of a feast day, or a new moon, or a Sabbath day ;"

adding as a reason,

"which are a shadow of the things to come, but the body (or Substance) is Christ's."

There can scarcely be a question that the Old Testament Sabbath is intended here, and the as-

The Old Testament Sabbath intended.



The assertion in harmony with other parts of Scripture.

The description of the day as observed by Christians.

The meaning of Christ's saying that "the Sabbath was made for man."

The Sabbath a spiritual privilege to fallen man.

sertion that it was a "shadow" of the future coming of Christ is in perfect harmony with the testimony of other parts of Scripture, and with the idea that when Christ, who is the Substance, had come, the old Sabbath, as the anticipatory shadow, must pass away. It is to be noticed, in accordance with this, that where the day observed by Christians is mentioned in the New Testament it is called simply "the first day of the week," except in that passage of the Apocalypse where for the first time we find the term, afterwards general, "the Lord's Day."<sup>1</sup>

We learn also from this view of the day of rest the full meaning of that weighty saying of Jesus: "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." Man, as originally created, needed no Sabbath law, for he had entered into the perpetual rest of the Sabbatism of his Creator. But when he fell from this high estate the Sabbath was made for him, not as a mere legal obligation, but as a great spiritual privilege. For this reason faithful men and women in Israel of old clung to it as the earnest of the great salvation which was to restore the lost paradise for which their hearts yearned, and with reference to which their cry was, "O that I had wings like a dove, then

<sup>1</sup> Acts xx. 7; 1 Cor. xvi. 2; Rev. i. 10. In the Peschito version the expression "Lord's Day" occurs in 1 Cor. xi. 20. (Etheridge's Translation, p. 272.)



would I fly away and be at rest.”<sup>1</sup> So it is in regard to the Lord’s Day. Just as we honour and trust in the Saviour, so shall we regard the day which commemorates His entering into His rest. Just as we appreciate that rest which He gives us in part here, and as our hearts long for that rest which remains in the Father’s house, so shall we hold in loving remembrance the day which points to it, and which enables us to have some faint realization of it in the midst of sorrow and trouble.

In a lower sense the Sabbath was made for man as a relief from the heavy curse of unremitting labour, and though the world will never gain much spiritually by a merely legal observance of the Sabbath, even this is of priceless value to the working man in a moral, social, and physical point of view. It is thus not merely an arbitrary enactment, but a statement of an effect depending on an adequate cause, that the man or the nation honouring God’s day of rest will itself be honoured and prospered.

The primitive Sabbath of Genesis and of the Moral Law has thus a definite connection with human labour and with the physical well-being of man. “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread,” is the doom of fallen humanity—a doom too fearfully felt in the whole history of the world, and strange to say, apparently not less so in our times

As we honour the Saviour we shall regard His day.

The Sabbath a relief from unremitting labour.

The connection of the primitive Sabbath with labour

<sup>1</sup> Psalm lv. 6, R.V.



The Sabbath the only means of alleviating the life of labour.

The law extended even to domestic animals.

The physiological necessity for a periodical interruption of toil for man or beast affirmed.

A nation without a Sabbath must prematurely decay.

of mechanical invention and mastery over nature, than in ruder ages. How terribly would this doom have been aggravated had man been expelled from Eden to a life of unremitting toil. But the Sabbath stood between him and this fate, and so far as human experience has shown, was the only possible means of alleviating his life of labour. Hence Moses impresses on his nation of emancipated slaves the constant remembrance of this day, and enjoins on them the extension of its benefits to their own slaves and to strangers within their gates, even though not believers in Jehovah. Hence also the provisions of the law are extended even to domestic animals, which, though destitute of spiritual natures, have bodily organisms, which under ceaseless labour will be worn out prematurely and subjected to a living death while they survive. These lower animals have no share in the moral law directly, but it is immoral to deprive them of the little happiness of which they are capable, and to subject them to conditions inconsistent with their physical well-being. The physiological necessity for a periodical interruption of toil, whether for man or beast, is thus affirmed in the law, and it is verified by all that we have learned of the constitution of living things. It is confirmed by the experience of all thoughtful men and of all nations. A nation without a Sabbath must fall to a low ebb of civilisation and efficiency,



or its people must become prematurely old and worn out. It scarcely needs any special intervention of Divine justice to inflict on those who disregard the Sabbath the penalties denounced by the Hebrew prophets. Those who would take away the day of rest from the working man on any pretext, are not his true friends; and it is one of the hopeful signs of the times, that in recent discussions of this question the working men and those who might most truly be considered their representatives have shown themselves opposed to innovations, which however plausible and harmless in appearance, might be the thin edge of the wedge which would break down this great privilege. It seems to be a result of physiological and social laws, as well as of moral laws, that the man who works six days and rests on the seventh, will do more and better work than the man who works without interruption, because the Sabbath is a mental and physical restorative to wearied nature. Thus nations which are so unwise as to sacrifice the day of rest find that instead of promoting their wealth and happiness they have involved themselves in hopeless slavery.

The right understanding of the Sabbath also throws light on the true relation of the moral law to the Christian system. That specially Jewish law which related to the Temple service and the Aaronic priesthood, was, we are informed in the

The intervention of Divine justice hardly needed to inflict the penalty for disregard of the Sabbath.

The man who works six days and rests on the seventh will do more and better work than the man who works unceasingly.

The relation of the moral law to the Christian system.



The  
Decalogue  
the rule of  
life.

New Testament, of temporary obligation only, and was annulled in Christ. But the Decalogue still remains as the rule of life. It is, however, exalted in the teaching of Christ by His directing special attention to the summing up of the whole in the two great commandments, and also by His adding to the second that new sanction, which He calls a new commandment, "Love one another, as I have loved you." So in like manner the old Sabbath becomes the Lord's Day, with the higher sanction of being the memorial of the finished work of redemption, as well as of creation. So spiritualized by the teaching of Christ, and the example of the primitive Church, the Decalogue does not pass away until the time shall come when it will be no more needed, because men shall themselves be like the Lord, when they shall see Him as He is, and because they too, like Him, will have entered into an eternal Sabbatism.

The  
Decalogue  
does not  
pass away  
till men  
will have  
entered  
into an  
eternal  
Sabbatism.

The Lord's  
Day points  
forward to  
the second  
coming of  
Christ.

Thus the Lord's Day also in its true significance points forward to the second coming of Christ, and to the New Jerusalem. Christ our Forerunner has entered into His Sabbatism, and that rest remains for us—to be fully enjoyed in that blessed time of the restitution of all things which He is to inaugurate, and when Eden will bloom again, or rather will be replaced by the city of God, which comes down from heaven. Then God's Sabbatism will be fully restored to man never again to be



broken, and the weekly day of rest will be swallowed up in that eternal Sabbatism, of which it is but a feeble and transitory type. Then the day of the Lord will be revealed in its full force and meaning.

The day of rest will then be swallowed up in the eternal Sabbatism.

After what has been said above, it is scarcely necessary to ask the question, What is the relative religious sacredness or obligation of the Lord's Day and the ancient Sabbath? We should, however, regard the former in the full light of the new dispensation. In this, love to God as the reconciled Father in Jesus Christ, takes the place of legal obligation, and the love of our brother is raised to a higher plane by the new commandment of Christ—"Love one another, as I have loved you." We are therefore not surprised to find that in the New Testament the Lord's Day does not appear as a stringent law to be enforced by pains and penalties, but as a loving tribute to our best friend, as a commemoration of the completion of that work of self-sacrifice which has secured for us the highest blessings in this world and that which is to come, as a means of attaining even here to that blessed rest which He has prepared for us, and as a presage of a still happier rest in the future. Such a day cannot be enforced on the unwilling or inappreciative. God may invite them to His feast; but they will make excuse, and man cannot force them to partake of it. But is it on this account less sacred than the

The relative obligation of the Lord's Day and the ancient Sabbath.

Why the New Testament does not enforce the Lord's Day by pains and penalties.



The Lord's Day not less sacred than the old Sabbath.

What Christians should aim at.

We are called to enter into rest.

old Sabbath? Is it not rather incomparably more holy? And should it not be one of the highest aims of Christians to guard it for its highest uses, and, while entering themselves into that happy Sabbatism of which it is the emblem, to induce all others to accept Christ's gracious invitation to enter into this rest, and to respect the day which is at once its sign and its means of attainment. It is to be feared that inattention to the sacredness of the Lord's Day, and inability to enter into the inward peace and rest which it represents, are besetting evils of our time, and hindrances to our attaining to the highest type of Christianity. We are called on by our Redeemer to enter into rest; but like Israel of old we may fall short of it, and be doomed, because of want of faith, to wander long in the desert of disappointed hopes.

"Let us therefore give diligence to enter into that rest, that no man fall after the same example of unbelief."





NOTE.—The writer had not observed, till the foregoing pages were in type, the recent controversy as to the origin of the week, arising from an article by the Bishop of Carlisle in the *Contemporary Review*. No scientific importance can be attached to the hypothesis that the week has a merely astronomical origin. The naming of the days after planets or planetary gods was probably an afterthought, not likely to have suggested itself to primitive man, especially as some of the planets are too inconspicuous to have early attracted attention. The week does not actually correspond with quarters of a lunation; and these are not definite marks of time, like complete revolutions. The week must thus depend, as stated in Genesis, on some different basis from the other divisions of time. These, in so far as days, months, and years are concerned, arise from definite astronomical revolutions, and are, no doubt, of priceless value to man, as the basis of "times and seasons," without which civilisation would have been impossible. But the week and the Sabbath rest on the revealed stages of the creative work, and hence occupy a special place in relation to God's providential procedure, and mark a different connection between man and his Creator from that indicated by the suitability of merely astronomical arrangement. For this reason the week becomes the basis of other sevenfold divisions of time having a religious significance, as, for example, the Sabbatical year. In the words of Mr. H. Grattan Guinness, "the entire meaning of the Sabbath depends on its connection with the rest of the Creator in a perfected creation, before the entrance of moral evil."



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