

The Christian Sabbath: Destiny not Drudgery

By Roy Mohon

The Christian Sabbath is Sunday, the first day of the week. Reformed Sabbath observance is often caricatured as drudgery being too plain in appearance for the natural man because he fails to enter into its spiritual essence. This is no new thing for throughout the centuries, both before and after the coming of Christ, colourful annual festivals have had more appeal to the natural man than the steady march of Sabbaths fulfilling God's predestined purpose for his Church in history. When the spiritual man is less vigorous about Sabbath observance, the church becomes less effective in the world. Conversely, when the church is more diligent in following God's prescriptions for his worship, expectations and assurance of God reviving his work strengthen and the work of the Lord goes forward with renewed force. In this article, it will be shown that, as opposed to the natural man's unspiritual observance of instituted Sabbaths or festivals of human invention, scriptural Sabbath observance has been and will remain God's way forward for believers in all generations. *It will be maintained in this article that the spiritual interest of the Church and nations will be advanced by renewed spiritual observance of the Christian Sabbath on the first day of the week by both Jews and Gentiles.*

THE PIVOTAL TEXT

Revelation 1:10 occupies a pivotal position in our appreciation of the place of the Christian Sabbath and of Sabbath observance in the outworking of God's plan

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as it advances to the eternal Sabbath rest. Church and nation can rightfully expect greater spiritual blessing by diligent observance of the instituted Lord's Day than by the observance of a church calendar of human invention even though the latter has points of contact with unbelievers. In Revelation 1:10, the Apostle John informs his readers, 'I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet.' We are left in no doubt that *the Lord's Day* was the specific time that the risen Christ, clothed in his mediatorial glory, sovereignly chose to give his final, inspired revelation to his afflicted church in order that believers might be more than conquerors through him that loved us. We should have no doubt about this victory when we read the opening verses of this book. It begins, 'The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand' (Revelation 1:1-3). The reading, hearing, and observing of Christ's word is the route to blessing and, although this is true every day of the week, the appearance of Christ on the Lord's Day to give this revelation is indicative of the Saviour's attitude to the day upon which he rose from the dead. John had seen the risen Lord on that first Lord's Day evening (John 20:19) and again one week later (John 20:26). In prison on the island of Patmos on the first day of the week he has this final evidence of Christ's determination to bless his people on the Lord's Day and wonderfully so by infallibly shewing things to come to pass. Thus, at both the beginning and the close of the apostolic age we have Christ's personal endorsement of

the change of the Sabbath day from the seventh to the first day of the week and of his intention that the day should be a day of immense blessing to his church. In consequence, believers ought to have a serious intent to observe the first day of the week with this blessing in view and with an assured confidence that diligence will be rewarded.

GOD'S PURPOSE FOR HIS SABBATH

The question arises, whose day is the first day of the week? The expression, 'The Lord's day', points to *proprietorship*. The description identifies the day as Christ's day. It is his by personal sacrifice, triumph over death and divine right. Christ, the King of kings, is sovereign and the first day belongs to him. He has appointed it to be special. This matter of ownership is important. People waking on a Sunday morning might think, what shall I do today? They might allocate some time 'to go to church' but have other plans as well. This is where the error begins. Sunday is thought of as a day off even by Christians because it is not an ordinary week day. John's description reminds us that Sunday is *God's day*.

The divine proprietorship involves divine *prescription*. The description 'the Lord's Day', identifies the day as sovereignly regulated. John saw the glory of 'the Son of man' (Revelation 1:13–15) who is King of kings (Revelation 19:16). As such the Lord Jesus has absolute, supreme, universal and perpetual authority and has set apart the whole of the first day for himself. In my childhood in the UK nearly all shops were closed on a Sunday for Christian reasons. The description, 'the Lord's Day', identifies the whole day as being for Christ. Is that such a problem? What would Christian readers rather be doing than being with Christ? Is it not for him to say how his day will be spent?

Biblical history shows that the divine purpose concerning his own glory in the progress of the kingdom of heaven on earth includes both repetition and expansion. This purpose, however, is not cyclical with a regular repetition of the same events as was the pagan practice but is linear and is closely identified with the recurring weekly Sabbath *footsteps*. Historically, these footsteps have undergone significant changes. In line with great epochal events there has been a historical development of the Sabbath amidst many hindrances and apparent reversals. At each stage, the Adversary has sought to neutralize the blessings of the developing Sabbath by distracting worshippers from its spiritual essence to unedifying observance involving ceremonialism, syncretism, legalism or outright neglect. This is

illustrated below by reference to the Creation Sabbath, the Jewish Sabbath and the Lord's Day Sabbath and we will see that ultimately Satan's endeavours always fail.

PREPARATION (1) THE CREATION SABBATH

The seventh day Sabbath (Genesis 2:1–3) began on the seventh day immediately following the six days of creation. This seventh day Sabbath continued till the demonstration of the new creation at the resurrection of Christ (John 20:1). We see from this that God's choice of one whole day in seven goes right back to creation. The seventh day was set apart and consecrated as the day of rest for *mankind*. In Genesis 2.2–3 we read, 'And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.' Things continued so until the resurrection of Christ but, because of Adam's fall and apostasy among his descendants, the observance of God's Sabbath rest was sadly lacking.

Before the flood 'God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually' (Genesis 6:5). After the global flood things quickly went in the same direction and men said, 'Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth' (Genesis 11:4). Apostate mankind was not irreligious but intensely religious. The natural man still looked heavenward but the wise man comments, 'God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions' (Ecclesiastes 7:29). The essence of the Hebrew is 'many contrivances' or in the intellectual sense, 'many machinations'. Both were in evidence on the plain in Shinar, the tower-technology and the evil purpose behind it, which was to reach heavenwards without the Lord to make *themselves* a name. Archaeological evidence of such tower technology is found in abundance from Mesopotamia and Egypt in the Middle East as far as South America and Europe. With the tower technology emerged elaborate religious ceremonies and, in particular regular, festivals involving idol processions with which the archaeological records are replete.¹ Isaiah makes reference to such occasions and their futility in Chapter 46:6–7a as follows: 'They

1. For a detailed account of archaeological evidence of the apostasy see Roy Mohon, *Cosmic War Survival: The True Gospel distinguished from the Global Apostasy by reference to the Early Ages of Man* (Available in electronic format at amazon.com)

lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance, and hire a goldsmith; and he maketh it a god: they fall down, yea, they worship. *They bear him upon the shoulder, they carry him, and set him in his place, and he stands.* Such elaborate religious occasions were closely associated with astrology and it was natural that they should become annual festivals because life on earth revolved around the agricultural seasons and astronomy around the solar year. Thus, paganism neglected the weekly Sabbath in its preoccupation with the recurring annual calendar positioned within endless cyclical ages.

PREPARATION (2) THE JEWISH SABBATH

The divinely revealed legislation that God gave for the formation of the Israelites into a nation included moral, ceremonial and civil law. The moral law summarized in the Ten Commandments is both permanent and universal. The fourth commandment republishes the one day in seven Sabbath. In the following quotation from Exodus 20:8–11, the word ‘sabbath’ is shown in italics to emphasize the difference between the Hebrew word for ‘Sabbath’ and the Hebrew word for ‘seventh.’ ‘Remember the *sabbath* day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the *sabbath* of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work... For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the *sabbath* day, and hallowed it.’ Israel was to be a people marked out by Sabbath observance.² We are to be *in the way of keeping* God’s Sabbath. The commandment given to God’s covenant people was, ‘Wherefore the children of Israel *shall keep* the sabbath, *to observe* the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed’ (Exodus 31:16–17). The observance of one day in seven, specifically the seventh day, from the creation of the world to the resurrection of Christ and the first day thereafter are both provided for in this revelation. Israel was to observe the Sabbath on the seventh day, mindful of the original creation, but this would not be the end of it for Peter, Paul, John and many other Jews who would continue to observe the Sabbath but it would

2. The word ‘observance’ is used advisedly here not merely traditionally. Our English word ‘observe’ is from the Latin *ob* ‘in the way of’ and *servo* ‘to keep’. It has two senses in English, ‘to take notice of’ and ‘to comply with’. ‘Observance’ thus involves ‘performance’ or ‘obedient regard’.

be on the first day in commemoration of the more glorious new creation arising from redemption as well as of the original creation.

The remaining revealed Israelite law, not classed as moral, was neither universal nor permanent. These laws were for the Jews to the coming of the Messiah. The ceremonial laws are now ‘abrogated’ and the judicial laws ‘expired’ except ‘the general equity thereof’ (Westminster Confession of Faith, 19.3, 4). Within this non-permanent body of laws specific to Israel there was an annual ecclesiastical calendar including among other festivals, the Passover (Exodus 13:2), Firstfruits (Leviticus 23:17), and the Day of Atonement (Exodus 30:10). There were also longer time periods related to rest. Each seventh year was a Sabbath of rest and seven Sabbaths of years were followed by a jubilee in the fiftieth year (Leviticus 25). Israel could not pick and choose among the regulated festivals. They were all mandatory including the seventh and fifty year Sabbaths.

Although God preserved his remnant and granted various wonderful revivals, Israel’s Sabbath-keeping and festival observance steadily declined. By the eighth century B.C. the Northern Kingdom was beyond redemption as God revealed through his prophet Amos saying, ‘The virgin of Israel is fallen; she shall no more rise: she is forsaken upon her land; there is none to raise her up’ (Amos 5:2). Unspiritual and syncretistic observance of feasts and sacrifices made them an abomination in the eyes of God. God’s word of rejection was most solemn and final ‘I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream’ (Amos 5:21–24). Israel retained its festivals but they failed in any true spiritual Sabbath observance.

The Jewish Sabbath during our Lord’s lifetime

The life of Christ falls within the Creation Sabbath period and within the nation and territory where the Israelites’ ceremonies and festivals applied. That the Messiah was thoroughly Jewish was indicated by his circumcision and presentation in the temple where Joseph and Mary came ‘to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons’ (Luke 2:24). The short period of the life of our Lord was a unique and truly wonderful time

regarding the Sabbath. It is distinctive as the only period after the Fall when the Sabbath was perfectly kept in heart, word and deed for the Saviour loved the house of God and the worship of the sanctuary. John 2:13–17 comes to mind and Luke 4:16, where we read, ‘And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day’. Whenever we are absent from the fellowship of the saints, for whatever reason good or bad, we can be sure that Christ is not. We should weekly follow the Psalmist and Saviour in confessing, ‘How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longs, yea, even faints for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God’ (Psalm 84:1–2).

Our Lord’s encounters with the Pharisees demonstrated their apostasy which involved a legalistic mindset and practice. The legalism of the Pharisees led them to criticize both works of mercy and works of necessity on the Sabbath day. Regarding works of mercy the woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years is a case in point. When Jesus saw her he healed her and she glorified God. To this the ruler of the synagogue indignantly answered, ‘There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day’. The Lord answered him saying, ‘Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?’ (Luke 13:14–16). Clearly there must be no strictness of Sabbath observance that hinders compassion in works of mercy on the Lord’s Day. The legalism of the Pharisees also led them to criticize works of necessity done on the Sabbath day. Such works are neither recreation nor income motivated but are necessary to life. The disciples plucking the ears of corn and rubbing them in their hands to eat is a case in point. The Pharisees regarded this as work and said to the disciples, ‘Why do ye that which is not lawful to do on the sabbath days?’ Jesus answered, ‘Have ye not read so much as this, what David did, when himself was an hungred, and they which were with him; How he went into the house of God, and did take and eat the shewbread, and gave also to them that were with him; which it is not lawful to eat but for the priests alone?’ (Luke 6:2b–5). We can be sure that the Lord’s teaching and practice provides our perfect pattern for Lord’s Day observance with spiritual devotion but without legalism.

THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH *The Apostles*

As the creation of the universe began on Day One, the new creation likewise began on the first day of the week when Christ rose from the dead and became the first-fruits of them that slept (John 20:1, 1 Corinthians 15:20). We now commemorate both creation and resurrection each week *on the very same day* as Christ rose again and we do so with emphasis upon the restoration arising from Christ’s redemptive work and eternal glory. We find no warrant in Scripture for an *annual* church calendar, which at the least becomes a distraction. No warrant can be found in the institution of the creation Sabbath, the Sabbath of the Jewish ceremonial law, now abrogated, or the apostolic Lord’s Day. There is no *Biblical* annual calendar for the Christian era. An annual calendar constructed on the basis of events in the life of our Lord will be an artificial construction. The life of our Lord was approximately thirty years and his ministry took place in the last three years of his life. Christ’s birth was at the beginning of his life, the temptation in the wilderness was at the beginning of his ministry, the transfiguration was part way through his ministry and Calvary was at the end. To collapse 30 years into one and mix it with Church events such as Pentecost and an eschatological event such as the second coming can never have any authority beyond that of a human scheme. It is further evident that December 25th in particular has no scriptural data to support it even as to the general time of the year. The crucifixion and resurrection and consequently the ascension are the only events where the general time of year can be known.

Papal syncretism

In 1855, C. H. Spurgeon opened his Sabbath morning service, 23rd December, with the words, ‘This is the season of the year when, whether we wish it or not, we are compelled to think of the birth of Christ. I hold it to be one of the greatest absurdities under heaven to think that there is any religion in keeping Christmas-day. There are no probabilities whatever that our Saviour Jesus Christ was born on that day, and the observance of it is purely of Popish origin; doubtless those who are Catholics have a right to hallow it, but I do not see how consistent Protestants can account it in the least sacred.’³ Spurgeon recognized that there are no probabilities that

3. C. H. Spurgeon, *The New Park Street Pulpit*, v. 2 (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1963), 25.

Christ was born on the 25th December and that the festival only exists as a result of papal invention.⁴

This came about in relation to Rome's syncretism, blending pagan and Christian things to popularize Roman Catholicism. It became a successful strategy in various parts of the world because local folk cared little about who sponsored a festival and its ceremonies as long as things remained familiar. Early in the third century, Tertullian complained of the inconsistency of Christians as follows, 'By us who are strangers to Sabbaths (*i.e. Jewish sabbaths*), and new moons, and festivals, once acceptable to God, the Saturnalia, the feasts of January, the *Brumalia*, and *Matronalia*, are now frequented...'⁵ It is well known that among the pagans at Rome, December 25th was the *annually returning* 'birth-day of the unconquered Sun', a myth going back to the Babylonians and 'Nimrod *redivivus* - the slain god come to life again' (Hislop, 98). Rome could find no warrant for such things in the creation Sabbath nor the Jewish calendar of festivals, which had been abrogated. Nor could they rightly claim the teachings and practice of the apostles as found in the New Testament for a church calendar. The real source was the pagan year with its various festivals. It was a paganization of the Church.

The Reformation Sabbath

The Reformation brought about a wonderful return to Biblical standards regarding the Lord's Day but subsequent neglect has left us in a position of decline again. Our current state of affairs requires a reorientation of the church to the true place, purpose and practice of the Lord's Day in order that it might be truly Christ-centred. Our pivotal text in its historical and literary context provides relevant guidelines.

Observe three significant points regarding the historical context. *Firstly*, the text appears almost at the end of the period of apostolic supervision of a Lord's Day observance that was spiritual and Christ honouring not syncretistic, ceremonial, or legalistic. Christ's

4. A distinction can be made between celebrating annual festivals and adopting annual lectionary readings. The latter practice is not intended to endow any particular Sabbath with special significance or sanctity but to ensure comprehensive instruction. In such cases it would require prudence not to become entangled thereby with the celebration of syncretistic Christmas and Easter ecclesiastical celebrations both of which have pagan and papal associations and lack any specific Biblical prescription.

5. Quoted in A. Hislop, *The Two Babylons or The Papal Worship proved to be the Worship of Nimrod and his Wife* (London: S. W. Partridge & Co., 1989), 93.

appearance on the Sabbath mentioned by John serves as the glorified Saviour's endorsement of the first day Sabbath observance implemented by the apostles. *Secondly*, this text records the fact that the immediate historical context of the special revelation was a Lord's Day and that in his banishment John did not neglect devotion on the Christian Sabbath but was 'in the Spirit on the Lord's Day.' *Thirdly*, the revelation Christ gave points us to the fact that as the risen Christ had visibly visited and revisited his Church in blessing on the Lord's Day so he finally did so once again. This particular Sunday revelation reminds us that *we can legitimately expect that Christ will continue to visit and spiritually bless his church on the first day of the week, though no longer in visible form nor by visionary manifestation but by the Holy Spirit as another comforter. We conclude, therefore, that the glory of Christ is observable on earth in direct proportion to how truly Christ-centred the Lord's Day is kept to the exclusion of other interests.*

There are three important lessons from the literary context.

1. The unique *place* of the Lord's Day in the life and witness of the true church

There are now no other instituted days for worship. The first day of the week stands in lonely isolation as to its sanctity. No other days in the year should be recognized as even similar. The first day has its priority by divine authority and it is never but one of a calendar of ecclesiastical days. It begins each seven day period and the seven day period is more fundamental than the year or any other period of time, 'for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed' (Exodus 31:17). Consequently, on the first day of the week, we are to cease from our ordinary labours and recreations in order to take spiritual rest and refreshment. It is not to be a day of inactivity but of different activity.

2. The unique *purpose* of the Lord's Day in the life, ministry and witness of the true church

John brings everything into proportion with his greeting. He writes, 'Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; And from Jesus Christ' (Revelation 1:4-5a). When people go to a place of worship they see a preacher but the unseen presence is that of the triune God manifest in Jesus Christ the mediator by the Holy Spirit. The triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit is thus made known to us for our spiritual enlightenment, guidance and welfare. The particular Lord's Day to which the Apostle John refers became of continuing, outstanding benefit to the

Church. Christ gave to his church this prophetic guide and challenge for our spiritual good.

The message evident in the Book of Revelation is Christ's glorious sufficiency in his life, death, resurrection and present glorification as the prophet, priest and king sufficient for all our spiritual needs, always, whatever happens. This is to mark all our gatherings in the sanctuary. It involves history but even the commemoration in the Lord's Supper is not focused on the *time* of Christ's death like a Passover celebrated at the specific time of the year. This lack of annual focus is so, even though the first Lord's Supper *was* celebrated following the Passover meal. This calendar detail is left behind with the Passover abrogation. The communion is focused upon the enduring effects of the past event and the time of year of the remembrance is irrelevant. It adds no significance to the commemoration. Christianity is not ceremonial in the way in which the ancient shadows were tied to time and place as when the Jews went up to Jerusalem for the annual feasts. Christianity has no such focus on calendar, pilgrimage or ceremonialism, 'which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ' (Colossians 2:17). John fully understood Paul's point and his focus is on the personal, living, active Christ as he is now. He provides six heart warming emphases in Revelation 1:5-7 as follows.

(1) *Christ is 'the faithful witness'*. The Law, Prophets, Psalms, Gospels and Epistles are from him and speak of him and he speaks through them in their reading and exposition.

(2) *Christ is 'the first begotten of the dead'*. The Lord's Day is a commemoration of the commencement of spiritual re-creation. On the first day of the week Christ rose as the firstfruits from among the dead.

(3) *Christ is 'the prince of the kings of the earth'*. He is the Lord's Anointed and God has given him a name which is above every name. No mortal will stay his power. He will do his will in the army of heaven and the kingdom of men. Though we tremble for the ark of God we must bring our emotions into submission to Scripture. Christ must reign for ever and ever.

(4) *Christ is the Saviour of his people*. He is the One 'that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood'. Love indeed that gave all to secure full pardon for the chief of sinners and for a multitude which no man can number of every nation and of every tongue!

(5) *Christ is the one who shapes our destinies*. He has 'made us kings and priests unto God'. Often we feel lost in this wilderness of a world like Elijah when he fled from Jezebel but Christ's hand is upon us that his will for us

might be accomplished. The Lord of the Sabbath draws out our hearts to *his* purposes for *our* lives.

(6) *Christ is going to return*. The Sabbath is a day of glorious prospect on account of the linearity of God's purpose leading directly to the second coming of Christ. 'Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him'. It will be a joyous day for believers.

3. The unique *practice* for the Lord's Day in the life and witness of the true church

Reference has already been made to the institution of rest from our daily labours and recreations except regarding works of necessity and mercy. The Lord's Day is for spiritual devotion and worship in the sanctuary, in private, and in the family. As a day for spiritual devotion the Christian Sabbath is identified as one to be spent *spiritually*. The whole day is for the things of Christ. John was used to this. It was not a sudden novelty adopted in his imprisonment. On the first day of the week John had been with Peter at the empty tomb. Later that same day he had been with the other apostles when the risen Saviour appeared to them and again he had been present a week later. John would be fully conversant with the stated and ordinary practice of the apostolic church of meeting on a Sunday (Acts 20:7). He would be conversant with the fact that the Jewish synagogue practice of collections for the poor on the seventh day Sabbath was transferred in the Christian Church to the first day of the week (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). It is evident that, even though he was cut off from the church in his banishment, he had already been focused on spiritual things and was 'in the Spirit on the Lord's Day'. If it was so with the inspired founders of the church, it is evident that departure from this standard is inexcusable and detrimental to our spiritual welfare. The words of Robert Shaw are apposite, 'The proper observation of the Sabbath is a principal means of promoting the temporal welfare of individuals and of nations, of elevating the tone of public morals, of advancing the interests of religion, and of drawing down the divine favour and blessing.'⁶

Lest it be thought that Sabbath observance will result in a dull first day of the week, with work and recreation laid aside, it is important to emphasize that it is to be a day of spiritual *delight*. It surely could not have been otherwise for John. Even when he fell at Christ's feet as dead, overawed by his resplendent majesty and humbled by his own uncleanness, he was comforted by the Saviour who laid his right hand upon him, saying, 'Fear

6. Robert Shaw, *The Reformed Faith: An Exposition of The Confession of the Westminster Assembly of Divines* (Inverness: Christian Focus Publications, 1973), 234. Readers should note the inclusion of 'public morals', so relevant in our present situation.

not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen' (Revelation 1:17b-18). 'Alive for evermore' stirs the heart to praise, assurance and spiritual delight. The majestic, omnipotent, divine Saviour and king of glory is pleased to visit *us* on his day. Well may God call upon us to call the Sabbath a delight (Isaiah 58:13-14a).

Two observations are important. *Firstly*, we see that the Sabbath being a delight and our delighting in the Lord go together. To neglect the Lord's Day is to neglect the Lord who gave it and declining love for the Lord will be evident in declining interest in the Lord's Day. One affects the other. *Secondly*, we see that the whole day is to be under Christ's superintendence. Israel was commanded to keep from doing their own pleasure on God's holy day. We are to be too busy delighting in the Lord to have time for other things. The Westminster Confession explains how this works out in practice. It states: 'This Sabbath is then kept holy unto the Lord, when men, after a due preparing of their hearts, and ordering of their common affairs before-hand, do not only observe an holy rest, all the day, from their own works, words, and thoughts about their worldly employments and recreations, but also are taken up, the whole time, in the public and private exercises of His worship, and in the duties of necessity and mercy' (WCF 21.8). There is no legalism in this. The apostles imposed nothing of human ingenuity and expected no merit seeking but simply kept to the clear intent of the fourth commandment that the day should be devoted to God but not to the exclusion of necessary or compassionate deeds.

The experience of John is particularly instructive concerning Christ's loving concern. John could not go to church to worship Christ. He was unjustly imprisoned. Christ, however, could come to him and did. In wonderful condescension he delights to be with his people. This is true wherever they might be or whatever their circumstances. As God was with Elijah in his cave, so Christ the Beloved appeared to John, his beloved disciple, in his prison. We get concerned about small numbers but Christ said, 'where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them' (Matthew 18:20). Whatever our condition Christ will not forget us nor forsake us. John may have looked forsaken but he was not. John may have felt forsaken but he was not. Why be downcast or negligent about the Lord's Day when he says, 'Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. For as a young man marries a virgin, so shall thy

sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee' (Isaiah 62:4-5).

CONCLUDING THOUGHT

From what we have said, it follows that *spiritual Lord's Day observance is one precursor of spiritual reviving in the church and consequent spiritual awakening in nations and we are not to look to syncretism or ecumenism as alternatives.*■

In Brief: Zanchius on "Remember the Sabbath day."

And this is that also which Master Zanchius observes upon this word of the fourth commandment, *Remember*; where he renders two reasons of this addition, and that we might always remember it.

Sed accredit alia causa, etc. But there is another cause, for by it God would signify that this precept of sanctifying the Sabbath day, was not then first prescribed by Him unto the people; for it was delivered from the beginning of the world unto Adam and to the rest of the fathers in remembrance that the world was created in six days, and of that rest which God Himself so kept upon the seventh day. And therefore it is not simply said, Sanctify you the Sabbath, but, Remember to sanctify it. So that this word looks forward and backward: backward, because it shows that this day was dedicated unto the worship of God from the creation of the world; forward, because it admonishes us that we should never forget it.

And a little after, expounding these words, "The Lord sanctified the seventh day," he says,

... that the meaning of them is, that God did from the beginning of the world choose out that day from the rest of the week, and did consecrate it to Himself, that first of all Himself might rest in it from the works which He had made, and then also that men might rest from theirs, and wholly attend upon God's divine worship.

Thus we see that his judgment is clear, that the law of the Sabbath was well known in the Church of God, and practiced of the holy fathers long before the law was given. And of this judgment also for the most part are all the Greek and Latin fathers; and yet I do not deny that some are otherwise minded. Nicholas Bownd, *The True Doctrine of the Sabbath* (2015), 54-55.