

Regulae de Observatione Sabbathi:

The Synod of Dort's (1618–19) Deliverance on the Sabbath

By Daniel R. Hyde

“What is your view of the Sabbath?” This is a pressing question for Reformed Christians seeking to live out the historic Reformed faith in a twenty-first century context. The question itself assumes there are more views than one, offering options for the Reformed believer. One of the popular ways of expressing this is to say that there are two views of the Sabbath in Reformed churches: the Continental view and the Puritan view. What is the difference? R. C. Sproul wrote that the former allows for recreation, while the latter forbids recreation on the Lord’s Day.¹ More recently he has written of this “division of the house among Reformed theologians,” saying,

To see how these views [Continental v. Puritan] collided, imagine the consternation of John Knox, who was expelled from England during the reign of Bloody Mary, and first sought refuge in Germany and finally went to Geneva, Switzerland, under the auspices of John Calvin. Knox was shocked when he arrived in Geneva and found Calvin, with his family, lawn bowling on the Sabbath day. Calvin took the Continental view, while Knox took the Puritan view. This difference among Reformed thinkers has gone on for a long time.²

Further evidence of this supposed division is shown in comparing the representative catechisms of each tradition. When one looks at Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 103, the emphasis is on attendance at public worship as well as the eschatological aspect of the Sabbath day, while the Westminster Larger Catechism, Q&A 115–121, emphasizes the day of the Sabbath (116) and the duty of resting on that day (117–121). Jay Adams engages in this type of argument, setting John Calvin and the Heidelberg Catechism’s heavenly focus against the “legalistic” emphasis of the Puritans and Westminster Standards.³

In order to evaluate whether such a division exists, it is necessary to delve into the history and practice of the

Dutch Reformed churches as representative of the Continental Reformed tradition. Reformed Christians over the past four centuries have known “the great Synod of Dort in 1618–1619” (De grote Synode van Dordrecht in 1618–1619) from its work in the third confessional document of the Dutch Reformed churches, the Canons of

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1. R. C. Sproul, *Now, That’s a Good Question!* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1996), 351.

2. R. C. Sproul, *Truths We Confess: A Layman’s Guide to the Westminster Confession of Faith, Volume 2—Salvation and The Christian Life* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Publishing, 2007), 342. Cf. the harsh language of J. C. Ryle towards the “Continental” view of the Sabbath in *Sabbath: A Day to Keep* (rev. ed., Rowlett: Faith Presbyterian Church Reformed, 2007): “Sunday amusements and sport have been long tried in Continental cities. But what benefit have they derived that we should wish to imitate them? What advantages have we to gain by making a London Sunday like a Sunday in Paris or other continental cities. It would be a change for the worse, and not for the better... Away with the idea that a pleasure-seeking, Continental Sabbath is mercy to anyone! It is nothing less than an enormous fallacy to call it so. Such a Sabbath is real mercy to nobody, and is positive sacrifice to some.... I fear that hundreds of British travelers do things on Sundays on the Continent, which they would never do in their own land” (http://www.fpccr.org/blue_banner_articles/ryle_sabbath.htm; accessed on November 3, 2009).

3. Jay E. Adams, *Keeping the Sabbath Today?* (Stanley, N.C.: Timeless Texts, 2008), 20–30. See the review article by Ryan M. McGraw, “Jay E. Adams, *Keeping the Sabbath Today?*,” *Puritan Reformed Journal* 1, 2 (2009): 275–81.

Dort. While not being as familiar to Reformed Christians as the warm and experiential Heidelberg Catechism (1563) or the majestic Westminster Confession of Faith (1646), the Canons offer a thoroughly biblical and pastoral response to the teachings of the Remonstrants of the early seventeenth century. Yet unbeknownst to many of these Reformed Christians who love the Reformed confessions, even to those of the Dutch Reformed tradition, the Canons of Dort were not the only doctrinal deliverance from the great Synod. The purpose of this article is to examine and demonstrate that the great Synod's rules of Sabbath observance (*regulae de observatione Sabbathi*) held a moderate Reformed orthodox position not at odds with the principles and practice of their English compatriots.⁴ This will be seen by examining their context in early-seventeenth-century Netherlands and by analyzing them briefly in comparison with a major proponent of the English "Puritan" view of the Sabbath in William Ames (1576–1633). We will also conclude by seeing their contemporary relevance for Reformed churches in the twenty-first century.

THE SABBATH DEBATE AT DORT

After the international delegates from Great Britain, the Palatinate, Hesse, Switzerland (Zurich, Berne, Basel, Schaffhausen, Geneva), Bremen, Emden, and Nassau-Wetteravia departed in session 154 on May 9, 1619, the Dutch delegates dealt with many issues facing the life of their churches in what is known as the *Post-Acta*.⁵ One such issue was a question concerning the law of

God, specifically, what relationship did the Sabbath of the Old Testament have to the Lord's Day of the New Testament, and what did this mean practically for the average Hollander's observance of the day?

This issue first was raised at session 148 as the doctrine of the Heidelberg Catechism was approved by all the collegiate suffrages as agreeable to the Word of God, notwithstanding the English delegates' right to interpret Christ's descent into hell differently. This discussion of the Catechism led the delegates sent by King James I to publicly state their offense at the lack of Sabbath observance in the town of Dordrecht. Positively, they pled with the Synod to petition the civil magistrates to forbid commerce and trade on the Sabbath day. Subsequent to this, the Middleburg elder delegate and doctor of law, Josias Vosbergius, then moved that the Synod take up the larger issue of the observance of the Sabbath in general, given that the Reformed did not observe the seventh day.⁶ Later, in his departing address to the States General on May 18, 1619, Bishop George Carleton called the Dutch magistrates to a holy observance of the day of the Lord, "which is the Christian Sabbath" (*quod est Christianum sabbatum*).⁷

At session 162, then, on May 16, 1619, among the many *gravamina* was the fifth *gravamen* "concerning abuses and desecration of the Sabbath" (*De tolendis Sabbathi profanationibus*) in the Netherlands.⁸ At session 164 on May 17, 1619, the Synod appealed to the States General to enact new and strict (*rigidioribus*) laws against the increasing profanation of the Sabbath.⁹ This led to "a question concerning the necessity of observing the day of the Lord" (*Quaestio de Necessitate observationis*), which was becoming an issue in the province of Zeeland.¹⁰ In response to this question, the Synod appointed the theological professors, Johannes Polyander of Leiden, Franciscus Gomarus of Groningen, Antonius Thysius of Harderwyk, and Antonius Walaeus of Middleburg, to "arrange a friendly private conference" (*amicam privatim instituant collationem*) with the Zeeland delegates to come up with general rules on the issue with "common consent" (*communi consensu*).¹¹ Finally, in this 164th session the Synod of Dort adopted the following "rules on the observance of the Sabbath, or Lord's Day" regarding this issue.¹²

1. There is in the fourth commandment of the divine law a ceremonial and a moral element.

2. The ceremonial element is the rest of the seventh day after creation, and the strict observance of that day imposed especially on the Jewish people.

4. Cf. W. Robert Godfrey, "Calvin and Calvinism in the Netherlands," in *John Calvin: His Influence in the Western World*, ed. W. Stanford Reid (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982), 109.

5. For a list of the international and national delegates as well as the political commissioners to the Synod, see *Crisis in the Reformed Churches: Essays in Commemoration of the Great Synod of Dort, 1618–1619*, ed. Peter Y. De Jong (Grand Rapids: Reformed Fellowship, 1968), 213–20.

6. *The British Delegation and the Synod of Dort (1618–1619)*, ed. Anthony Milton. Church of England Record Society 13 (Woodbridge, England: The Boydell Press, 2005), 328–29. Cf. Gerard Brandt, *The History of the Reformation and Other Ecclesiastical Transactions in and About the Low-Countries: From the Beginning of the Eighth Century, Down to the Famous Synod of Dort, Inclusive (1720–1723; repr., New York, N.Y.: AMS Press, 1979)*, 3:290.

7. *The British Delegation*, 356.

8. *Post-Acta*, 150.

9. *Post-Acta*, 171.

10. *Post-Acta*, 171.

11. *Post-Acta*, 171.

12. *Regulae de observatione Sabbathi, seu diei*. Kuyper, *Post-Acta*, page 184.

3. The moral element consists in the fact that a certain definite day is set aside for worship and so much rest as is needful for worship and hallowed meditation.

4. The Sabbath of the Jews having been abolished, the day of the Lord must be solemnly hallowed by Christians.

5. Since the times of the apostles this day has always been observed by the old catholic church.

6. This day must be so consecrated to worship that on that day we rest from all servile works, except those which charity and present necessity require; and also from all such recreations as interfere with worship.¹³

THE CONTEXT OF DORT'S REGULAE

Before examining the *regulae*, we need first to understand the social and theological context in which they were adopted. In a word, these *regulae* did not just appear as pristine principles, but they arose out of a decades-long struggle to reform the church in the Netherlands.

Theological Context

W. Robert Godfrey has periodized the Reformation in the Netherlands into four theological eras. First, a Lutheran era (1517–1526); second, a Sacramentarian era (1526–1531); third, an Anabaptist era (early 1530s–early-1540s); and fourth, the Reformed era (from the mid-1540s in the South and approximately 1560 in the North) [figure 1].¹⁴

The Reformation in the Netherlands

1517–26	1526–31	early-1530s– early-1540s	mid-1540s (South)/ 1560 (North)
Lutheran	Sacramentarian	Anabaptist	Reformed

FIGURE 1

Further, it is helpful to add Richard A. Muller's periodization of post-Reformation Protestant orthodoxy into this discussion. Muller classifies Orthodoxy as early (first phase: 1565–1618, second phase: 1618–1640), high (first phase: 1640–1685, second phase: 1685–1725), and late (post-1725) [figure 2].

Post-Reformation Protestant Orthodoxy

Early		High		Late
1	2	1	2	
1565– 1618	1618– 1640	1640– 1685	1685– 1725	Post– 1725

FIGURE 2

The theological and ecclesiastical context of the Synod of Dort's *regulae*, then, is the end of the era of Reformed theology known as the first phase of early orthodoxy.¹⁵ As Muller summarizes, this was a transitional year in which the Reformed theology of John Calvin, Wolfgang Musculus, Peter Martyr Vermigli, and Andreas Hyperius passed to a new generation who solidified a confessional orthodoxy.¹⁶

Social Context

This pronouncement came not only out of that theological context, but also out of the political and social

13. Howard B. Spaan, *Christian Reformed Church Government* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1968), 208; J. L. Schaver, *Christian Reformed Church Government* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1937), 123; Biešterveld and Kuyper, *Ecclesiastical Manual*, 187; Brandt, *The History of the Reformation and Other Ecclesiastical Transactions in and About the Low-Countries*, 3:320.

The Latin text from the Post-Acta may be found in *De post-acta van Dordrecht*, ed. H. H. Kuyper (Amsterdam: Höveker & Wormser, 1899), 184–86:

Regulae de observatione Sabbathi, seu diei Dominici, à D.D. Professoribus, sum fratrum Zelandorum consensus, conceptae, praelectae atque approbatae fuerent hae sequentes.

I. In Quarto Legis divinae praecepto aliquid est Ceremoniale, aliquid Morale.

II. Ceremoniale fuit quies diei septimi à creatione, et rigida ejusdem diei observatione populo Judaico peculiariter praescripta.

III. Morale verò, quod certus et status dies cultui Dei sit destinatus, ac tanta quies quanta ad Dei cultum sanctamque illius meditationem est necessaria.

IV. Abrogato Sabbatho Judaeorum, dies Dominicus à Christianis est solemniter sanctificandus.

V. Hic dies inde ab Apostolis in priscà Ecclesià Catholicà semper fuit observatus.

VI. Idem dies sic cultui divino est consecrandus, ut in eo cessetur ab omnibus operibus servilibus, exceptis ijs, quae sunt charitatis et praesentis necessitas, et ab hujusmodi recreationibus, quae DEI cultum impediunt.

14. W. Robert Godfrey, "The Dutch Reformed Response," in *Discord, Dialog, and Concord: Studies in the Lutheran Reformation's Formula of Concord*, ed. Lewis W. Spitz and Wenzel Lohff (Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress Press, 1977), 166.

15. Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725*, Volume One: Prolegomena to Theology (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 30–32. Hereafter, Muller, *PRRD*.

16. Muller, *PRRD*, 31.

context of the Dutch revolt that broke out in 1572 and was not settled until 1648 at the end of the Eighty-Years' War. William of Orange (1533–1584) sought to keep the seventeen provinces of the Low Countries united against Spain in a political revolt, not a religious crusade, since he relied upon Catholic nobility for financing and troops. With the Pacification of Ghent in November 1576 and the Spanish acceptance in the Union of Brussels in January 1577, religious toleration came to the Netherlands. Revolt flared up again, though, and led to the seven Northern provinces forming into the Union of Utrecht in January 1579, while the southern provinces, led mainly by Catholic nobles, united into the Union of Arras in May 1579. On July 26, 1581, the Union of Utrecht rejected Philip II's (1527–1598) claim to be sovereign over all the provinces of the Netherlands.

This led to social, political, and theological complexities throughout the Netherlands. For example, Godfrey has shown how, in 1580, the province of Holland passed a law allowing both Reformed and Lutheran churches to exist at a time in which the Reformed church was supposed to have a favored position. This inevitably led to opposition from the Reformed ministers.¹⁷

Another issue was that of ministerial appointments. The earliest Dutch Reformed church orders specified that ministers' calling was an ecclesiastical affair. Yet theory often gave way to practice in places such as Rotterdam, where the town council sought to impose Pieter Hyperphragmus upon the church and where the church was forced to compromise in dismissing its orthodox minister, Aegidius Johannes Frisius.¹⁸ Other

issues show the constant struggles of the Reformed churches in various locales with the magistrates, such as with the regulation of school teachers, control of diaconal ministry to the poor, and control over access to communion.¹⁹ It was this latter issue that opened up the issue of the Sabbath.

The Reformed sought godly communities, though they as a church made up only ten percent of the population in 1587 and less than twenty-five percent by 1622.²⁰ Even in the strongholds of Calvinism, the provinces of Holland and Zeeland, the Reformed church was still a minority of the population up to 1650.²¹ Alongside the Reformed movement were those who were sympathetic politically and socially, known as *liefhebbers* (lovers of arts and liberty) or *toehoeders* (auditors). Yet these did not unite to the Reformed churches, as most of the people of the Netherlands did not. The Sabbath was a major issue since the ordinary affairs of towns as well as social events competed directly with Reformed services. Andrew Pettegree illustrates this with an account of a conversation between a Reformed minister and a local authority in Dordrecht, in which the minister requested moral legislation. The burgomaster replied that it was the church's task to discipline. Yet therein lay the issue. The Reformed church had jurisdiction not over an entire parish, but only over those within the parish that were members of the church.²² Even in towns where the church's and magistrates' interests overlapped and where civil moral ordinances were passed, social events such as games, theaters, dances, and fairs were not outlawed. Pettegree concludes his chapter, saying, "Notwithstanding frequent protests from synods, and from the classis, there is no sign that even in Dordrecht any magistrate or state official did anything to enforce Sunday observance in the period before 1590; abuse of the Sabbath remained a running sore until well into the seventeenth century."²³ As Alexander Leighton said of the Netherlands and Sabbath observance in 1624,

This sin cries in England; and roares in Holland, where by open shops, and other works of their calling, they proclaim, with open mouth, their little regard of God, or his Sabbath.... I wish to God that the United Provinces, and all others that professe the Gospele, would looke to this.²⁴

This situation gave rise to the preachers of the *Nadere Reformatie* (Dutch Further Reformation) to refuse to use the term "Sunday" (*zondag*) and instead to call it "sins-day" (*Zonden-dag*), because of the prevalence of ungodliness in Dutch society.²⁵

17. Godfrey, "The Dutch Reformed Response," 168–70.

18. Andrew Pettegree, "Coming to Terms with Victory: The Upbuilding of a Calvinist Church in Holland, 1572–1590," in *Calvinism in Europe, 1540–1620*, ed. Andrew Pettegree, Alastair Duke, and Gillian Lewis (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 164–65.

19. Pettegree, "Coming to Terms with Victory," 168–74. On the issue of church discipline, excommunication, and Lord's Supper access, see Christine Kooi, *Liberty and Religion: Church and State in Leiden's Reformation, 1572–1620*, Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought 82 (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 90–124.

20. Alastair Duke, "The Ambivalent Face of Calvinism in the Netherlands 1561–1618," in *International Calvinism 1541–1715*, ed. Menna Prestwich (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 109–10.

21. Godfrey, "Calvin and Calvinism in the Netherlands," 103.

22. Pettegree, "Coming to Terms with Victory," 176.

23. Pettegree, "Coming to Terms with Victory," 178.

24. Alexander Leighton, *Speculum Belli sacri: or the Lookingglasse of the Holy War* (n.p., 1624), 267–68, 279.

25. Karel Blei, *The Netherlands Reformed Church, 1571–2005*, trans. Allan J. Jansen, The Historical Series of the Reformed Church in America, No. 51 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 42. On the *Nadere*

The context of Dort's *regulae*, then, was that while Reformed theology was becoming worked out and applied in new situations, often its implementation was not as complete, universal, or successful as the Reformed desired.

ANALYSIS OF DORT'S *REGULAE*

Before moving to a comparison of Dort's *regulae* with an exemplary English Puritan, a brief analysis is necessary. Dort's rules are presented in thesis form, which was a common scholastic (*scholasticus*) tool in the universities in the seventeenth century.²⁶ As Muller notes, "Scholasticism, properly understood, indicates a method, capable of presenting and arguing a variety of theological and philosophical conclusions, and not a particular theology or philosophy."²⁷ Unlike the Canons, which were written in a popular, prose form complete with spelled out Bible passages, the rules were written in a terse form and intended as a communication between professors, ministers, and the entire Synod.

1. There is in the fourth commandment of the divine law a ceremonial (*Ceremoniale*) and a moral (*Morale*) element.

The first rule hints at the traditional medieval doctrine of the threefold division of the law.²⁸ So commonplace was this that John Calvin could call it a "common division" and Melancthon, "the old and customary divisions."²⁹ Later in the seventeenth century, Francis Turretin would write in his *Institutio theologiae elencticae* that the law was "usually distinguished into three species" (*Lex per Mosem lata in tres species solet distingui*).³⁰

Where did this division of the law come from? In speaking of Calvin's doctrine of the law, I. John Hesselink traced the threefold division back to the medieval theologian, St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274):³¹

We must therefore distinguish three kinds of precept in the Old Law; viz., 'moral' precepts, which are dictated by the natural law; 'ceremonial' precepts, which are determinations of the Divine worship; and 'judicial' precepts, which are determinations of the justice to be maintained among men.³²

Aquinas located this distinction in Deuteronomy 6:1, which mentions the commandments (moral), statutes (ceremonial), and judgments (judicial) of the LORD. As well, he looks to Paul's words in Romans 7:12, which speak of the law as holy (ceremonial), righteous (judicial), and good (moral).

Just prior to Aquinas, John of La Rochelle sought to reestablish the traditional Christian reading of the law against William of Auvergne in his *Tractatus de praeceptis et legibus* (ca. 1236–1245). John wrote that the law was divided into three: "*moralia* clarified the law of nature; *iudicialia* repressed evil desire and served as a source for the wicked; *ceremonialia* signified the law of grace."³³ Aquinas, though, cites Augustine (354–430) for this distinction. Augustine said in his treatise against Faustus, "For example, 'Thou shalt not covet' is a moral precept, 'Thou shalt circumcise every male on the eighth day' is a symbolical precept."³⁴ When answering how he would answer a Jew as to why he did not follow all the law if he believed the Old Testament, he said, "The moral precepts of the law are observed by Christians; the symbolical precepts were properly observed during the time that the things now revealed were prefigured."³⁵ The Fathers made distinctions between different kinds of laws. Tertullian (160–220) distinguished "the primordial law" or "the natural law" from "the sacerdotal law" or "the Levitical law."³⁶ Justin Martyr (100–165) makes a threefold

Reformatie see Joel R. Beeke, "The Dutch Second Reformation (*Nadere Reformatie*)," *Calvin Theological Journal* 28, 2 (Nov. 1993): 298–327.

26. Donald Sinnema, "Reformed Scholasticism and the Synod of Dort (1618–19)," in *John Calvin's Institutes: His Magnum Opus*, Proceedings of the Second South African Congress for Calvin Research, July 31–August 3, 1984 (Potchefstroom, South Africa: Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education, 1986), 469–70.

27. Muller, *PRRD*, 1:35.

28. For a brief and popular treatment in defense of the threefold division of the law see Jonathan Bayes, *The Threefold Division of the Law* (Newcastle upon Tyne, England: The Christian Institute, 2005). For a more thorough defense, see Philip S. Ross, *From the Finger of God: The Biblical and Theological Basis for the Threefold Division of the Law* (Fearn, Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2010).

29. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 4.20.14; Philip Melancthon, *Melancthon on Christian Doctrine: Loci Communes 1555*, trans. and ed. Clyde L. Manschreck (1965; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), 83; cf. Heinrich Bullinger, *The Decades of Henry Bullinger* (1849–52; repr., Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2004), 2.2; Johannem Polyandrum, Andream Rivetum, Antonium Walaenum, and Antonium Thysium, *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae*, ed. H. Bavinck (Leiden: Didericum Donner, 1881), XVII.v.

30. *Francisci Turretini Opera: Tom. II* (New York: Robert Carter, 1847), 11.24.1.

31. I. John Hesselink, *Calvin's Concept of the Law* (Allison Park, Pa.: Pickwick Publications, 1992), 102.

32. *Summa Theologica* I Ilae, xcix, 4.

33. Cited in Stephen J. Casselli, "The Threefold Division of the Law in the Thought of Aquinas," *Westminster Theological Journal* 61, 2 (Fall 1999): 198.

34. *Contra Faustum*, 6.2.

35. *Contra Faustum*, 10.2.

36. Tertullian, *An Answer to the Jews*, 2 and 5.

division for piety, for shadowing the Messiah, and for the people's hard hearts.³⁷

2. The ceremonial element is the rest of the seventh day after creation, and the strict (*rigida*) observance of that day imposed especially on the Jewish people.

The second rule goes on to discern what precisely was ceremonial in the fourth commandment. Peculiarly ceremonial, that is, accidental, to the fourth commandment are two things: first, the day upon which the Sabbath fell—the seventh day—and second, the strictness of the commandment under the Old Covenant with Israel (Ex. 35:1–3; Num. 15:32–35). As we will see in relation to Ames, this was the common teaching of the orthodox Reformed.

3. The moral element consists in the fact that a certain definite day (*certus et status dies*) is set aside for worship (*cultui Dei*) and so much rest as is needful (*necessaria*) for worship (*Dei cultum*) and hallowed meditation.

The third rule discerns what was moral, that is, substantial, to the fourth commandment. The moral element consisted in three things. First, that one particular day in seven be set aside; second, that this particular day be devoted to worship and meditation; and third, that this particular day include rest.

4. The Sabbath of the Jews having been abolished (*abrogato*), the day of the Lord must be solemnly hallowed (*solemniter sanctificandus*) by Christians.

The fourth rule pertained to the change in the history of salvation of the day in which the fourth commandment was to be observed. Since creation the Sabbath day was the seventh day of the week. This was observed by the Jews in the wilderness (Ex. 16:22–30) and reiterated at Mount Sinai in the law (Ex. 20:8–11). This particular day on which the moral element of the commandment was observed was abolished (*abrogato*). Now Christians solemnly sanctify the Lord's Day.

37. Jean Daniélou, *Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1973), 223.

38. As late as 1672 John Owen complained about "sundry divines of the United Provinces, who call the doctrine of the Sabbath, *Figmentum Anglicanum*." "Letter 79. To John Eliot," in *The Correspondence of John Owen (1616–1683): With an Account of His Life and Work*, ed. Peter Toon (London: James Clarke, 1970), 154.

5. Since the times of the apostles this day has always been observed by the old catholic church (*priscâ Ecclesiâ Catholicâ*).

Rule five gives further evidence of this practice by making an appeal to the history of the church, claiming that "the old catholic church" (*priscâ Ecclesiâ Catholicâ*) has always (*semper*) observed this day. In saying this, the Dort divines were identifying their doctrine and practice as that of the historic Christian church and not just the patristic age, but the ancient and primitive age of the apostles. Therefore, the divines used this word to make the point that their doctrine was not a novelty, but biblical and historical.

6. This day must be so consecrated to worship (*cultui divino est consecrandus*) that on that day we rest (*cessetur*) from all servile works (*omnibus operibus servilibus*), except those which charity (*charitatis*) and present necessity (*praesentis necessitas*) require; and also from all such recreations (*recreationibus*) as interfere with worship (*DEI cultum impediunt*).

Finally, rule six gives the practical requirements of the Lord's Day for Christians. While being only a bare outline of the things required (worship and rest) as well as the things to be forbidden (servile labors and recreations), this rule can be read as nothing less than a moderately sabbatarian rule. While it is true that English delegates to the Synod of Dort complained about the lack of Sabbath observance in the town of Dordrecht and some of the Dutch theologians complained about the English's practice of the Sabbath as *Figmentum Anglicanum* (an English figment), this needs to be read in light of the social and cultural struggles facing the Reformed churches in practically implementing the Sabbath in their day, not as a rebuke of Dutch Reformed principles.³⁸ For while the *regulae* do not say everything there is to say in terms of principle and practice, they are clearly to be located within the realm of orthodox and even moderately Puritan thought.

COMPARING DORT'S *REGULAE* WITH AMES

One way to highlight this is to show both the continuities and discontinuities between Dort's *regulae* and English Puritanism on the topic of the Sabbath, which can best be seen in a comparison between Dort and an exemplar of the English Puritan movement. William Ames not only taught at the Dutch University of

Franeker, but he had previously been the personal secretary to Johannes Bogerman, president of the Synod of Dort.³⁹ His role in the *Collatio Hagiensis* and his subsequent treatise, *Coronis ad Collationem Hagiensem*, no doubt had an impact on Bogerman's choice of Ames as his secretary.

According to William Ames in his "Preface" to William Bradshaw's *English Puritanisme*, Lord's Day observance was a distinctive mark of the Puritan, "In that they hold the Lord's Day to be of divine institution, and say that it ought wholly to be spent in an holy rest."⁴⁰ Ames expanded upon this terse statement in several places in his works. For example, the longest section of his *Medulla Theologiae* is book 2, chapter 15, entitled, "The Time of Worship."⁴¹ He also devoted book 4, chapter 33, of his *De Conscientia* to this issue. Below is a summary of Ames's thought in light of Dort. As is typical of Ames's Ramist approach, he deals first with the principle of the Sabbath before moving to the practice of the Sabbath. He includes a comparison with Dort's first five *regulae*.⁴²

Ames begins with natural reason, which not only "dictates that some time be set apart for the worship of God"⁴³ but also "a natural moral law" known even to the heathen is to observe this on "some particular day."⁴⁴ Ames then moves to the realm of "positive law" which "decrees that this holy day should occur at least once in a week, or in the compass of seven."⁴⁵ Setting worship one day every week was not a ceremonial or temporal law because it was not only commanded of the Jews, but was in fact evidenced in the creation account in which "the seventh day, or one day out of seven" was set apart.⁴⁶ Beyond natural reason and the law that is derived from God's example of resting, the institution and moral authority of the Sabbath command is "primarily based on the express command in the decalogue."⁴⁷ Here Dort's third rule that a "certain definite day is set aside for worship" and Ames are in agreement.

Ames shows his honest wrestling with the Sabbath. He is no mere proof-texting sabbatarian; he describes what he calls "the matter" of the fourth commandment as being "not in degree or mode of the same moral nature as that of almost all the other commandments, for it is part of the positive law and not natural law."⁴⁸ What he means is that while the first three commandments of the Decalogue are negatively stated ("Thou shalt not"), the fourth is stated positively before being addressed negatively.⁴⁹ Here Dort's first rule—that there is a ceremonial and moral part to the fourth commandment—and Ames are in agreement.

Ames then pauses to answer several objections

concerning the Sabbath. Some argued this command was ceremonial, but Ames points back to previous discussion as well as to the fact that there are ten "moral precepts" in the law, not only nine.⁵⁰ Some argued that the moral precept of this command was "only that some time or certain days be assigned to divine worship." Ames responds that these "do not make the ordinance any more moral than the building of the tabernacle and temple among the Jews."⁵¹ By this Ames means that

39. For a brief introduction to the relationship between English and Dutch thought, see J. Douglas MacMillan, "The Connection between 17th Century British and Dutch Calvinism," in *Not By Might Nor By Power*, Papers Read at the 1988 Westminster Conference (London: Westminster Conference, 1989), 22–31. For biography on Ames see Keith L. Sprunger, *The Learned Doctor William Ames: Dutch Backgrounds of English and American Puritanism* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1972). For the theology of Ames see John Dykstra Eusden, "Introduction," in *The Marrow of Theology* (1968; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 1–70, and Joel R. Beeke and Todd M. Rester, "The Learned Doctor William Ames and A Sketch of the Christian's Catechism," in *A Sketch of the Christian's Catechism*, trans. Todd M. Rester, *Classic Reformed Theology* 1, gen. ed. R. Scott Clark (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2008), xii–xxxii.

40. William Ames, "To the Unbiased Reader" (London, 1660). This tract was prefaced to William Bradshaw's *English Puritanisme* as early as 1610 by Ames. It was finally distinguished as the preface to the work by Ames in the 1660 edition of Bradshaw's *Several Treatises of Worship and Ceremonies* (London, 1660). For an account of the history of this tract see Keith L. Sprunger, *The Learned Doctor William Ames: Dutch Backgrounds of English and American Puritanism* (Urbana, Ill.; University of Illinois Press, 1972), 96–97.

41. William Ames, *The Marrow of Theology*, trans. and ed. John Dykstra Eusden (1968; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 287–300. Hereafter, Ames, *Marrow*.

42. For more on the relationship between Ramus and Ames see Keith L. Sprunger, "Ames, Ramus, and the Method of Puritan Theology," *Harvard Theological Review* 59, 2 (April 1966): 133–51.

43. Ames, *Marrow*, 2.15.3.

44. Ames, *Marrow*, 2.15.5.

45. Ames, *Marrow*, 2.15.6.

46. Ames, *Marrow*, 2.15.8. Ames went on in 2.15.10 to answer the objection that there was no account of the patriarchs observing the Sabbath day:

1. Everything the patriarchs did was not recorded in Scripture.
2. Even if the patriarchs did neglect the Sabbath, this did not nullify its original institution.

3. Before the Sabbath command was given the Jews observed the Sabbath (Ex. 16:24–30), as the past tense is used, "The LORD has given you the Sabbath" (Ex. 16:29).

4. Even among the heathen there were traces of Sabbath observance (e.g., Josephus, *Against Apion* 2.40).

5. The Israelites' neglect of the day was rebuked with the word, "Remember."

47. Ames, *Marrow*, 2.15.11.

48. Ames, *Marrow*, 2.15.12.

49. Ames, *Marrow*, 2.15.12.

50. Ames, *Marrow*, 2.15.14.

51. Ames, *Marrow*, 2.15.15.

these stripped the commandment of its authority and applicability. These latter argued that the prescriptions in the law for annual feast days, new moons, and other days were ceremonial and “teach us that some suitable days should be appointed for public worship” and that since this “contains no command at all for men collectively or individually” and “private men do not have the power to ordain certain days for public worship,” only public officials were authorized to call for days of worship.⁵² Ames responds with the logical conclusion, that since “no particular commandment is given them... they may act according to their own wisdom in setting apart days for public worship,” which Ames says could have been every twenty or thirty days without breaking the fourth commandment.⁵³

Does this mean that there were no ceremonial aspects at all in the fourth commandment? Again, Ames is not arguing in a simplistic manner for complete continuity with regards to the Sabbath, but instead upheld the classic distinctions within the law. If there were ceremonial aspects to the fourth commandment, they were only “an addition or something extrinsic to the nature and first institution of the sabbath” but not to the “particular moral significance of the institution of the seventh day.”⁵⁴ The actual observance of the Sabbath day, then, was not ceremonial, and this observance was no more ceremonial than the fourth commandment can be said to have been judicial because of the penalties associated with it.⁵⁵ The ceremonial elements were twofold, in agreement with Dort’s second rule. First, the seventh day observance, given as an accommodation to “the special state of the Jews.”⁵⁶ Second, the “more strict observance” given “in those days of tutelage and bondage which is not binding in all ages.”⁵⁷ This strictness, though, does apply to Christians, since the prohibition of kindling of fire and preparing of food were given for

very particular situations, since fires were kindled at the tabernacle and manna was given from heaven.⁵⁸ Finally, Ames answered another objection of some who held that the Sabbath was ceremonial because it was given after the deliverance from Egypt. Ames’s response was that all the commandments, then, would have been ceremonial, since they all refer to the deliverance in the preface to the law and that there is nothing in particular about the Sabbath that ties it to their deliverance.⁵⁹

The final principal issue Ames deals with in relation to the Sabbath concerns the day on which the Sabbath occurred. In harmony with Dort’s second rule, Ames states that God ordained the last day of the week as the Sabbath at creation.⁶⁰ As Dort said in its fourth rule, Ames likewise said that this day has been changed. Its change was not by human authority, but divine authority, since only He who is Lord of the Sabbath can change it, which is why it is now called the Lord’s Day.⁶¹ As Dort said in its fifth rule that the Lord’s Day has been observed “since the times of the apostles,” Ames wrote that the authority of the apostles to change the day in which to celebrate worship was exercised not only in their “propounding the doctrine of the gospel by word of mouth and writing” but also because they were “guided by the Spirit in holy practices.”⁶² In relation to Dort’s first five *regulae*, Ames propounded substantially the same doctrine of the Sabbath and Lord’s Day. The only difference was that while Dort said the strictness imposed upon the Jews was ceremonial and thus abolished, Ames said that the particular application of picking up sticks and kindling fires was abolished, but that there was a moral element to this strictness that applied to the Christian observance of the Lord’s Day.

Ames then moves to the practical application of the commandment with the general observation that guides him: “Experience also teaches that license and the neglect of holy things more and more prevail when due respect is not given to the Lord’s Day.”⁶³ Ames’s practical exposition is divided into two areas: rest and sanctification of that rest.⁶⁴ This was what Dort also said in its sixth rule: “This day must be so consecrated to *worship* that on that day we *rest* from all servile works, except those which charity and present necessity require; and also from all such recreations as interfere with worship” (emphasis added).

Like Dort, Ames defined “rest” as “the cessation from all work which might hinder divine worship.” What is meant by “work”? Ames goes on to define this as “all works properly called servile.”⁶⁵ Servile works are “those to which servants or servile men are accustomed—all mechanical work and those in which great bodily labor

52. Ames, *Marrow*, 2.15.16.

53. Ames, *Marrow*, 2.15.16.

54. Ames, *Marrow*, 2.15.17.

55. Ames, *Marrow*, 2.15.18, 21.

56. Ames, *Marrow*, 2.15.21, 22.

57. Ames, *Marrow*, 2.15.22.

58. Ames, *Marrow*, 2.15.24.

59. Ames, *Marrow*, 2.15.25.

60. Ames, *Marrow*, 2.15.26.

61. Ames, *Marrow*, 2.15.27.

62. Ames, *Marrow*, 2.15.28. In fact, Ames said that the day was actually changed by Christ through his apostles (2.15.30) and that it was not a mere tradition, contra Rome (citing Roman Catholic writers Suarez and Pope Alexander III against Rome itself) (2.15.31).

63. Ames, *Marrow*, 2.15.33.

64. Ames, *Marrow*, 2.15.36.

65. Ames, *Marrow*, 2.15.37.

is required, such as plowing and digging.” In addition to these, “all of our usual work is forbidden.”⁶⁶ In a word, Ames said all our work is forbidden, even though it may not be servile or mechanical, since the Lord says, “On the sabbath you shall not do any work.”⁶⁷ Ames clarifies that this cessation of labor and rest pertains to all men, and not just servants or those of low degree. For freemen, Sabbath rest means natural and civil things that lead to gain and profit such as “studying and the pursuit of the liberal arts...traveling and handling business affairs.”⁶⁸ Ames does go on to state what is not explicitly stated by Dort. While Ames distances himself from some divines who conclude from Isaiah 58:6 that “every human word or thought” is sin on the Lord’s Day, Ames stated that only words and thoughts that pertain to our wealth and profit or are “unlawful and repugnant to the exercise of worship” are forbidden, citing Isaiah 58:3 and 58:6. These are called “solicitous cares” about external employments.⁶⁹ Ames also cited Exodus 34:21 to show that working during harvest time was forbidden, Exodus 31:13 to show that work on the holy tabernacle was forbidden, Exodus 31:13 to show that ordinary journeys were forbidden, and Nehemiah 13 to show that visiting markets was forbidden.⁷⁰ In *De Conscientia*, Ames stated the meaning of “rest” more succinctly:

What things otherwise lawful, are unlawful on the Lord’s Day? All those employments which do notably hinder a man from attending upon God and his worship, either public, or private, are regularly, and ordinarily unlawful, from the end of this institution.⁷¹

Concerning recreation, like Dort’s prohibition “from all such recreations as interfere with worship,” Ames said all works belonging to pleasure and recreation were forbidden “if they be such as hinder from attending on God.”⁷²

What about Dort’s double exception to the command to rest in the cases of charity and present necessity? Ames actually mentions four exceptions. Ames lists works imposed by special necessity according to Matthew 12:11. These works were not those “which men make or pretend to make necessary,” but those which the providence of God brings unexpectedly and are unavoidable—for example, the need of a doctor’s care for our neighbor.⁷³ Ames agrees with Dort in *De Conscientia* that works of mercy are permitted.⁷⁴ However, Ames also lists works that are part of honorable conduct, that is, those in which the “modest delight of life is cherished, and exercises of piety are not hindered,” although this is not to be taken too far as “sumptuous preparations for banquets, cannot consist with the due rest of this day.”⁷⁵

Finally, Ames lists works that affect worship, citing Matthew 12:5 and John 5:8–9.⁷⁶ These latter two exceptions do not contradict Dort and in fact may be subsumed under charity and necessity, respectively.

Like Dort’s third and sixth rules, sanctification of rest is the “chief matter” of the day.⁷⁷ The chief place of worship on the Sabbath even led Ames to specify that services should be held both before and after noon, citing the burnt offerings of the tabernacle in Numbers 28:9, which should happen “in a Church well constituted, and enjoying her liberty,” citing Psalm 92:1 and Acts 20:7.⁷⁸ The rest of the day is to be spent in “pious activity,” as the added Sabbath offering to the daily sacrifices in Numbers 28:10 evidenced.⁷⁹ Public worship was to be celebrated with Scripture reading, meditation, prayer, holy discourse, and contemplation of the works of God.⁸⁰ By these “we may be more open to public worship and worship may become truly effective in us.”⁸¹ In *De Conscientia*, Ames stated it thus: “We are so to be employed in those exercises, that we may get spiritual refreshment thereby, by virtue of which we may be made the fitter to pass the rest of the week holily [in a holy manner].”⁸² This meant that contrary to this holy observance was business, trade, feasts, sports, and anything else that “draw[s] the mind of man away from the exercise of religion” (2.15.54).⁸³

While Ames was more explicit in several areas than Dort, what we learn from this comparison is that Dort and Ames present substantially the same doctrine and

66. Ames, *Marrow*, 2.15.39.

67. Ames, *Marrow*, 2.15.40.

68. Ames, *Marrow*, 2.15.41; cf. William Ames, *Conscience with the Power and Cases Thereof* (London, 1639), 4.33.5. Spelling modernized. Hereafter, Ames, *Conscience*.

69. Ames, *Marrow*, 2.15.42; cf. Ames, *Conscience*, 4.33.8.

70. Ames, *Marrow*, 2.15.42.

71. Ames, *Conscience*, 4.33.2. Ames went on to say that there was no difference between “a mechanical or corporal work, which is called servile, and that which is called liberal” since by synecdoche, when servile works were forbidden, all works were forbidden. *Conscience*, 4.33.3.

72. Ames, *Conscience*, 4.33.4.

73. Ames, *Marrow*, 2.15.43; cf. Ames, *Conscience*, 4.33.9, 10–11.

74. Ames, *Conscience*, 4.33.13.

75. Ames, *Marrow*, 2.15.43; cf. Ames, *Conscience*, 4.33.15.

76. Ames, *Marrow*, 2.15.43; cf. Ames, *Conscience*, 4.33.14.

77. Ames, *Marrow*, 2.15.46.

78. Ames, *Marrow*, 2.15.46; cf. Ames, *Conscience*, 4.33.18.

79. Ames, *Marrow*, 2.15.47; cf. Ames, *Conscience*, 4.33.17.

80. Ames, *Conscience*, 4.33.20.

81. Ames, *Conscience*, 2.15.48.

82. Ames, *Conscience*, 4.33.21.

83. Ames, *Conscience*, 4.33.6; cf. 4.33.7 in which Ames said “those things which pertain to courts and judicatories” were also forbidden.

practice of the Sabbath or Lord's Day. While some have attempted to pit Puritanism against mainstream Reformed theology on this topic, the evidence is not there. For example, in 1636, King Charles I's chaplain, Peter Heylyn, sought to place a wedge between the two, saying that Ames "had learnt his lirry in England" and then taken it with him to the Netherlands and sought to impose a doctrine and practice embraced by no other reputable theologian.⁸⁴ Even Keith Sprunger has argued this in an article,⁸⁵ listing three marks of "Puritan Sabbatarianism":

- (1) the doctrine that the Sabbath, now Sunday or the Lord's Day, had been ordained by God as a day of worship and rest—"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy";
- (2) the cessation of work on Sunday so that it could be solely a day of worship and rest; all work except the most essential was to stop and shops must be closed;
- (3) the prohibition of frivolous recreation and sports on Sunday.⁸⁶

Judged by the standard of these three points, one hardly can see how the *regulae* of Dort could be considered anything other than "Puritan" or "Sabbatarian." Sprunger goes on to locate the difference between English and Dutch practice in the failure of Dutch magistrates to implement laws concerning the Sabbath as the English had done.⁸⁷ For this reason, Dort can be called a moderately Puritan position on the Sabbath.

RELEVANCE OF THE DORT *REGULAE*

Having examined the context and substance of Dort's *regulae* and having compared them to William Ames's teaching, it remains to say a word about the ongoing relevance of Dort's *regulae*. This pronouncement of Dort is a part of the historic faith and practice of churches in the Dutch Reformation. An example of their continuing relevance and use in the Reformed churches is the fact that, in the early decades of the

Christian Reformed Church, Dort's *regulae* were adopted at the Synod of 1881. They were then reaffirmed at the Synod of 1926.

The six points of 1881 are to be regarded, even as the three points of 1924, as an interpretation of our Confession. First, the Synod of 1881 did not add a new confession to the Forms of Unity, but accepted the six points as an interpretation of the confessional writings, in so far as they express the Reformed position relative to the fourth commandment. Secondly, such an interpretation given by synod must be regarded as the official interpretation, and is, therefore, binding for every officer and member of our denominational group. Thirdly, one cannot place one's personal interpretation of the Confessions or a part thereof above the official interpretation of synod. That would make void the significance and power of the Forms of Unity.⁸⁸

The context of this reaffirmation was a case between the Jamestown Christian Reformed Church consistory and its minister, the Rev. H. Wierenga, who preached on Lord's Day 38 and was found to be in error.⁸⁹ In response to his lengthy appeals, the Synodical committee found his sermon to contradict the six points of Dort that had been previously adopted by Synod 1881. His sermon contradicted point one, that there is a moral element; point three, that a definite day is set aside; point four, that the Lord's Day must be kept holy; and point six. On this last point of Dort the committee felt it necessary to emphasize that "there is an imperative 'must' in this sixth point, an imperative that the ethical element of the law justified, that certainly pronounces the doing of certain things sinful because it is done on the Sabbath day."⁹⁰ Synod 1926 upheld Rev. Wierenga's suspension from the pulpit and deposition from office as just on the basis of the *regulae* of Dort.⁹¹

These *regulae* continue to be a relevant statement of the Reformed doctrine and practice of the Lord's Day as well as a helpful guide in our time and place. It goes without saying that we live in a time that also could be described with the words surrounding Dort's discussion—days of "increasing abuses and desecration of the Sabbath." We see this not only in the world at large around us, but within the professing church of Jesus Christ as well. There are three areas of need in which the Dort pronouncement would serve the Reformed churches well today.

1. *For the witness of the churches.* This is seen in two ways: first, we live in a time of great confusion and even lawlessness when it comes to the Sabbath or Lord's Day,

84. Peter Heylyn, *The History of the Sabbath. In Two Books* (London, 1636), 2:184–88.

85. Keith L. Sprunger, "English and Dutch Sabbatarianism and the Development of Puritan Social Theology (1600–1660)," *Church History* 51, 1 (1982):24–38.

86. Sprunger, "English and Dutch Sabbatarianism," 26.

87. Sprunger, "English and Dutch Sabbatarianism," 28–29.

88. *Acts* 1926, art. 136, pp. 191–92.

89. *Acta der Synode 1926 van de Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk* (n.p., 1926), 79, 89–94.

90. *Acta der Synode 1926*, 187; cf. 185–88.

91. *Acta der Synode 1926*, 188–200.

not only in the world, but also among Calvinistic-type evangelicals and Presbyterians.⁹² Second, as the Reformed churches continue to expand their witness through church planting and evangelism of unbelievers, as well as by the infusion of numerous newly Reformed Christians, Reformed ministers and elders need to be able to present a common position on this issue to all.

2. *For the unity of the churches.* In light of the above, it is a pastoral duty to give members biblical and historically tested principles and practical guidance on the Reformed understanding of the fourth commandment. For example, one Dutch Reformed denomination speaks of its congregations as having covenanted together that its consistories “shall call the congregation together for corporate worship twice on each Lord’s Day.”⁹³ By keeping Dort’s pronouncement ever before it, the churches will have official, public principles concerning the Sabbath or Lord’s Day. What is often described as a peculiar practice in calling two services each Lord’s Day will have a rationale via the *regulae*. The beauty of Dort’s pronouncement is that it is broad enough to protect Reformed churches both from legalism and libertinism.

3. *For the identity of the churches.* With more and more cross-pollination between members of NAPARC congregations in the twenty-first century and the prevalence of the internet, many Christians come to Reformed churches with the understanding that they hold to the so-called “Continental” view of the Sabbath or Lord’s Day over against the so-called “Puritan” view. This contrast is posited by comparing and contrasting Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 103 with the Westminster Larger Catechism Q&A 115–121. The practical result is that many use this as a means to reject any regulations and to live in a loose way on the Lord’s Day. The Synod of Dort’s *regulae* reflect the historic Reformed understanding of the Sabbath or Lord’s Day and is the best interpretation of the Three Forms of Unity, vis-à-vis, the Belgic Confession Article 25 and the Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 103.⁹⁴

CONCLUSION

We have placed the Synod of Dort’s six “rules for the observance of the Sabbath or Lord’s Day” within the theological period of early orthodoxy as a new generation of Reformed theologians and ministers sought to apply and develop their inheritance from men such as John Calvin. We have also placed this development within the struggles of the early seventeenth-century Dutch Reformed churches with the Dutch civil magistrates as they sought to implement their new independence from

Spanish rule. We have also seen that Dort’s rules were a clear Christian presentation founded upon centuries-old exegesis and distinctions of Augustine and Aquinas. Finally, Dort has been shown to be a moderately Puritan and Reformed position on the Sabbath or Lord’s Day, contrary to the thesis of others. As a moderately Puritan position on the Sabbath in such a tumultuous time as seventeenth-century Netherlands, Dort’s *regulae* give to us a clear, balanced, and pastoral direction as Reformed Christians and churches seek to sanctify the Lord’s Day in twenty-first-century culture. ■

In Brief: The Sabbath Day a Creation Ordinance

...Peter Martyr observes, that: “... the observation of the Sabbath did not begin when the law was given in Mount Sinai, but was celebrated long before that time; for when He blessed the seventh day, He bestowed something upon it, and this chiefly, that therein men should rest, and apply themselves to the service of God.

Therefore, seeing by his judgment men knew from the beginning that this day was sanctified, we must not think them so irreligious as to neglect it.”

And Athanasius, speaking upon occasion of the great difference that was between the writings of the philosophers and the prophets, and namely that the one was often contrary to the other, as those that taught but man’s doctrine; but the prophets did not dissent, either in foretelling of things to come, or in their doctrine; as being the prophets of the same God, speaking by the same Spirit, and delivering the same word, and one also teaching another; then he infers this general saying: *Quæ Moses docuit, eadem illa Abraham observavit, Noe cognita habibat*, etc. “The things which Moses taught, the same did Abraham observe, and Noah [18] also knew very well.” And then he shows it by some particulars, that the fathers by traditions did know and observe many of these things, which Moses did write of long after, and that the knowledge of them was not delivered first by him, but from Adam, and so to the rest, who received them himself of God. As he says, “Noah knew the difference of clean and

92. For example, see John MacArthur’s position in “Are the Sabbath laws binding on Christians today?” (<http://www.gty.org/Resources/Questions/QA135>); for Meredith G. Kline’s position see *God, Heaven and Har Magedon: A Covenantal Tale of Cosmos and Telos* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2006), 187–98.

93. Church Order of the United Reformed Churches in North America (Third edition, 2004), art. 37.

94. Cf. Idzerd Van Dellen and Martin Monsma, *The Church Order Commentary: A Brief Examination of the Church Order of the Christian Reformed Church* (1941, repr.: Wyoming, Mich.: Credo Books, 2003), 275–76.

unclean beasts, when he entered into the ark. And Abel was not ignorant of the first fruits, when he brought his offering unto God, for he had learned them of Adam, who had learned them of God” (Gen. 7:2; 4:4). Which as it is true of other things, then most of all of the Sabbath, which was of the greatest moment, and on which these things should be used; namely, the offering up of clean beasts, and the first fruits. And therefore some have thought (as said before) that this commandment should be placed first in order, because it is most ancient; which opinion of theirs, though the text of scripture does sufficiently confute, yet their reason is true, to wit, that this commandment was first delivered by lively voice, namely to Adam and Eve in paradise.

And a little after he [Daneau] adds:

Etsi more [iam] quodam, etc. Although the Heathen did after a manner keep holy some days, yet the seventh day was always observed of the Jews; that had they from the tradition of their fathers, unto whom God Himself did reveal, both that sacrifices were acceptable unto Him, and that He was well pleased with the seventh day, because therein He rested Himself.

Of which Master Zanchius speaks more fully and plainly, and leaving other men to the liberty of their own judgment, sets down his own opinion ingeniously and freely, in treating of these words of Moses, “The Lord blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it.” That is, he says:

He did separate it from the beginning to a holy rest, when as other days of the week were appointed to the affairs of this world. For seeing that He did rest Himself upon the seventh day from [19] the works of creation, and there was nothing more remaining to be done, therefore He would have this seventh day, by resting from other works, to be consecrated unto a work of another kind. And what could that be else, but that He did declare unto Adam and Eve, all things that He had done, and to what end He had created them, and what happiness was prepared for them in heaven; how they ought to worship Him, and other things which did appertain both to their duties, and to their everlasting happiness? I doubt not therefore (I will tell you my opinion, without the prejudice of others), I doubt not, I say, but that the Son of God taking upon Him the shape of a man, was occupied that whole seventh day in most holy colloquies with Adam; and that He did also fully make Himself known unto Adam and Eve, and did reveal the manner and order which He had used in creating of all things, and did exhort them both to meditate upon those works, and in them to

acknowledge their Creator, and to praise Him. And that by His own example He did admonish them to occupy themselves especially in this exercise of godliness, setting all other business aside; and also that they would so instruct and teach their children.

To be short, I doubt not, but that in that seventh day He did teach them all divinity; and did hold them occupied in hearing of Him, and in praising and giving thanks to God their Creator for so many and so great benefits. And unto this interpretation of this text I am led by these two reasons:

[(1.)] Whereof the first is taken from the sanctification of the Sabbath, which God has prescribed in the law; and that is that men forsaking all worldly business should give themselves to the contemplation of the works and benefits of God, and to the knowledge, and praising, and worshipping of God; and also that they neglecting the affections and works of their own flesh, should suffer God to work in them by His Holy Spirit. Therefore such was the sanctification of the seventh day (as concerning mankind) of which Moses speaks here.

[(2.)] Another reason is, because that Adam ought to understand this sanctification of such a day, therefore it is probable that the Son of God did open this unto Adam and Eve both in plain words, and also by His own example. For even God also is said to rest upon that [20] day, and in Exodus (Exod. 20:11) He does exhort unto the sanctification of the Sabbath by His own example; therefore He did sanctify it with Adam and Eve. This is my opinion of the sanctification of the seventh day, which God rested from all His work that He had made: namely, that Christ did spend that whole day in instructing our first parents, and in exercising them in the worship of God, and in admonishing them, that they should teach the same things unto their posterity.

Thus far Master Zanchius: in which he shows, that not only God did even from the beginning command our first parents to keep holy this day, but also that they were bound from that time to teach it to their posterity. And so we may be sure that they did, and so the day was continually kept in the Church, and of the people of God; although the heathen in the posterity of Ham and others did altogether neglect it, as they did also the pure worship of God, long before the flood.

Nicholas Bownd, *Sabbathum Veteris et Novi Testamenti: or, The True Doctrine of the Sabbath* (Naphtali Press and Reformation Heritage Books, 2015), 51–54. ■