

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php

been taken by missionary societies in Germany, Switzerland, and, we believe, in other countries. The adhesion of the London Church Missionary society has already been noticed. But until the other great societies of England and America follow this example, the work is not half done. And we cannot doubt that, in a question so important to the present and future generations of a multitude of people, nations, and tongues, all petty jealousies, all personal and national predilections, will be laid aside; and we venture to hope that this alphabet, the fruit of such lengthened labors and such extensive researches, may be enabled to effect all the benefit desired and intended by its philanthropic author.

ARTICLE II.

THE SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY AND OBLIGATION OF THE SABBATH EXAMINED.

By Rev. W. M. O'Hanlon, Burnley, Lancashire. [Continued from page 551.]

The Primeval Sabbath.

OUR last paper was devoted to an examination of the views of Paley and Hengstenberg on the question of a Primeval Sabbath. This led to a consideration of the subject of septenary institutions, and of some of the modes in which writers have attempted to account for these institutions, while they have denied that original appointment of a periodic time (six days' labor, followed by one day of rest), which seems to us the only satisfactory explanation of the prevalent, if not absolutely universal, extension and establishment of this hebdomadal arrangement.

The topic of the Primeval Sabbath, however, is by no means exhausted, as all must be aware who have made themselves at all acquainted with the literature of the question.

One method by which the force of any argument derived from the first pages of Genesis on behalf of a primitive Sabbath is sought to be weakened, if not annihilated, is, that the account given by the Writer is to be considered simply in the light of a *poetical cosmogony, and not at all as a real and veritable history of the work and process of creation.* This is the position maintained by Professor Powell of Oxford, as seen in his elaborate Article upon "Creation" in Kitto's Cyc. of Biblical Literature. He alleges that the principle of accommodation or adaptation to the "apprehensions, the prejudices, and the previous belief of the Jewish people," pervades the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and is to be found largely in this opening portion of the Bible. "In the present instance," he observes, "the adaptation to the people of Israel was manifestly of the greatest importance, in order to secure their attention to points of vital moment in connection with the worship of the one true God, and their renunciation of idolatrous superstition. With this end, the first great truth with which they were to be impressed was the unity, omnipotence, and beneficence of the Creator." And then he represents these doctrines as taught by means of "a narrative proceeding step by step, in a minute detail, to assert in each individual instance the power and goodness which they were thus led to recognize in every familiar detail of the natural world, and which could thus alone be effectually impressed upon their minds." After stating what he conceived to have been a second great object of the author of the Book of Genesis (the subversion of the worship of animals) in this, as he deems it, poetic and popular style of narration, he proceeds thus: "These remarks refer yet more directly to what doubtless was the third and chief object in this representation of the creation,—the institution of the Sabbath. This remarkable observance, the peculiar badge of the chosen people to distinguish them from all other nations, was appointed them before the delivery of the rest of the law; and as the work of creation with reference to the different classes of beings was associated in their minds with each of the six days, so the

seventh was identified, in the order of the narrative, with the entire completion of the work, the Divine rest and cessation from it, and the solemn sanctification of it pronounced to consist in a precise abstinence from any kind of labor by themselves, their household, and even cattle. They were thus led to adhere to this duty by reflections connected with the highest truths impressed under the most awful sanctions; and the wisdom of the injunction, not less than the means thus taken to promote and secure its fulfilment, cannot but the more fully appear, the more we examine the character and genius of this singular people for whom it was ordained, and to whose peculiar condition it was in every way so remarkably adapted. The narrative, then, of six periods of creation, followed by a seventh similar period of rest and blessing was clearly designed, by adaptation to their conceptions, to enforce upon the Israelites the institution of the Sabbath; and in whatever way its details may be interpreted, it clearly cannot be regarded as an *historical* statement of a *primeval* institution of a Sabbath,—a supposition which is indeed, on other grounds, sufficiently improbable, though often adopted.” And subsequently this writer says: “As to the particular form in which the descriptive narrative is conveyed, we merely affirm that *it cannot be history,—it may be poetry.*” The italics in these quotations are in the Article, and must be presumed to be the author’s own.

Now, it is in this manner learned critics venture to deal with the Sacred Scriptures, a mode in which the most hardy of them would be slow to treat any other ancient document. The reconciliation of the narrative in the commencement of Genesis with the conclusions and facts of modern science, has engaged many pens in recent times; and it may be freely conceded that none of the solutions proposed entirely obviates all the difficulties of the subject. But the labors of the Rev. Baden Powell are directed not to the *solution* of the difficulties in question, but to something far easier—*their evasion*. He finds it more expeditious and facile to cut the Gordian knot than to unloose it. Certainly, if we are to regard the opening chapter of the Divine Revelation as a

mere poetic and fabulous representation, and not as a real narrative of events which actually occurred, there can be no difficulty in the work of reconciling Scripture and science; for, in fact, there is nothing to reconcile, according to this supposition. But a far greater and more insuperable difficulty is thus created within the sphere of Scripture itself. For, assuredly, if we may apply such a principle to the interpretation of this portion of the word of God, bearing as it does all the semblance of a veritable history, and entering into details in the way which might be expected in such a history, then there is no part of the Sacred Volume, whether of the Old or New Testament, that can be shielded from a similar application and a like process. The Bible in whole, or in great part at least, will or may be thus reduced to a series or concatenation of poetic legends, to be interpreted and understood according to any fashion which the prevailing philosophic system or *organon* of the age may seem to dictate or require.

It is no part of our present object to discuss the comparative merits of the several methods, by which it has been attempted to harmonize the language of Genesis with the incontestable facts of science. But to treat it either as a myth, or as a poetic and fanciful cosmogony, is to do violence to the most obvious principles of sound and legitimate interpretation. Whether the "days" refer to periods of indefinite duration, or to the limited space of time usually so denominated; whether the magnificent series of geological revolutions, whose records are written upon the pillars and foundations of the earth, took place before "the beginning" indicated in this book, or whether we are to find room for them between the event announced in the first verse understood as the creation of the material of the universe, and the events disclosed in the subsequent verses, understood as the ordering and arranging of the present condition of our planet, or of a portion of it; or whether, again, their place and period are to be fixed within the "days" understood as lengthened eras in the history of the system,—whatever view we adopt on these points, we are shut up, by all the laws of a

valid exegesis, to take the account as a narrative of real phenomena, clothed, it is true, in a poetic form, expressed in terms of lofty eloquence, and dealing largely, no doubt, in anthropomorphism, but nevertheless real and true. And this is our position, whatever hypothesis we may form as to the conditions under which the narrative was composed (whether from preëxisting materials or not), and whatever opinion we may entertain as to its date. Let the Bible be explored by the lights of a sound and just hermeneutics, and Nature by the lights of a sound and just, an inductive philosophy, and we have no fear as to the results. Not a few of our modern sciences have seemed, at the outset of their course, to assume an antagonistic aspect to Revelation; but, in each and every instance, the issue of further investigation has only served to illustrate more fully the unity of all truth, and to demonstrate more clearly the divinity of the Bible. But in order to realize such an issue, Nature and Scripture (both revelations from God) must each be studied according to its own distinctive laws, neither being allowed to invade the province of the other, or to supersede its rightful claims. This, however, by no means forbids the inquiry, so important in our times, Can the scriptural narrative of creation be so interpreted, as that, while no sacrifice is made of the principle now stated, its several parts shall be seen to be in perfect unison with the conclusions which are necessitated by our inquiries in another field? It is perfectly possible, that the *current interpretation* of certain portions of the Bible may be false; but, as the word of God, it is utterly impossible that any portion *should be found incapable* of being reconciled with truth, in whatever department that truth presents itself.

Having said so much, however, we must not advance farther in this line of observation. We believe there must be a close and intelligible connection between the reason assigned in the fourth commandment for the observance of the seventh day, and the order and sequence of time mentioned in the beginning of Genesis. The "days" must mean the same thing in both places, if there is any validity or coherence in

the language of the decalogue. It has been suggested by a recent writer, that the "day" of Genesis might be used for an indefinite period, and yet the term in the fourth commandment be employed to denote a natural day; and that, still, the language of the decalogue enforcing the observance of a seventh portion of our time for sacred uses, *by a reference to a sevenfold division and order of the epochs of creation*, might be perfectly warrantable and just. But we confess our inability to take this view of the matter. It is the dedication of each revolving seventh day, and not merely of a seventh portion of existence that is enjoined in the Sinaitic law, and the measure and interval of time are alike enforced by a consideration of the time of the creative process and the time of the Creator's rest; and this in such a manner that we cannot but regard the Divine as the model and exemplar of the human. The reasoning of Mr. Powell, if such it may be called, presents another instance of the way in which even men of great ability impose upon their own understanding, when there is some favorite scheme of opinion to be supported. Who can, for a moment, seriously believe that the great fundamental truths of religion could be rendered more impressive, and clothed in more commanding forms, by having recourse to deceptive representations? — and deceptive they must be regarded, since they were presented in the guise of veritable history, and made the basis of actual and positive religious institutes. Does not this seem very much like doing evil that good may come? How these truths could be said to be, by this method, "impressed under the most awful sanctions," and the means thus taken to promote and secure the fulfilment of Sabbath observance be regarded as a proof of "wisdom," we are entirely unable to discover. In our estimation, the whole would only exemplify the sinister expedient to which human policy resorts in its weakness, rather than the wisdom and righteousness that must ever characterize the legislation of God, in his majesty and strength. Besides, if the "work of creation with reference to the different classes of beings was associated in the minds" of the Jews "with each of the six days," this could be only as the

result of oral or written tradition, credited as fact and history, before the time of Moses, or, at all events, before the composition of Genesis in its present form; and if this be admitted, there is no possible ground to doubt that "the seventh day was identified with the entire completion of the work, the Divine rest and cessation from it," also, before the era when this inspired narrative was penned. The weakness of the reasoning exhibited in this part of the Article, can be paralleled only by the reckless daring displayed in the closing assertion, "*It cannot be history—it may be poetry.*" If the first chapter of Genesis be poetry, then what of the second and following chapters? And where is the point of transition from fiction to fact, from the creations of fancy to the sober realities of truth? The writer of the book has certainly furnished no marks or *criteria*, by which this important and vital point can be determined; nor does it seem possible to us, except by the aid of an hypothesis which begs the whole question, to draw any line of distinction, where the style of narration, or of apparent narration, is throughout so uniform, so straight-forward, and so simple. In conclusion, we must say that assumptions should not be mistaken for arguments, nor preconceived theories for the sound conclusions of a patient and extended process of induction. We are greatly in need of a more faithful application of the great Baconian principle in the sphere of theological, not less than in that of ordinary and natural, science. This would terminate many a controversy which has agitated the church; and while it would tend to dry up the sources of logomachy, it would open wide the fountains and well springs of truth.

It constitutes no part of our present object to endeavor to define the mode in which the Sabbath was at first observed. But regarding this primeval appointment as the foundation-stone of the whole structure of Divine legislation upon the subject, it is important to keep in view the three inscriptions, or emblematical devices, it contains. It speaks of *rest*, of *blessing*, and of *sanctification*: God "rested from all his work." The figure, no doubt, is anthropomorphic;¹ but

¹ Vide Hengstenberg on "The Genuineness of the Pentateuch," for an interesting brief discussion of the principle of Anthropomorphism.

there is a real solid fact beneath, and one full of meaning and suggestiveness. We might have supposed that the Omnipotent, by a single fiat, would have at once summoned into being the entire creation in its full magnificence and perfection, instead of extending the creative process over a series of days. How did *He* need repose who "fainteth not neither is weary," who "worketh hitherto," probably in the actual formation of new worlds and systems, but certainly in what may be deemed equivalent, as it regards power and majesty, in the sustentation and government of those which exist. But the whole work was thus lengthened out and thus closed and crowned, perhaps for other reasons at present inscrutable to us, but obviously for this special one, that we might have a Divine model and law of successive labor and repose. And this repose, it is manifest, was one associated with blessings adapted to the lofty nature and destinies of the new made creature. It would indeed be a style unworthy of inspiration, as well as a sad mockery of the high faculties and yearnings of the great and holy soul, fresh from its Maker's hand, and bearing upon it the Divine stamp and impress, to speak thus of blessing and setting apart a period, the benefits and privileges of which terminated and centred on the mere animal nature and condition of man. Doubtless the day was encircled by a spiritual halo and brightness, such as could be caught only from the light of the celestial throne falling upon it in fuller, richer radiance, than upon any other of the seven. Doubtless it was a day in which heaven seemed to bend down more sweetly, and to embrace more lovingly, the new made world with its garden of delights, because on this day man, freed from even the slightest earthly cares, and ceasing from "his own works as God did from his," was wholly absorbed in the more elevated engagements and the more rapturous pleasures of immediate, uninterrupted communion with his Father, God.

As yet the creation had not been doomed to groan beneath the burden of human transgression, and to long for deliverance from the "vanity" to which it has since become "subject." As yet, it found a voice and interpreter in man, still

unfallen, and with a soul attuned to perfect harmony with its every tone and utterance. He, the high-priest of Nature, offered up her morning and evening incense, fresh and untainted, to the God of all.

"These are thy glorious works, Parent of good,
Almighty ! Thine this universal frame,
Thus wondrous fair : Thyself how wondrous then !
Unspeakable, who sitt'st above these heavens,
To us invisible, or dimly seen
In these thy lowest works ; yet these declare
Thy goodness beyond thought, and power divine."

But it was in the serene, unclouded heights and depths of his own being, in the brighter and more divine forms of existence within, in the glorious intuitions and visions of his own soul, that he found the chief incentives of his noblest and purest sacrifice of thanksgiving and adoration. And what had the external creation, with all its revelations, been to him, but for this richer apocalypse within ? A blank, an enigma. In his own breast, he found the key that unlocked all its varied treasures—the cipher which explained all the hieroglyphs that God had hung up on sun and star, and written all over earth and sky. It was thus he read and understood Nature, then not as now an opaque body (because the eye of man is covered with an earthly film), but a luminous and transparent thing, through which God shone forth in visible splendor, and guided, as in primal Epiphany, the worshipper of earth to his own shrine and dwelling place.

But it was on the day "chosen of God and precious," that Nature would seem to wear her brightest aspects, and fulfil her loftiest ministries ; that the thoughts and faculties of man would find their freest and fullest scope heavenward ; that Jehovah himself would grant the most impressive signals of his presence, and communicate the highest lessons of his wisdom ; and that the primeval pair, kneeling at the altar of Eden, would experience the deepest, divinest thrill, as by the electric touch of God, fulfilling his gracious promise to sanctify and bless this day.

Man fell "like Lucifer, son of the morning." The star sinks downward from its sphere. But it is not left to perish

in utter darkness. There is a mysterious hope thrown upon the pathway of humanity. There still rests upon it the lustre and beauty of the Sabbath. This became to man, in his altered circumstances, the memorial of the past, the solace of the present, and the bright harbinger of the future. On it, the curse of toil was removed and Paradise was already half regained. Distant gleams of a purer Eden would shoot through the gloom and fall upon his spirit. Its gates, on this day, seemed to open and invite his approach, and no cherubic sword waved its stern rebuke and prohibition there. Then, too, he beheld another fairer and richer "tree of life, in the midst of the paradise of God;" and, standing at the entrance, the repenting and returning soul called the Sabbath a delight; and, believing, it would there enter into rest.

It will be seen that we attach considerable importance to the fact that the Sabbath was established from the beginning; not that this point may be deemed absolutely and in all respects necessary, for the "keeping of a Sabbath" might devolve upon subsequent ages, and yet the first ages of the church and of the world have known nothing of its existence. Perhaps, in this respect, some needless advantage has been often given to opponents. But our charge, in the preceding inquiries, proceeded upon the principle that it is our duty to ascertain, if possible, the real position which the whole subject occupies in the Inspired Volume, and to obtain all the light which can be thrown upon it from the earliest times. "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning." "All Scripture given by inspiration of God, is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." And, after all, though the general admission might be made that this, as any other institution of revealed religion, so far at least as its positive element is concerned, might be ordained in a later era, it is not easy to imagine a period when, taking it all in all, it could have been dispensed with, consistently with man's necessities and God's claims.

The Jewish Sabbath.

Our attention is next called to the place which the Sabbath law occupies under the Jewish dispensation. Hitherto, so far as we know, it might have been dependent upon oral tradition for its safe transmission. But its exposure to mutilation and wrong in this channel, for the first twenty-five centuries of its existence, would be far less than is generally imagined. It is remarkable how few links were necessary to connect the progenitor of our race with Aaron and Moses, the leaders of the Jewish people. Adopting Calmet's Chronology, Adam could converse with Methuselah, who was two hundred and forty-three years of age at the death of Adam; Methuselah could converse with Shem, who was ninety-eight years old at the death of Methuselah; Shem could converse with Abraham, who was a hundred and fifty years of age at the death of Shem; Abraham could converse with Isaac, who was sixty-nine years of age at the death of his father; Isaac could converse with his grandson Joseph, who was carried into Egypt eight years before the death of that Patriarch, and who was at least seventeen years old before his brethren sold him to the "Midianites merchantmen;" and Joseph could converse with Amram, the father of Aaron and Moses, these being born, the former sixty-one, the latter sixty-four years after the death of Joseph. So that six persons would suffice to bear down the great primeval institution, from the hands to which it was first committed, until it was lodged with those who were honored to give it a more stable position amidst the ordinances and records of the Judaic economy.

But the time had now arrived for the separation of the "peculiar people." The patriarchal was to give place to a more elaborate and complicate religious regimen. Besides, the span of human life had become greatly contracted, and the links of human descent were proportionally multiplied. It was, therefore, fitting that the Divine statutes should be taken out of the sphere of human tradition, placed amidst the monuments of history, and committed to the archives

of a nation that might act as conservators of the precious and holy treasure. Thus would these statutes partake of the benefits of written language, and in the end constitute a part, the most essential part, of the world's ancient literature and laws.

This being the case, we find that ordinance which in the beginning took the precedence of every other in the Divine announcements (even of that prohibitory command, upon obedience to which the destinies of the whole race depended), was now written by the finger of God himself, twice written upon tables of stone, emblazoned in characters of light and fire, and proclaimed by the voice of Jehovah out of the midst of that visible glory which descended and dwelt upon the mount; as if, by such external splendor, the Divine majesty would supply some feeble symbol of the higher lustre of his law. "And all the people saw the thunderings and the lightnings and the noise of the trumpet and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they removed and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die. . . . And the people stood afar off and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was." Such was the solemn and august enthronement of the Divine moral code. And, embosomed in the midst of it, stands this great sabbatic law, taken up out of the past, like all the other "words" of the decalogue, and invested with the awful sanctions common to them all (Ex. 20: 8—11).

We say, taken up out of the past; for there is a continuity in the dispensations of God, which must not be overlooked by the student of either his works or his word. These commandments, thus uttered amid such overwhelming proofs of a present Deity, were not novel in their principles, though doubtless they were in their circumstances and form. No one who had rightly understood the genius of the patriarchal religion, or felt its spirit, would be conscious of entering a region essentially new, or of coming under a different jurisdiction, when he heard the "fiery law" issuing from the summit of Sinai. We speak of its ethics, its everlasting and

immutable moralities. And it is utterly impossible to separate from these the essence at least of the precept in question, which appears, from its position and bearing, to combine, concentrate, and bring into practical form, the grand verities involved in the preceding portion of the first table of the law. It would, indeed, be a strange anomaly, if, associated with these, which in their essential elements are as old as the creation, and related to every age and nation alike, we should find a statute, belonging to a quite different category, of recent origin, and of temporary, limited authority; and which, while other regulations of the economy and ritual were inscribed upon the fragile papyrus or parchment, was thus engraven, and that not "by man's device," upon the solid and enduring stone (thus symbolically intimating its more lasting character), and in this form laid up and deposited in the ark of the covenant. We are not prepared for anything so wanting in harmony and order, so calculated to shock all the conclusions of the reason in the methods of the Divine procedure. To this and kindred considerations we may have occasion to advert more fully at a subsequent stage of our argument. But, meanwhile, in accordance with the evidence already adduced, we hold that the Sabbath ordinance was embodied in the Jewish code, in part, at least, that it might have its rightful position among the very first and chief institutions of all religion; and that, invested with all the sanctions which could attach to a precept of its rank, antiquity, and importance, it should be handed down to future ages, in all its integrity, and with the peculiar advantages which belong to a written formula.

It is not denied that the due observance of the Sabbath was obligatory upon the Israelites; or that, as a people, their religious prosperity or decline greatly depended upon it. But it is denied that the promulgation of the sabbatic law upon Sinai could have any relation to us, who are under a new and different economy. To this point it will be our duty to direct attention, when we come to examine the question of the permanent obligation of the ordinance, and its binding character in the present day.

It may tend, however, to clear our path and to facilitate our object, if we now advert to the important distinction which subsisted between the Sabbath law as a constituent part of the *ethical code* of the Jews, and the same law as introduced into their *civil code*. It should never be forgotten, in the discussion of this question, that the peculiar government established among this people, gave a special air to the whole of their national polity, forming, as it did, the basis of many regulations which could have had no existence apart from the theocracy. Thus it was that temporal rewards were annexed to obedience, and temporal punishments to disobedience, in cases where, otherwise, only the natural moral results would have followed the practice of virtue or of vice.

Accordingly, disobedience to the fourth commandment, under the Mosaic economy, was not only *an act of gross impiety* against God as the *supreme moral Governor*, but likewise *an act of daring rebellion* against him as their *theocratic King*. It is on this principle we are to explain the form in which it is presented, and the penalties by which it is enforced in Ex. 31: 13—15 and 35: 2, 3. And such being the righteous penalties enacted and promulged by the sovereign lawgiver, the infliction of them as revealed in Num. 15: 32—35, must not, as it need not, excite our wonder. Thus, to despise the word of the Lord and to break his commandments was a crime, a public, open violation of the social and civil law, and one which was no more to pass with impunity under the theocratic rule established among the ancient Israelites, than the daring transgression of the law of the land is to be exempt from retribution, in any well ordered state or commonwealth of the present day. Moreover, such an act was invested with an aspect of peculiar aggravation, because committed against a Sovereign who had claims to their love and fealty, such as God alone could prefer. "Remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence, through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm; therefore, the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath." Superadded, then,

to other considerations and inducements, there was this, which they were bound to enshrine in their "heart of hearts," that by stupendous displays of power, by "his wonders in the land of Ham," they had been rescued from the deepest degradation, from the intellectual, moral, spiritual degradation of slavery; and, from being no people, had become the people of the most high God. Nor was this all; for to them pertained "the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises." From the most abject wretchedness they had been lifted to the loftiest pinnacle ever occupied by any people. If then it be alleged, by any one, that the punishment of sabbath-breaking was greater than the offence, though our reply might simply be, "Who art thou that repliest against God?" yet we add, Canst thou measure the extent and enormity of *his* guilt who, in defiance of the plain, positive enactments of his God and King, and despite the majesty and mercy so frequently and so signally displayed in the history of this chosen people, and as it were in the very face of the Almighty seated upon his throne in the midst of them, could thus wilfully and presumptuously transgress a law, binding alike as a religious and a civil statute, and one, be it observed, on which Jehovah had fixed as a special sign of the solemn and tender relations into which he had entered with that nation? Until we have found the scales in which such a crime can be adequately weighed, we may well bow to the Divine award, mysterious though it may appear, assured that though "clouds and darkness are round about God, righteousness and right are the bases of his throne."

Nor must it here be overlooked that, while this law was, in this peculiar manner, incorporated with the Jewish civil institutions, it was by no means, even under the Mosaic dispensation, restricted in its bearing to the Israelites. It was binding upon "the stranger within their gates," and thus the soul of "the stranger" was to be "refreshed." In regard to the rite of circumcision, it is clear that it was optional with the stranger whether he would submit to it or not, though

such submission was necessary ere he could partake of the Passover. But with regard to the Sabbath, there seems to have been no option allowed ; it was binding upon all to whom the words of consecration could come. It was binding, however, be it remembered, as much in the form of a privilege to be enjoyed, as of a duty to be discharged. It would be doing great injustice to its celestial spirit, to represent it as clothed with austerity and scowling portentously upon an enslaved people. When rightly understood, and viewed in its higher relations, nothing could be more benignant than the aspect which it wore both to the "home born" and "the stranger." To the former, God spake these words: "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable, and shall honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words ; then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father ; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." To the latter, the Most High referred in these terms : "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, every one 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."

Not a few of those features which have been connected with the Sabbath under the law, and which have been regarded as forbidding and ungenial, were in reality the result of human interference, abuses imposed upon it by that formalism which had been substituted for true piety and obedience. They were the incrustations with which ritualism evermore seeks to obscure and pollute the fair and heavenly form of religion, just in proportion as the genuine spirit of devotedness to God declines and decays. From the begin-

ning, the Sabbath being "made for man," was designed and calculated to ensure his happiness, to promote his interests for both worlds, to "scatter many blessings by the way, on its march to immortality," to throw its lustre upon his earthy dwelling place, while in the act of preparing him for that loftier world where its festive light and joy never terminate, and never suffer even the shadow of a cloud. Our Divine Saviour, in the days of his ministry, resolutely set himself to remove these false and pernicious views which had grown up and defaced the beauty of this sacred ordinance. But while, with just severity, he rebuked those who "bound heavy burdens and grievous to be borne," he honored the Sabbath, by investing it with the sanctions, and yielding to it the obedience of "God manifest in the flesh." In him the glory of the Jewish Sabbath might be said to reach its zenith, and not the less, but the more so, because of those works of benevolence, those miracles of mercy, which he wrought on this day, and by which he illustrated in the most signal manner the true genius of religion and of religious ordinances, under whatever dispensation.

It has been asserted by some who have written on this subject, that Christ violated the Jewish Sabbath, and that he did this designedly and on system, in order to prepare the way for its entire abrogation. But such a position is at utter variance with his own express declaration in reference to the design and tendency of his mission "not to destroy, but to fulfil, the law and the prophets;" and it is equally opposed to the whole character he sustained on earth, as one who came to exhibit a model and exemplar of all righteousness. True, he did, on one occasion, when charged with a breach of the Sabbath law, announce a lofty principle, which only as God he could have propounded: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." But while this clearly indicated his right to act above the laws which he had promulgated for the government of his creatures, if he pleased, it does not follow that either on this, or on any other occasion in his career, he did actually sanction, by either precept or example, the least violation of the ordinance which, as the

God of Israel, he had established among the chosen people. There was nothing in the strictness enjoined upon the Jews, in relation to the Sabbath, which, when rightly apprehended, could be deemed at variance with *those works of necessity and mercy* which the Saviour of the world allowed or wrought. This is taking low ground, but ground sufficiently high for our purpose. The hypocritical Pharisees, living in the utter violation of the *spirit*, were accustomed, in the same proportion, to strain and exaggerate the *letter* of the Sabbatic law. Christ taught as much by action as by word. His deeds were lofty symbols, speaking to all future ages, and speaking in forms too impressive to be forgotten by the humble and docile spirit. Their effect on his contemporaries was manifest, in the very malignity and censure which they elicited from the carnal and the superstitious, from the formalist and the hypocrite. Instances of the manner in which he thus rebuked the Jews, will readily occur to every reader of the New Testament. In Matt. xii. we read: "And behold there was a man which had his hand withered. And they asked him saying, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath days? that they might accuse him. And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the Sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it and lift it out? How much, then, is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore, it is lawful to do well on the Sabbath days. Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other. Then the Pharisees went out and held a council against him how they might destroy him." Here was a work of mercy performed on the Jewish Sabbath by one who was "made under the law," and whose whole life is the grand model-life of sanctified humanity. It follows, then, that there was nothing in this act contrary to the divine injunction. And the case is more worthy of notice, because it is only a specimen of similar acts wrought by him on the Sabbath (chosen apparently as the most appropriate day for such works of beneficence), and because like many, if not most of these, it was not of such a

nature as to demand immediate attention and performance on the part of Christ. Without any apparent obscuration of his merciful and compassionate nature, he might have postponed, for a few hours, the putting forth of his miraculous healing power; and thus at least avoided the giving of occasion to the Pharisees to indulge and display their fiendish opposition. His adoption, then, of a different course, and that with so much system, could only have been the result of a profound principle, worthy of his character and his mission. It was impossible to teach, more significantly, the great and suggestive truth which had been so much overlooked, that "the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath;" and that works of benevolence, tending to lessen the load of human misery and to light up the soul with gratitude and holy joy, are among the most divine and acceptable offerings which can, on that day, be presented upon the altar of God. Not against such, then, were directed the prohibitions of either the moral or civil code established among the Jewish people. This fact is placed beyond all reasonable doubt by the conduct of Christ. Again, in the commencement of the same chapter of Matthew, we have another illustrative fact, serving to aid us in the conception we should form of the requirements and spirit of the Jewish Sabbath law. See also Luke 6: 1—5. The charge against the disciples was, that by plucking the ears of corn on the Sabbath, and rubbing them in their hands, they had violated the sanctity of that day. Christ's reply to the Pharisees was: "Have ye not read what David did when he was an hungered, and they that were with him; how he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them that were with him, but only for the priests? Or have ye not read, in the law, how that on the Sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are blameless? But I say unto you that in this place is one greater than the temple. But if ye had known what this meaneth: I will have mercy and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of man is Lord even of

the Sabbath day." Now that the disciples, under the circumstances, were "guiltless," is plainly intimated by the Saviour. And yet there was some shadow of foundation for the allegation of the Pharisees. Upon any other day, it would have been allowable, even in their view, to act as the disciples did; for provision for such a case was made, with the utmost explicitness, in the Pentateuch (Deut. 23: 25). But on this day they were not at liberty, according to the strict letter of the Sabbath law, *under ordinary circumstances*, to engage in any work, not even for the supply of their corporal wants, for which due care was to be taken beforehand. Ex. 20: 10. 35: 2, 3. Num. 15: 32—36 will throw light upon this position. And from the position furnished by these passages, the charge, in all likelihood, was preferred; though it is probable the Pharisees had also in view some tradition of their own, by which the law was overlaid and corrupted. Our Saviour's plea, not merely of extenuation, but of complete acquittal, was that of *necessity*. The conduct described in Num. 15: 32—36, and which met with the penalty of death, was of a widely different character. The connection in which it stands clearly shows that it was a *presumptuous and daring transgression*; and, as such, to have permitted it to pass with impunity, would have been to undermine the entire authority of the theocratic rule. But the conduct of the disciples was dictated by *dire necessity*. "They were an hungered," and their attendance upon their Lord and Master had precluded the possibility of their making previous provision for their bodily wants. If then David was justified when, fleeing before Saul, he ate the shew-bread of the tabernacle; and if the priests were justified in preparing the sacrifices and kindling fires for their consumption on the Sabbath, in the temple service, how much more the disciples, while in attendance upon One "greater than the temple," in plucking and preparing the ears of corn to supply their immediate and craving necessities. A narrow, illiberal, pharisaic interpretation of the Jewish law might seem to condemn them; but an enlightened, a just and scriptural interpretation fully warranted their deed. "Mercy," rather than mere "sacrifice,"

is the genius of every economy of religion. Even in Judaism, with all its fiery denunciations, and though it was "the ministration of death," this principle prevailed. And these examples, presented in connection with the highest authority,—that of the Lawgiver himself,—serve to show the benevolent design and spirit of the Sabbath ordinance, even under that dispensation which, confessedly more than any other, abridged the liberties and restrained the inclinations of the human spirit.

Thus far, however, we have looked chiefly at the negative side of this ordinance in the Jewish era. But we cannot imagine that mere cessation from labor was all that was required. Viewing man in the inferior aspects of his being, it cannot be denied, indeed, that respite from toil, which oppresses and exhausts both bodily and mental energy, is a great blessing; and looking still higher, to the moral and spiritual elements of our nature, such respite might be regarded in itself, apart from other considerations, a boon of no small value. Still, however, contemplating man in his fallen condition, the intermission of labor might, on the whole, be susceptible of abuses so great as to far more than counterbalance all the advantages derivable from it. The human being must have some objects of interest. A *vacuum* of mind, even if desirable, is impossible; and where it is not possessed by that which is good, it will be by that which is evil. Hence the refreshing repose of the Sabbath, both primeval and Jewish, was so ordered, doubtless, as to subserve the very highest interests of humanity, *by a provision for the spiritual and moral culture of the soul.*

It is true, we have no direct statement to this effect before the establishment of the Mosaic economy. But we are not left without such intimations as lead us naturally to infer the existence of such a provision. Even independently altogether of any inspired communication on this subject, we must be convinced that without something of this order, recurring too at fixed intervals, the life of religion could ill be sustained in the human spirit. And brief as are the notices of the pre-Mosaic period, there is enough to warrant the be-

lief that some specific arrangement did exist to meet this necessity and to crown the Sabbath rest. Grotius¹ has remarked that "the precept concerning the Sabbath is twofold: a precept of remembrance and a precept of observation. The precept of remembrance is fulfilled in a religious memory of the creation of the world; the precept of observation consists in an exact abstinence from all manner of labor. The first precept was given from the beginning; and without doubt the pious men before the law obeyed it, as Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob; with respect to the latter of whom, though we have a relation of many of their travels, yet there is no sign of their stopping their journey on account of the Sabbath." We have already referred to the invalidity of such negative evidence. If we are to take Gen. 2: 3 as the foundation stone of the ordinance, the rest as well as the sanctification of the Sabbath would seem to be comprehended; and it is clear that Grotius admitted this passage in the modified and imperfect theory he entertained of the primeval ordinance. But in the face of this, little or no importance can be fairly attached to the absence of such information as he refers to; nor do we see how a religious remembrance of the creation, such as might be described in the language of Genesis, could be maintained in the neglect of that rest with which the memory of the day is so intimately associated in the divinely recorded appointment. The social element of worship was early called into exercise; otherwise we should not find Cain and Abel meeting at the same altar; and this was "in process of time," or "at the end of the days." And so also we read, Gen. 4: 26, that in the time of Seth "men began to call upon the name of Jehovah," — an expression which, as Hengstenberg has well remarked, has reference to the social developments of religion, "the solemn calling upon God in a consecrated place, in church fellowship, so that it implies the existence of a church." And if it imply the existence of a church, and of holy fellowship among the worshippers of the true God, revealed too in those

¹ Vide "The Truth of the Christian Religion," by Grotius, Book V. Sect. 10.

more intimate relations involved in the sacred name "Jehovah," it is surely no unwarrantable inference, that the time fixed for these holy convocations would be the day set apart from the first to sacred purposes, and thus rescued from the curse of toil.

But whatever may be alleged as to the times before Moses, no reasonable doubt can exist as to the order and practice demanded by the institutes which he was commissioned to establish.

It will hardly be questioned that Nehemiah and his co-religionists understood the genius of the Mosaic ordinances, when, in the solemn covenant they made and signed and sealed, they resolved to abstain from all commerce and trade upon the Sabbath (Neh. 10: 31). And the prophets were not slow to condemn that spirit of cupidity and love of gain which could scarcely brook the interruption to traffic caused by the recurrence of the sacred day. "When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the Sabbath, that we may set forth wheat?" (Amos 8: 5.)

So far, even those who are opposed to the idea of any special sanctification of the day "under the law," would probably go; but there were profounder principles involved, and more sacred and diviner requirements enjoined, to which they are not willing to assent. An elaborate attempt was made by Spencer, in the seventeenth century, to prove that only a cessation from labor was demanded by the Jewish statute. And this dogma, advocated by him in his work on the Hebrew ritual, received the sanction of writers from whom better things might have been expected. Vitringa, for example, observes: "The lawgiver commences with the summary of the commandment, 'Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy,' and then explains, in the latter part, what keeping holy implies. This continuation contains directions to cease from work, and to extend this rest to others. And wherever this command of God is repeated, we find only the injunction to abstain entirely from work, which proves in our opinion that the keeping holy of the seventh day consisted merely, as the words of the commandment

read, in entire abstinence from work." But this view is irreconcilable with the general teaching of the Old Testament Scriptures, which must surely be regarded as supplying the the best commentary upon the meaning of the statute. We cannot do better, than here refer the reader to the remarks of Hengstenberg, in which he argues for a more exalted conception of the Jewish law, showing that the peculiar, the double sacrifice, offered on the Sabbath (Num. 28: 10), the strong and special exhortations as to the study of the law of the Lord (Deut. 6: 6, 7. Lev. 10: 11), the ancient practice of the synagogue worship (2 Kings 4: 23), and the injunction requiring "a holy convocation" on this day (Lev. 23: 3) — all, more or less directly, serve to demonstrate the loftier character and claims conceded to the Sabbath under the Mosaic economy. Vitringa, indeed, endeavors to set aside the idea of assemblies for worship taking place on that day, by proposing to render the words in Leviticus, "a proclamation of holiness." But, as Hengstenberg has shown, Isa. 4: 5 disproves this, where the same Hebrew word is employed; and he might have added Isa. 1: 13 and Num. 28: 18—25, as also demonstrative of the falsity of this rendering. Such holy convocations or assemblies were doubtless signaled by the presentation of sacrifice, where this was lawful. But as this was lawful only in one place, when the people had settled in the promised land, these conventions must have been designed elsewhere, throughout the tribes, only for such moral and religious purposes as could be realized apart from sacrificial services; while, in all instances and all situations, the elements of instruction and spiritual worship must, more or less, have found a place in these assemblies. This, then, was not only a special period for the cultivation of domestic piety, for it was "the Sabbath of the Lord in all their dwellings;" but, throughout all their borders, the seventh day was to be one of "holy convocation" likewise; so that provision was thus made for the development of religion, in all its social aspects, in immediate connection with that day which had been, from the first, "blessed" and "sanctified" of God. We read, in Ex. 16: 29, that the Israelites were commanded

not to move out of their places on the Sabbath day ; but it is evident this prohibition had reference only to their going forth to gather manna in the wilderness ; for the law of "convocation" required them to leave their habitations for the public service of God on the seventh day. And the prescription of that service, as we have seen, amply refutes the position of those who would limit the meaning of the fourth commandment to a mere cessation from accustomed labor.

Such a limitation, we may further remark, finds no sanction or authority in the writings of the prophets, the divinely inspired interpreters of the laws of God among the Jewish people. The language of Isa. 58: 13, 14, already adduced, would, if understood in this negative and inferior sense, be stripped of the greater part of its force and beauty ; and so also would the words of the same prophet, in chapter lvi. : " Thus saith the Lord, Keep ye judgment and do justice, for my salvation is near to come and my righteousness to be revealed. Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it ; that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil." Indeed, it is impossible to examine either the historical or prophetic portions of the Old Testament, without being convinced of the vast importance which the God of Israel attached to this right and religious observance of the day. In the twentieth chapter of Ezekiel we discover the signal influence which the neglect and pollution of the Sabbatic seasons, including of course the weekly Sabbath, had upon the destinies of the entire people. This had been one of the principal causes of the punishment and privation endured in the wilderness (even to their exclusion from the promised land), by the generation which had been rescued from Egyptian bondage. " 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, for their heart went after their idols." And now, this was among the chief national sins which had led the Most High to abandon the people for seventy years, during which they

wore the chain of captivity in Babylon, and "the iron entered into their soul;" while Ezekiel, "among the captives by the river of Chebar," was inspired of the Lord to recall to their memory the transgressions they had committed, and to urge the duties of penitence, humiliation, and prayer.

We have spoken of "the right and religious observance" of the Sabbath, under the Jewish dispensation, and the tenor of preceding remarks has been, that such observance involved not merely the negative element of rest, but the positive element also of spiritual culture and worship. The portion of Ezekiel just cited, serves to corroborate this view, since it is clear that while the Israelites did not, so far at least as their history shows, violate generally the law of rest, they nevertheless were guilty of polluting the Sabbath, and that to such an extent as to subject themselves to national excision; which could therefore only have been through the neglect of those higher principles, for the sake of which chiefly respite from labor was valuable and important.

In estimating the import and usage, the genius and bearing of the Jewish Sabbath, we are in danger of falling into one of two opposite extremes: either, underrating its spirituality of character and design, on the one hand, and so submerging it into the rank of a mere outward civil statute; or, on the other hand, transferring the associations of the present economy back to times when God had not revealed himself in such glorious and gracious forms as those which it is our privilege to witness, and thus investing the ordinance with a measure of lustre, such as could not have been realized by worshippers in Jewish synagogue or shrine. Examples illustrating both these extremes might readily be adduced from writers on this subject, who have evidently been guided by their spiritual or unspiritual tendencies, and have not been sufficiently alive to the necessity of exploring fully and impartially the nature and relations of the Sabbatic institute, as given, or rather reconstructed, by Moses, and enforced by the inspired teachers who followed him in long succession. The "keeping" of the day would doubtless take its tone and character from the sphere of religious ideas to which it

pertained. The creation of the world, the movements of divine Providence, the preservation of the church, the signal interpositions of God on their behalf as a people, the giving of the law from Sinai, the distinguishing privileges which they enjoyed; these, and such as these, were the highest manifestations of the Divine which had been, as yet, given. And the study of them would form an appropriate business of the day of public, national rest; while the influence which such study exerted, and the measure of the devotion inspired, would depend largely upon the degree of religious susceptibility possessed. The ninety-second Psalm, intended (as the title indicates) for the Sabbath, may be regarded as embodying the highest style of sentiment, and exhibiting the purest and loftiest type of devotion, belonging to the times before the Gospel. But "that which was made glorious, had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth." Far nobler themes, far more wonderful evolutions of the Divine character—those pertaining to redemption—are now to be celebrated by the church of God, under the New Testament dispensation. The shadows have disappeared. The types have vanished. The true light now shineth. A more golden age is running its appointed course. It might then, indeed, be given to a few choice spirits, specially illumined and spiritually elevated above their fellows, to penetrate the veil and to gaze upon the glories of the coming times, and thus to anticipate, in part, the more exalted visions of the future. But, at best, they could do little more than catch the distant radiance that gilded the mountain tops; whereas the meridian brightness of the Sun of Righteousness is now the cheap and common possession of all who enjoy the Gospel. We have risen to a more elevated position. The church at large has passed from the state of nonage to maturity, from twilight into day. And all her institutions, of whatever kind, must partake of the richer lustre and the higher perfection which pertain to this more advanced, this final stage in the history of the Divine dealings with the children of men. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

It will be the object of a future Article to examine the relation which the Lord's day bears to the primeval and Jewish Sabbaths, and the authority, if such there be, upon which a day of holy rest, under the Christian economy, can be securely and satisfactorily built and maintained.

ARTICLE III.

THE BIBLE IN SCHOOLS.¹

By Rev. J. H. Seelye, Pastor of the First Reformed Church, Schenectady, N. Y.

THERE is no tendency among us to revolutionize our present theory of government. The American public are content with this theory as it is ; and whether our civil institutions would satisfy us better if formed upon a radically different plan, is a question which no special interest is felt in discussing. There are, however, many cases arising where the precise application of this theory is a much disputed point. How should it regulate domestic servitude ? In what relation does it stand to a protective tariff ? Does it authorize or conflict with the doctrine that a certain portion of our public domain may be given away to furnish homes for the homeless ? What does it permit or prohibit respecting laws for preventing intemperance ? These, and other questions, relating solely to the application of our theory of government, have awakened a profound interest and an animated discussion. The subject of the Bible in schools belongs to this class, and is exciting much feeling at the present time. We propose to examine this in the present Article, hoping to

¹ Elements of Moral Science. By L. P. Hickok, D. D., Union College. 1854.

Right of the Bible in our Public Schools. By George B. Cheever, D. D. 1854.

Decision of Mr. Superintendent Randall in the Quigley Case. 1854.