

ARTICLE VII.

THE NEW TESTAMENT AND THE SABBATH.

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THE future of the Christian Sabbath depends on the answer that shall finally be given to the question, whether the church has a "Thus saith the Lord" for its observance.

If Sabbath-keeping is to be urged on the ground of expediency alone, the day is at the mercy of human judgment, and that is too often the plaything of human desires. Nevertheless, not a few Christian scholars have thought to encourage Sabbath observance, while admitting that the Fourth Commandment has lost its authority under the new dispensation, by appealing to Christian loyalty to the spiritual privileges of the gospel. The result is as might have been expected. Multitudes of Sabbath-breakers have eagerly caught at this release from the law, and what was intended to be Christian liberty has become worldly license. If there is divine authority for the Fourth Commandment, the first step in this reform is to show it, for one word of command from heaven will have more weight than all the reasoning of men.

The attitude of the Berdeans is, therefore, the attitude for us. Let us examine the Scriptures, whether these things are so. This argument will endeavor to answer in the negative two questions: I. Has the Decalogue been superseded by the law of liberty? II. If the Decalogue, as a code, is still in force, has the Fourth Commandment been excepted?

I. Has the Decalogue been superseded by the law of liberty? We have a right to ask, Where in the New Tes-

tament is this code distinctly annulled? When a system of laws has been given with the solemnity that attended the giving of the Mosaic code, we are compelled to assume it continuously in force, unless set aside by a distinct fiat of the God who gave it. Solemnly to proclaim a set of rules for human conduct, especially when they meet in every instance recognized needs of men, and then leave them to be outlawed by lapse of time, or put aside by human reason, is folly too great to be imputed to God. It is proper, therefore, to call for proof that the Decalogue has been repealed.

It will probably be conceded that the ceremonial law of circumcision, of sacrifices and temple services, was not in question. when, on the Mount, Jesus said, "Verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished." This law that was to endure could have been none other than the moral law, epitomized in "The Ten Words," as the Jews called them. This law included the "great and first commandment," love to God, and the second, which "was like unto it," love to man. Christ did not repeal the Decalogue. He ratified it by his frequent references to it, and by the spirit of it running through the gospel.

The words of Paul, "Ye are not under the law, but under grace," are often quoted. But such an explanation must be brought to the words of an apostle as will put them in harmony with his other declarations on the same subject. In the sentence following the one just quoted he says, "What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid" (Rom. vi. 15); also again, "So that the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and righteous, and good" (Rom. vii. 12); and again, "Do we then make the law of none effect through faith? God forbid: nay, we establish the law" (Rom. iii. 31). These words of the chief of the apostles

¹ Scriptural quotations are from the Revised Version.

show, as Shedd, Hodge, and others hold, how false is the notion that according to Paul we are freed from the authority of the Decalogue.

It will be sufficient, in passing, to make three notes: 1. All the commandments of the Decalogue are approved by the reason of the Christian world. Permission to do with impunity what is harmful is license, not liberty. The attempt to annul the Decalogue is antinomianism, and in many places is to-day bearing its fatal fruit. 2. Our Lord and his apostles used the law and the prophets as the foundation of their work, and would not have consented in any way to weaken that foundation. 3. Examined carefully, Paul's doctrine of liberty proves to be, not freedom from observance of the moral law, but such an abundance of grace by the indwelling Spirit as makes obedience possible, and becomes liberty in contrast with the former ineffectual attempt to obey.

The testimony of Christian scholarship of all ages and schools is overwhelming on this point. Irenæus, who was but one remove from the apostle John, said: "Preparing man for this life, the Lord himself did speak in his own person to all alike the words of the Decalogue; and therefore, in like manner do they remain *permanently* with us, receiving by means of his advent in the flesh extension and increase, but not abrogation."² Professor Robertson Smith says: "In the legal tradition of the elders, he [Jesus] saw the commandments of God annulled. It was his part to fill up into spiritual completeness the teaching of the old dispensation, and herein he attached himself directly to the prophetic conception of the law in Deuteronomy. And not only in his ethical teaching, but in his personal sense of fellowship with the Father, and in the inner consciousness of his Messianic mission, Jesus stood directly on the Old Testament."³ Said Dean Stanley of

² Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. i. p. 482, Christian Literature ed. (So in all references to the Fathers.)

³ Encyclopædia Britannica Vol. iii. p. 642, art. "Bible."

the Ten Commandments: "They are embedded in the heart of the Christian religion. Side by side with the prayer of our Lord, and with the creed of his church, they appear inscribed on our churches, read from our altars, taught to our children as the foundation of all morality."⁴ Dr. Phillip Schaff says: "The gospel has not superseded the ten words of Sinai, nor abolished their authority."⁵

II. If the Decalogue, as a code, is still in force, has the Fourth Commandment been excepted? Certain isolated texts, which will be examined later, are relied upon to support the view that it has. But the reason of the case is entirely against it.

Experimental evidence is conclusive that animals and men need one day in seven as much as ever; that Christian character breaks down unless the Sabbath is kept holy; that the Continental Sunday is in league with the saloon, the brothel, and lawlessness of every kind.⁶

It is then proper to call for evidence that shall not lack one point of absolute demonstration that he who said "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven," has authorized the singling out and abrogation of this commandment so important to Christian civilization. If it cannot be shown that a decree has come from the Supreme Court above, declaring the Fourth Commandment out of harmony with the rest of the code (a decree that would impeach the self-consistency of God), or that an edict has come from the supreme Legislative Power, declaring the law no longer needed, we gain our case.

The affirmative answer often given to this question is made to rest on five bases: I. The change of day; II. The teaching and example of Christ; III. The teaching and example of Paul; IV. The absence in the New Testament

⁴ Schaff-Herzog Encyclopædia, Vol. i. p. 620.

⁵ *Ibid.* ⁶ See *The Sabbath for Man*, by Wilbur F. Crafts.

of explicit reaffirmations of the Fourth Commandment ; v. The custom of the early church. Each of these will be examined.

I. THE CHANGE OF DAY.

An extended discussion of the authority by which the first day of the week has superseded the seventh is not necessary to this discussion, but the change is sometimes urged as showing that the Fourth Commandment rests on a level lower than that of other parts of the Decalogue. The proper reply is: the commandment has not been changed, for the time-element in it is not a prescription of any particular day in the week. In connection with the Sabbath "the seventh day" denotes the one that follows six days of labor.⁷ It is not said, "The seventh day of the week is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God." It is a seven-fold division of time, and it seems probable that the week began with this division, and thus it came that the Sabbath fell on Saturday, instead of some other day that would have met the requirement precisely as well.⁸ A reference to Gen ii. 1-3 shows this very clearly. We are not ready to return to the notion of six solar days as the time of creation ; but unless we do so and suppose that a divine revelation gave to the Jews the hebdomadary of the rest of God, the words "God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it" are meaningless, save as simply pointing to a seven-day division of time, with six parts for labor and one for rest.

Should it be urged that the calendar week might have been of divine origin, inasmuch as the Jews unquestionably believed the day which they observed to have been appointed by Jehovah, it should be noted that the seventh-day ordinance here was the only point in the entire Decalogue that could be changed without affecting the law.

⁷ Gen. ii. 1-3, Ex. xxiii. 12, xxxi. 15, xxxiv. 21, xxxv. 2, Lev. xxiii. 3, Deut. v. 13.

⁸ See art. on "Calendar" (week) by N. S. B. Woolhouse, *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

But allowing the divine appointment of the day observed by the Jews, the law commanding rest one day in seven is not weakened when the Giver of the law changes the day to one that by later events has become more appropriate. Nor does the fact that the original commandment did not prescribe the particular day to be observed, give liberty to all to use whatever day may be convenient, which would practically abolish the Sabbath. To use the law in such a manner as to defeat its purpose is as truly lawless as to ignore it entirely. The need of unity in Sabbath observance must be apparent to all. Such unity is practically established, and upon the day sanctioned by the apostles and kept by the early church.* Note that the Lord's Day, appears everywhere, in the works of the Fathers of the early church, as an established institution, defended against Jewish attacks, but causing no discussion among Christians, except when (Epistle of Barnabas) they were in danger of Judaism "all along the line."

Since a day is the time between two successive passages of the sun across a given meridian, the presence of Christians in all parts of this spherical world has made the observance of the same period of absolute time as the seventh day quite impracticable. It is midnight with our antipodes when it is noon with us. Should it be said that this militates as much against the observance of the first day as the seventh, it is granted: but it goes far to establish the proposition that the Fourth Commandment requires a seven-fold division of time rather than the observance of a prescribed day of the week.

II. THE TEACHING AND EXAMPLE OF CHRIST.

1. "And he said unto them, The Sabbath was made for

* "But there is only one Sabbath [i. e. seventh day] to be observed by you in the whole year, which is that of the Lord's burial."—Apostolic Constitutions. Book vii. chap. xxiii.

Ignatius (A. D. 30-107) speaks of Christians as "no longer observing the Sabbath, but living in the observance of the Lord's Day."—Epistle to the Magnesians, chap. ix.

man and not man for the Sabbath : so that the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath" (Mark ii. 27, 28). Many seem to think that the Sabbath was made for man as a toy is for a child. But it was given as the atonement, or as the Bible, for his salvation, not for his abuse. The law of the Sabbath was no more truly given for man than the other nine commandments : but it will hardly be urged that they are in our hands to affirm or to annul at our pleasure. It is evident that the simple statement, "The Sabbath was made for man," gives us no authority over the sabbatic law, else were all law at an end, for all divine regulations are, in a very wide sense, made for man. Neither does "The Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath" put that day into the hands of men, though each must determine for himself how the commandment is to be interpreted in daily life, always remembering that it is nothing less than a law. This follows from two considerations. (1) If by "The Son of man" is meant mankind, and it is intended that humanity should hold the sabbatic law according to human judgment, then it should be *perfect* humanity, and not the distorted specimens that now inhabit the earth. Any sin blinds the sinner to some extent, and unfits him for passing judgment on the wisdom of the law that he has broken ; and as the moral law is properly a unit, a trunk with branches, and as sin is also a unit, every sinner is to some degree unfitted for passing judgment on any part of the law. (2) The title "Son of man" is applied in the Scriptures only to our Lord. And not only so : it is also used in the entire New Testament but three times by other lips than his,¹⁰ in each of which cases it seems the result of inspiration. Thus he seemed to guard with especial care the legislative authority from the hands of men, using his own peculiar title when he would assert his prerogative. Grant then that by "Son of man" is meant "Son of humanity ;" it must still refer to a perfect man, with his faculties unblunted, his judgment unim-

¹⁰ Acts vii. 56 ; Rev. i. 13 ; xiv. 14.

paired, his moral sense not distorted by sin. Where shall such an one be found, but in the spotless Son of God? *HE* is the Son of humanity. But the title is Christ's own, too sacred for human lips to utter, never applied by others to him except in beatific visions. He then, who gave the Sabbath is its Lord." Tertullian said: "In order that he [Christ] might, whilst allowing that amount of work which he was about to perform for a soul, remind them what works the law of the Sabbath forbade,—even human works; and what it enjoined,—even divine works, which might be done for the benefit of any soul, he was called the Lord of the Sabbath as his own institution."—Against Marcion, Book iv. chap. xii. The whole context is worthy of consultation.

2. "My Father worketh even until now and I work" (John v. 17). The assumption of liberty in relation to the Sabbath, based on this passage, must be met by an examination of what our Lord meant by "work." Works of mercy were allowed, even by the rabbinical code, from which as a basis the Pharisees criticised Jesus; and when he classed his healing miracles under that head, they could not deny the propriety of that classification. The works of Christ were preaching and healing; and they can no more justify our careless use of the Sabbath in business or pleasure than can the acknowledged right to summon a physician in case of severe illness, or the fact that to the great army of Christian ministers Sunday is the most toilsome day in the week. Let it be proved that Christ used the Sabbath for pleasure or for money-getting and the question will take quite another form. Again, it is important to notice that "work" is capable of another division. While God works he does not *labor*; he knows no toil. The creation of worlds needs but a thought. The power that healed the man at the pool

¹¹ It was very aptly urged, recently, by a gentleman who is prominent in legal circles, that our Lord's entering into an argument to prove his innocence of breaking it shows that he had no intention of abrogating the law.

was given by a word. The contrast between this powerful ease and our wearying toil is in itself a sufficient answer to any argument in favor of sabbatic laxity drawn from this passage.

3. "And it came to pass when he went into the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees on a Sabbath to eat bread" (Luke xiv. 1). It appears from the context that this was a gathering of the ruler's friends in considerable numbers. The question is asked: Did not our Savior thus teach laxity in Sabbath observance in the direction of pleasure, of recreation and social gatherings? May we not conclude that, even if labor is forbidden, we may make a holiday of Sunday? Moreover, was not the pre-Christian Sabbath a day of feasting? It was with no merely social purpose that he accepted the invitation to dinner. He went to the ruler's house to preach the gospel. That is hardly the purpose in Sunday social gatherings of to-day. By making that Pharisee his host, and the other guests his table companions, he availed himself of the laws of hospitality to obtain a courteous hearing. If any Christian, away from home, as was Christ, for the purpose of preaching the gospel, wishes to accept a Sunday invitation of this sort, and will do it on the platform on which Christ stood, using the moments as religiously as he used them, choosing such topics of conversation as he chose, we shall have no controversy with him. But the Jewish Sabbath was not by authority a day of feasting. The morning and evening sacrifices were doubled, and individual offerings were not forbidden. From these individual sacrifices may have come, as Professor Hackett thinks,¹² the custom of Sabbath feasts. They are no precedent for us.

We have, then, found in the life and words of our Lord no warrant for annulling the Fourth Commandment, or setting aside his distinct reaffirmation of the Decalogue. So far as aught that has been examined can affect it, the

¹²Smith's Dictionary of the Bible, art. "Sabbath."

ordinance requiring us to keep the Sabbath-day holy stands unshaken.

III. THE TEACHING AND EXAMPLE OF PAUL.

1. The preaching at Troas, and the journey to Assos and Mitylene (Acts xx. 7-15).

It has been seriously urged that this discourse was given on the evening of the Jewish Sabbath; hence Paul set out on his twenty-mile walk to Assos on Sunday, while his companions sailed to the same place, and, meeting there, they sailed to Mitylene,—and all this on the Lord's Day; hence Paul and his comrades set the example of a careless treatment of the Fourth Commandment, for it is well known that they were not scrupulous concerning the Jewish Sabbath. The Greek article prevents our reading "upon one of the Sabbaths," as some would have it, and compels "upon the first day of the week." The question, then, is, Did this day begin with the previous evening, according to the Jewish mode of reckoning time, and thus did Paul travel on Sunday; or did Luke think of the day as beginning in the morning, and so represent the journey as taking place on Monday?

It is worth remembering that Paul, who said that he did not "make the law of none effect," is to be expected to keep the law. Therefore, if he has, by divine authority, released Christians from seventh-day observance in favor of the first day of the week, we have a right to expect that he will remember the first day to keep it holy. We often find him preaching in the synagogues on the seventh day, for that was the time and place to obtain a hearing from the unchristianized Israelites; but the burden of proof of his secularizing the Lord's day rests upon those who affirm it. Neither the Greek text nor the English version states that the time of the gathering in Troas was the *eve* of the Lord's day. Luke simply says, "upon the first day of the week;" and the assumption that it was the *beginning* of the first day, and so, by Jewish reckoning, Saturday night, is purely gratuitous. It

may have been that the custom of Christians which endured nearly five centuries was observed here, and the Christians took their evening meal together in the "agape," or feast of love. In this case it may have been on Sunday afternoon, before sunset, while it was still "the first day of the week." Thus I hold it impossible to prove, even by Jewish reckoning, that Paul preached on Saturday night and traveled on Sunday.

But there are many reasons for concluding that the Jewish mode was not used in this account. The custom of the world was, as Professor Hackett says, "so that his evening or night of the first day of the week would be the end of the Christian Sabbath, and the morning of his departure that of Monday."¹³ Luke had been much among the Gentiles, and must have known their customs well; and as the book of Acts was written for Gentile readers, it is as natural that he should follow their custom as that a missionary, writing a letter to the Chinese, should use the Chinese dates instead of English, with which they are unfamiliar. It is established that the Roman method of reckoning time, making four watches instead of three, as was the Jewish custom, had to some extent, superseded the Jewish at the time when the gospels were written.¹⁴ This shows that the Roman method was known to the Jews and was gaining ground; while the Jewish method was quite unintelligible to the majority of Gentile readers. Matthew says also, "Now late on the Sabbath day, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week" (xxviii. 1), showing that he regarded the day as opening with the morning. Thus Matthew and Mark used the Roman method, and there is good reason for concluding that John did the same.

¹³ Commentary on Acts, *in loco*.

¹⁴ For the Jewish custom see Judges vii. 19, and for the Roman, Matt. xiv. 25; Mark vi. 48.

¹⁵ New Testament Lexicon, under *δψιτος*; also Gesenius' Hebrew and English Lexicon, under עֶרֶב. See also article on "Day" in Smith's Dictionary of the Bible.

To follow one line of argument in proof of John's usage will suffice here. Robinson says: "The Hebrews reckoned two evenings. The Pharisees and Rabbinites, according to the Mishnah, held the first evening to commence with the declining sun; and the second with the setting sun." " From the recorded events of the day it becomes certain that, when Jesus with the two disciples, drew near to Emmaus, the day must have been "far spent". But the Greek text gives a remarkable proof of the proposition in hand in its use of a word that corresponds with the statements of Robinson. Translated literally, the words as Luke uses them are, "Remain with us, because it is toward evening and *the day has already declined*" (xxiv. 29). The perfect tense and the strengthening adverb make the final clause as strong as needed. Since the first evening was the time of the declining sun, and the sun had already declined, it must have been the second evening, and sunset must have been at least near. But by Jewish reckoning the next day would begin at sunset. Now allow time for their reaching the house where they were to stop, for the evening meal, then for their return journey (seven and a half miles) to Jerusalem after the disappearance of Jesus, for they were telling their story to the other disciples when Jesus appeared again, and it becomes certain that by this time sunset must have been long past. But John says, "on that day, the first day of the week" (xx. 19), and since it was after sunset it would have been, by Jewish reckoning, *the evening before Jesus rose from the dead*. John must, therefore, have used the Roman method; and if Matthew, Mark and John would thus abandon the Jewish mode, Luke would certainly join with Mark for the benefit of his Gentile readers.

There is, therefore, no ground for holding that Paul set out on his journey on the Lord's Day. The gathering was on Sunday night; he preached till morning and went

to Assos and Mitylene on Monday."

2. "One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully assured in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that eateth, eateth unto the Lord, for he giveth God thanks" (Rom. xiv. 5, 6).¹

This passage must harmonize with Paul's reaffirmation of the law referred to earlier, and also with the connection in which it is found. Paul was a keen and careful logician, quite capable of carrying a line of argument through to the end, and not likely to needlessly break the course of his thought and turn aside to irrelevant issues. Let us see, then, what comes of viewing this chapter as a continuous whole, giving the apostle credit for reasoning consecutively, and holding to one point until he has finished. We find him in verses 2 and 3 treating the questions that would naturally rise in a city like Rome, among the early Christians, about eating. Meat that had been offered to idols would be sold in the shambles and might unwittingly be bought; and many preferred to eat no meat rather than risk such defilement, as, with their lingering Jewish scruples, they regarded it. The Judaizing tendency was strong, too, toward the observance of the old Jewish feast and fast days, and much discussion arose as to how Christians should view them. These are clearly the topics that the apostle is treating here. He first admonishes the Christians at Rome not to dictate, each to the other, what may be eaten. Then he says, very abruptly, if these words are a discussion of the importance of certain days, "One man esteemeth one day above another," etc. Equally strange, on the supposition that the passage under consideration relates to the Fourth Commandment, is the return to the subject of eating in the middle of the sixth verse, from which point the apostle

¹ See the testimony of F. C. Cook, M. A., Canon of Exeter, in "The Speaker's Commentary," volume on John and Acts, p. 487; also, Meyer on this passage.

proceeds as if that question had never left his mind, and without another reference to the question of days. The argument becomes natural and consistent only when we remember: (1) That there was nothing in verses 1-4 to call for a dictum here on the authority of the Fourth Commandment. (2) That there were two parts to the question under discussion; (a) Should Christians eat all kinds of meat or follow the Jewish mode? (b) Should they make all days alike as to eating and drinking, or should they keep the Jewish fast and feast days? That there was a tendency to this discrimination between days can be seen in the writings of the Fathers of the early church, who prescribed fasting through six days of the Passover week, using only bread, salt, herbs and water, and, when possible, fasting through Friday and Saturday.¹⁷ Both the questions mentioned above enter into this discussion. There is a question of days: but it rests on questions of propriety in eating and drinking. We hold that treating the apostle as we would any other reasoner, not forcing on him our own question of the comparative sanctity of days, we shall find his line of argument consistent. As far as eating and drinking are concerned, each Christian may follow his own conscience, whether the question be one of divers meats or of fasting on some days and feasting on others. These two questions troubled the early church, and hence it would be natural for Paul to introduce a few sentences on the Jewish use of days for fasting or feasting into this discussion of Jewish rules of feasting, since both would be in the minds of his readers, and were closely connected: but it would be very unnatural to make a forced digression and discuss the continued authority of the Fourth Commandment. It is unreasonable, also, that the commandment should have been abrogated by the apostle with such a mere passing notice, in the face of his Lord's and his own distinct reaffirmation of the Decalogue.

¹⁷ Apostolic Constitutions, book v. chap. xviii.

We reach, then, the conclusion that this passage has no connection with the Sabbath question, and no reference to the Sabbath except in so far as Christians were discussing specific rules of eating and drinking which concerned that day as others.¹⁸

3. "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; which are a shadow of the things to come: but the body is Christ's" (Col. ii. 16, 17).

The word "therefore" marks this passage as the conclusion of an argument, and directs our attention to the premises as the proper basis of a correct understanding of the conclusion. The Christians at Colossae needed to be warned of the "tradition of the elders," and the "rudiments" or "elements" of the world, which carry on the same idea of useless technicalities that made the unwritten law more voluminous than the Mosaic code. Paul instances circumcision, as if to show that his thought was entirely of the ceremonial law that formed the ground-work of the rabbinical formalities, and was set aside when Christ's redemptive work was completed. We are prepared to have Paul say "therefore," i. e., since the law of ceremonies which looked for-

¹⁸ Authorities—Stuart: "We may draw the conclusion pretty clearly that *ἡμέρα* (day) here relates to days which the scruples of the Jewish Christians held sacred and has no relation to the *ἡμέρα κυρίου* (Lord's Day) which all agreed to keep holy." Schaff (against Alford's claim that the Fourth Commandment is here abrogated): "The presence of the Fourth Commandment in the Decalogue, the recognition (and explanation) of the obligation to keep the Sabbath holy by our Lord as well as a true conception of the relation of the law to the Christian dispensation is against this sweeping view. There is no hint anywhere of a difference of opinion in regard to the observance of the Lord's day though we may admit that such observance was not universal." Shedd: "The Lord's Day was never regarded by the Apostles or by the Primitive Church as a common Jewish festival, and consequently, this and the following statements have no reference to the Christian Sabbath, as some (Phillippi, Alford) maintain." Meyer: "This refers to the Jewish feast and fast days still observed by the weak in faith." It should be added that many who, like Professor Robertson Smith, think that this passage refers to the Sabbath as a day of observance, hold that Paul is merely freeing the Church from the Jewish seventh-day observance.

ward to Christ is done away, "Let no man judge you in these things."

Much light is thrown upon this passage by a study of the pivotal phrase, "a Sabbath day." "Sabbath" and "Sabbath day," in the New Testament, never refer to Sunday. Two forms of the word were used for the Sabbath, viz., the singular, τὸ σάββατον, and the plural, τὰ σάββατα. The plural form was often used to denote the entire week. But no Jew then thought of designating any other day of the week than the seventh by either of these forms. The Greek forms and the English "Sabbath" are simply the Hebrew שַׁבָּת (Shābbāth) transferred. The Hebrew word, when used of a particular day, of course, denoted the seventh; sometimes in a different connection it was used of the seventh year; possibly in a few cases of the entire week. Thus it is plain that it would not have been applied by a Jew to any day but the seventh, or by a Christian with knowledge of Jewish customs. The word was as definite with them as Saturday with us; not because of the meaning of the term, nor because of the commandment, but because of the settled habit of applying it to that particular day. This word is used in some form fifty-six times in the Gospels, and no one could have applied it to Sunday, for the Gospels were written of a time when the observance of Sunday was not yet instituted. It is used in some form ten times in the book of the Acts, and in each case its meaning is evident; it could not be applied to the first day of the week. It refers to Saturday except in one instance (xx. 7) where it denotes the week, and other words particularize the first day. In the other books of the Bible, (Epistles, Revelation) the word is used but twice; once in 1 Cor. xvi. 2, where the use is the same as in Acts xx. 7. Thus in sixty-seven instances of its use in the New Testament the word cannot be questioned. There remains but one instance, that in Colossians. The meaning of a word in any particular connection is to be determined by its context and by its

general use. There is nothing in the context to suggest that anything more is meant here than observance of the Jewish Sabbath, the seventh day ; and the New Testament usage requires us to translate this passage with the understanding that Saturday is the day in question. When a writer wished to speak of Sunday," he specified it as "the first day of the week," or "the Lord's day." Moreover, we find that the early church continued to restrict the application of "Sabbath" to the seventh day. An examination of the works of the Ante-Nicene Fathers gives the following result: There is not one instance of confusion of terms. The Sabbath invariably means Sunday. When Sunday is referred to it is "the Lord's Day," "the first day of the week ;" and in the works of Justin Martyr the expression "day of the sun," which we make Sunday, begins to appear. The two expressions are frequently contrasted. Thus the martyr Victorinus urged that a rigorous fast be kept on the Sabbath, so that Christians might not seem to keep the Jewish Sabbath and might be ready to receive their bread with thanks on the Lord's day." The Apostolic Constitutions use "the Sabbath" repeatedly, as if no mistake could possibly be made, meaning the seventh day, the day before the Lord's Day." Tertullian, in "An Answer to the Jews,"¹⁹ speaks of "The Sabbath, that is the seventh day." These citations will illustrate the custom of the early Church, sometimes using the word Sabbath abstractly of a day of rest, which is the meaning of the Hebrew form, but never using it to denote Sunday. When it designated a day as in the large majority of cases, that day was invariably Saturday. Professor Frederick Gardiner says the Lord's Day "is nowhere habitually

¹⁹ Acts xx. 7 ; I Cor. xvi. 2 ; Rev. i. 10.

²⁰ Victorinus (died in the persecution of A. D. 304), on the Creation of the World.

²¹ E. g., book v, chap. xviii. (Latter part of the third century.)

²² Chap. iv. See article on the "Lord's Day," by Professor Hackett, in Smith's Dictionary of the Bible.

called the Sabbath, so far as we are aware, except in Scotland, and by the English Puritans.”³³ We might go farther, and note that the writings of Augustine reveal the same habitual discrimination between “Sabbath” and the “Lord’s Day.” It is very strange that the early church should have been so invariably exact in its use of the word if the New Testament writers had not set the example; and the conclusion reached is that when Paul spoke of the Sabbath, Jews and Gentiles thought of no day but the seventh, and no one would have dreamed of any authoritative release from the Fourth Commandment, which was being transferred to the first day, from this message to the Colossians, which was merely a release from the one as they were fastened to the other.” The question which day was to be their Sabbath was not to be settled by the tradition of men, but by the leading of the risen Lord.

The notion that this passage is an abrogation of the Fourth Commandment has been supposed to be further supported by the seventeenth verse, “which are a shadow of the things to come, but the body is Christ’s.” It has been said that the observances specified here, including the Sabbath, were but shadows, passing away when the body which they anticipated came, and that body was Christ. That rendering rests on a misquotation. This passage, which has often been interpreted as if it read “the body is Christ,” has been correctly rendered by both versions with a possessive, “is of Christ” (King James’ version), “is Christ’s” (revised version.) That is, the body belongs to Christ; and the meaning is one of two—either the body is Christ’s corporal frame, or it is Christ’s pos-

³³ Smith’s Dictionary of the Bible, article “Sabbath.”

³⁴ It may be a matter of surprise that in this discussion the word “Sabbath” has not been more carefully reserved for the seventh day. “Sabbath” has ceased, with us, to mark that day. The Christian Church has come to see that the Lord’s day is the true Sabbath and has at last succeeded in the difficult work of transferring the name as well as the reality of rest to the first day.

session. Evidently the first cannot be the true interpretation. Though the feast days looked forward to the work of Christ, and anticipated his redemptive sacrifice, it was his work and not his body to which they pointed. The paschal lamb, indeed, prefigured the body of Christ, yet the Passover foreshadowed his death. Then the meaning is that the body is Christ's possession, and whatever typical force these observances may have is in his power. This simple fact of a correct translation makes the argument from this passage against the Fourth Commandment entirely to fail.

We reach here a conclusion in exact accord with the lines of argument followed above. Paul is freeing the Christians at Colossae from obligation to keep the Jewish Sabbath, and urges Christ's lordship over the purpose of the day as the warrant for the change. The day is merely a shadow; the body is the divine purpose of good to men, including all the possibilities involved in the Fourth Commandment; and this body belongs to Christ, who can change body or shadow, and has, through his apostles, changed the shadow, the day. Additional light is thrown on the passage in question by noting later instructions that show what course the mind of the apostle was pursuing. In the twenty-first and twenty-second verses he asks why the Colossians subject themselves to ordinances, "Handle not, nor taste nor touch (all which things are to perish with the using), *after the precepts and doctrines of men?*" All that "bond written in ordinances, that was against us"—the Mosaic ritual and the precepts of men—has been taken away; Christ and his apostles are the authority, not the rabbins; hence the Colossians may not hesitate to abandon the Jewish Sabbath for the first day of the week. But the Decalogue, ratified by the words of Christ, stands to-day.

4. "Ye observe days and months and seasons and years" (Gal. iv. 10).

The purpose of this epistle was to recall the Christians of Galatia from attention to the Jewish ceremonial law, to which they were in danger of being again enslaved. But no one was said to Judaize until he had done something beside keep the Decalogue, and there is not a word to suggest that Paul had any thought of the Fourth commandment here. Moreover, if he intended to release the Galatians from that statute he did it in the strange manner of a rebuke—"I am afraid of you, lest by any means I have bestowed labor on you in vain." If Paul would rebuke a Christian or a church for keeping the commandment, lawlessness becomes obligatory, and religion is at an end. Until it is proved that the apostle was engaged in the astonishing work of rebuking Sabbath-keepers, no further attention need be given to this passage.

It will, however, be profitable to see how these words were understood by the early church. Tertullian answers the charge that the Christians were Galaticizing; for so well was the purpose of this Epistle known that the expression "to Galaticize," *i. e.*, to become like the Galatians, was coined from it. He says, "plainly we do if we are observers of Jewish ceremonies; for these the apostle unteaches"²⁶—showing clearly how the words of Paul were taken.

5. "There remaineth, therefore, a Sabbath rest for the people of God" (Heb. iv. 9).

It has been said that, because a Sabbath rest *remains*, it lies in the future, and hence we are freed from obligation to keep the Sabbath here. But this proves too much. Verses 3 and 4 show that the rest which the apostle had in mind has been "remaining" from the foundation of the world. Moses could have used these words as well as the writer to the Hebrews, and if the fact that a Sabbath rest

²⁶ On fasting, chap. xiv. Schaff, *in loco*: "Alford is scarcely warranted in saying that this verse is at variance with any and every theory of the Christian Sabbath, since the reference is evidently to Jewish observances of Jewish day."

is remaining on high for the people of God proves the commandment not binding to-day, it proves quite as clearly that it was not binding when Moses received and enforced it. But an examination of the third and fourth chapters shows that the rest that was used as a type of the heavenly rest was not the Sabbath day but the entrance into Canaan (iii. 17, 18). The reference to the seventh day (verse 4) is evidently (note the causal conjunction "for") to be taken with the preceding verse, and is introduced because in that connection the statement of God's resting from all his creative works, referred to in verse 3, is found. In chap. iv. 8 ("For if Joshua had given them rest, he would not have spoken afterward of another day"), it cannot be supposed that Joshua is thought of as giving (or not giving) sabbatic rest. The critical phrase "Sabbath rest" is in the Greek one word, (*σαββατισμός*), which is found but once in the New Testament, and was apparently coined for this passage.* Its composition gives it the meaning of a sabbatizing, *i. e.*, a resting. It need have no reference to the Jewish Sabbath or the Fourth Commandment, and from its etymology, and from its connection, evidently has none.

IV. THE ABSENCE FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT OF EXPLICIT RE-AFFIRMATIONS OF THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT.

Though Jesus ratified the entire moral code, and was careful to prove himself innocent of breaking the sabbatic law, yet there is in the New Testament not one distinct command to keep the Sabbath; not one warning against breaking it. If the Fourth Commandment is not annulled, why is it not re-affirmed?

The reply is, that no reinforcing was needed. It is pertinent to repeat the proposition stated earlier, that when a law has been enacted and proclaimed, especially with the impressiveness of Sinai, that law is assumed to be in

* The word was used once by Plutarch, whose work was principally done later than this.

force until repealed by the enacting power. The more wise and powerful the government the greater certainty have we that the laws will neither be permitted to be annulled by those for whom they were made, nor suffered to fall into disuse. If a law is repealed, the decree should be of such a nature that it cannot be questioned. The authority of a government is not increased by having its most solemnly given statutes left so that men may conclude, after however much reasoning, that any part of the law has been repealed. That leaves the law too largely in the hands of the subject, and leads to contempt for all authority, since as authority is needed to establish law, so is it needed for its repeal. We have seen that no such authority can be found. Our Lord had, then, no need to re-enact each article and section of the law. It stood by divine authority, and what was needed was to let it stand. The attention of the Jews and the early Christians was called to the other nine commandments, and they were rebuked for their violation; but the Fourth was in no danger. The Jews kept the Sabbath with excessive rigidity. Our Lord, therefore, treated the commandments as a skillful physician would treat bodies, each according to its need. Those that had been neglected he emphasized; the one that had been perverted and made an intolerable burden he restored to its original character. A re-enactment was not its need, nor was emphasis; it needed emancipation. The Decalogue is of permanent authority. Some parts had been violated; such violation was condemned. One part had been heaped high with rubbish so that only legal tricksters could stand upon it: that rubbish was swept away, and now all mankind can "remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." But to say that this precept has been annulled is to do, from the opposite standpoint, as did the Jews, confound the law with the rubbish.

A further question rises, Why did the apostle to the Gentiles, when writing to the churches in Rome, Greece, and Asia Minor, make no reference to the duty of Sabbath-

keeping? The apostolic churches generally, if not in every instance, had a foundation of converted Jews. To the Jews Paul made his first appeals, *e. g.*, at Antioch in Pisidia (Acts xiii, xiv), at Thessalonica (Acts xvii, 1-4), at Corinth (Acts xviii, 4), at Ephesus (Acts xviii, 19), while at Philippi a woman who worshipped God, and was probably a Jewess, received him (Acts xvi, 14), at Corinth his lodging was with a Jew, and at Rome the chief of the Jews were first called together (Acts xxviii, 17). Thus the churches, starting from a nucleus of converted Jews, would be familiar with the law. To it and to the prophets, the apostles appealed. The Scriptures that the Bereans searched with such commendable earnestness were those of the Old Testament. Their danger would be a tendency, not to neglect the law, but to Judaize; to be unwilling to break at once with the rabbinic supplement to the law. The apostles, therefore, found much the same state of things that Christ had found, and the method of treating the commandments followed in the Gospels is the method of the Epistles.

V. THE PRACTICE OF THE EARLY CHURCH.

The custom of the early church can aid us only by showing the understanding of the Scriptures held by those who were nearer in time to the source, and is a doubtful guide at best. The church was composed, very largely, of unlearned men; copies of the Scriptures were rare, and oral tradition must have furnished often most of the knowledge of what the law really was. This could not fail of an effect on the attitude of the church regarding vexed questions. Moreover, the early Christians were in many cases slaves, and in the church, where master and slave sat side by side, the slave often outranked the master. They had to settle, with their insufficient knowledge, questions of casuistry, such as whether, when a Christian is a slave and his master a hater of Christianity, the slave shall endanger his life, or shall work on the Lord's day as on others.

Many answered the question with their lives; but it can easily be seen that, while persecution in the main purified the church, it must often have led Christians to press the law hard for an escape from death, and in a time when the opinion of slaves was frequently the dominant one in the church, the Fourth Commandment must often have been strained. The sabbatic law was to some extent held loosely, but not so far as has often been urged. We have seen that Irenæus and Tertullian taught the permanence of the Decalogue. Justin Martyr (A. D. 110-165) speaks of the customs of Christians on Sundays, and gives the order of service." In the Apostolic Constitutions (A. D. 200-300) we find the following: "On the day of the resurrection, that is the Lord's day, assemble yourselves together, without fail, giving thanks to God and praising him for those mercies God has bestowed on you through Christ;"⁹⁷ also, "I, Peter and Paul, do make the following constitutions. Let the slaves work five days, but on the Sabbath-day and the Lord's day let them have leisure to go to church for instruction in piety."⁹⁸ The "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles" prescribes, "But every Lord's day do ye gather yourselves together, and break bread and give thanksgiving after having confessed your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure."⁹⁹ These citations are sufficient to show that keeping the Lord's day was held to be obligatory in the early church. Though persecution caused some looseness in the observance of the Fourth Commandment, it is a noteworthy fact that, when, at the accession of Constantine, the Roman Empire became officially friendly to Christianity, the church began to clear its conscience by a more careful use of the Lord's day, showing that the previous laxity resulted from external pressure. Thus did the church estop our urging as an example that course, followed under persecution, which was repudiated when in peaceful times

⁹⁷ First Apology, chapter lxvii. ⁹⁸ Book vii, chapter xxx. ⁹⁹ Book viii, chapter xxxiii. ¹⁰⁰ Chap. xiv.

there was liberty to keep the law.

Every outlet, therefore, of precept or example, from a careful obedience of the law closes. Such a result was to be expected. The Fourth Commandment was, beyond question, given because faithful observance of it tends to lead the human race to its highest possibilities. It is one of the ten foundation stones on which is to rest the character of the man who stands complete in God. We have no reason for supposing its authority to have been weakened, but every reason for holding it to be in full and abiding force. Holy living is no more possible for us, without divine aid, than for the ancient Israelites. Without the support of the law we would be as certain to sink as they would have been not to rise.

Nor is it safe to neglect the law, while we talk of the spirit of love and liberty. The popular conscience cannot be trusted so far, nor can the most devoted Christian, though animated by the purest love for his Lord, trust his heart with all its evil inclinations without the guidance of the law. For the sake of Christian character, of the future of the church, of the permanence of our national institutions, of Christian missions, where the alphabet of biblical truth is being taught, for the sake of all that in any way rests on the Word of God, we need to hold and teach that Christianity stands on the entire moral law as its foundation, and neither Jesus nor his apostles abrogated one of the least of the Ten Commandments.

Our study will be fitly closed by quoting from Professor Murphy, whose words have exact application here: "It may be said that this does not prove the perpetuity of the Sabbath. But it refutes the only argument that can be brought against its perpetuity; and the Sabbath, as a primeval institution, can stand alone."²⁰

²⁰ James G. Murphy, Professor of Hebrew in Belfast, Ireland, on "The Weekly Sabbath," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, vol. xxix, p. 73.