

Pastoral Letter on the Observance of the Sabbath

By Thomas E. Peck

TO THE CONGREGATIONS UNDER THE CARE OF THE
PRESBYTERY OF BALTIMORE.¹

Dear Brethren: We, ministers and elders, in Presbytery assembled, respectfully and earnestly ask your attention to the following resolutions, adopted by the General Assembly of our church, at their sessions in Philadelphia, in May, 1853, and to some considerations which we venture to add by way of explaining, illustrating, and enforcing them. The resolutions are:

1. *Resolved*, That the proper observance of the Christian Sabbath is essential alike to the purity and progress of the church, and to the prosperity of the state. A church without the Sabbath is apostate; a people who habitually desecrate this divine institution have abandoned one of the grand foundations of social order and political freedom.

2. *Resolved*, That the General Assembly most earnestly enjoin it upon their churches, ministers, and members, both in their public and private capacity, both by their discipline and example, to sustain the strict observance of the holy Sabbath. The Assembly look upon the increasing desecration of this day, by the various modes of public conveyance, as of a most alarming character, as of a manifest abuse of the great temporal prosperity of the country, and as tending to provoke the judgments of God upon the church and the nation. So far as Christians are connected with the system of Sabbath desecration, by their ownership of stocks, or other interests in our railroad and other corporations, there can be no doubt of their duty to protest earnestly and constantly against the violation of the Sabbath, and to use all the influence of their position to arrest this growing evil.²

That this is a reasonable testimony cannot be denied by any serious observer of the signs of the times. In the universal agitation and conflict of opinions, which is one of the most striking characteristics of the age, the great questions touching the perpetual obligation of the Sabbath institution, and the change in the day of the week, from the seventh to the first, have again been subjected to a discussion, which, though earnest and solemn, has not been more solemn than the glory of God and the prosperity of the church demanded, or more earnest than the discussions of men generally are when their interests are concerned in upholding or in destroying anything venerable for its age or influence. No ordinance of God can dread discussion; no plant of our heavenly Father's planting can ever be rooted up by the storms of controversy, and we are under no apprehension that the Sabbath, which (beside the institution of marriage) is the only flower that has been transplanted from Paradise in our fallen world, and

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1. The following letter was reported by a Committee of the Presbytery of Baltimore, and read before that body on the 12th of April, 1854, and, though not formally adopted, was approved by them, and the author, Mr. Peck, requested to publish it. It appeared in the April number of the *Critic*, 1855. [Ed. *The Presbyterian Critic*, vol. 1 No. 4 (1855): 161–168; reprinted in *Miscellanies of Rev. Thomas E. Peck, D.D., LL.D., Professor of Theology in the Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, complete in three volumes*, edited by Rev. T. C. Johnson, D.D. (Richmond, Va.: The Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1895–97); repr. *Writings of Thomas E. Peck* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1999), 195–205.]

2. [*Minutes of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America with an Appendix, volume XIII, A.D. 1851* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Presbyterian Board of Publication, [1851]), 435.]

which has survived the scorching heats and blasting winds of wickedness for so many centuries, will be done away till he comes who is the substance of all the shadows, the complement of all pledges and earnestness which have been given to the people of God, and the final rest of all who are troubled for the cause of truth and righteousness. Still, unstable souls may be led astray, and even well-instructed Christians may be reduced to perplexity and doubt, "by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in weight to deceive." We exhort you, therefore, to study the word of God, and especially the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, in which the apostle brings out clearly the perpetual obligation of the Sabbath as a day of rest, and also the change (and nature of the change) of the day, from the seventh to the first, by showing that when the warning was given in Psalm 95:11, the rest founded upon the finishing of creation (which included the observance of a particular day), and the rest founded on the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, which also included the observance of a particular day (Deut. 5:14, 15; and compare the same as it occurs in Exod. 20:10, 11), had both passed away, and, consequently, there "remained still a rest" (Greek, in the margin, a "sabbatism," or "keeping of Sabbath") "for the people of God"; a rest which also included the observance of a particular day, to-wit, the day on which Jesus entered into his rest, having ceased from his own works, as God did from his. In thus studying the word of God you will find that the obligation to observe the first day of the week as a day of rest, and the consequent promises and privileges belonging to a conscientious and faithful observance of it, stand upon a foundation which cannot be shaken by the plausibilities of Christian argument, much less by the rhetoric of men to whom "gain is godliness." So shall you have boldness in the day of judgment and trial, and be able to stand before any tribunal on earth, and "give a reason for the hope that is in you."

The tide of immigration, unexampled in fullness and constancy, which is flowing into this country, invests this subject with peculiar importance to you as American Christians and American citizens. The strangers from the old world who come here are, for the most part, from Ireland and the provinces of Germany. The vast majority of the Irish emigrants are papists; and all the world knows with how little even of decent respect the apostate community of Rome has been accustomed to regard the Lord's day. It has multiplied days of its own till whole nations, subject, by the curse of God, to its dominion, have been reduced

to desolation, misery, and crime, and all possible evils which can flow from ignorance and idleness; but the desecration of the Lord's own day has been tolerated with a long-suffering very remarkable in her who has drunk the blood of the saints for refusing to obey her commands. In this, as in all things else, obedience to God is eternal enmity to Rome. You, who reside in the city of Baltimore, need not be told what Rome thinks of the Sabbath of the living God. Your eyes are shocked with their childish processions; your ears are offended, and your worship is disturbed, by their bells and bands of music, grating harshly upon that solemn quiet which ought never to be broken but by strains of heavenly melody, the sweet invitations of the gospel, or the voice of prayer. In all this they are consistent; they are not content with equal rights; they are not satisfied with the privilege of worshipping God or Mary undisturbed, but they must disturb others in their worship. They are driving us nearer, every day, to the decision of the great question which must be decided, sooner or later, whether Protestantism and liberty, or popery and despotism, shall rule this country, a decision which will not be doubtful.

In connection with the despotism of Rome, and its contempt for the Sabbath, and by way of illustrating the political tendencies of the Sabbath institution, we quote the following passage from the world-renowned "working-man," Hugh Miller. We quote the whole passage, though the whole does not bear upon this particular point: "Among the existing varieties of the *genus philanthropist*," he says,

benevolent men, bent on bettering the condition of the masses, there is a variety who would fain send out our working people to the country on Sabbaths, to become happy and innocent in smelling primroses and stringing daisies on grass-stalks. An excellent scheme, theirs, if they but knew it, for sinking a people into ignorance and brutality, for filling a country with gloomy workhouses, and the workhouses with unhappy paupers. 'Tis pity, rather, that the institution of the Sabbath, in its economic bearings, should not be better understood by the utilitarian. The problem which it furnishes is not particularly difficult, if one could be made to understand, as a first step in the process, that it is really worth solving. The mere animal, that has to pass six days of the week in hard labor, benefits greatly by a seventh day of mere animal rest and enjoyment; the repose, according to its nature, proves of signal use to it, just because *it is* repose according to its nature. But man is not a mere animal; what is best for the ox and

the ass is not best for him; and, in order to degrade him into a poor, unintellectual slave, over whom tyranny, in its caprice, may trample, rough-shod, it is but necessary to tie him down, animal-like, during his six working days, to hard, engrossing labor, and to convert the seventh into a day of frivolous, unthinking relaxation. History speaks with much emphasis on this point. The old despotic Stuarts were tolerable adepts in the art of kingcraft, and knew well what they were doing when they backed with their authority *The Book of Sports*. The merry, unthinking serfs who, early in the reign of Charles I., danced on Sabbaths round the Maypole, were afterwards the ready tools of despotism, and fought that England might be enslaved. The Ironsides who, in the cause of civil and religious freedom, bore them down, were staunch Sabbatarians.

In no history, however, is the value of the Sabbath more strikingly represented than in that of the Scotch people during the seventeenth, and a large portion of the eighteenth, century. Religion and the Sabbath were their sole instructors, and this in times so little favorable for the cultivation of mind, so darkened by persecution, and stained with blood, that, in at least the earlier of these centuries, we derive our knowledge of the character and amount of popular intelligence mainly from the death-testimonies of our humbler martyrs, here and there corroborated by the testimony of writers such as Burnet (*Memoirs*, Vol. I., page 431). In these noble addresses from prison and scaffold, the composition of men drafted from oppression, almost at random, from out the general mass, we see how vigorously our Presbyterian people had learned to think, and how well to give their thinking expression. In the more quiet times which followed the Revolution, the Scottish peasantry existed as at once the most provident and intellectual in Europe, and a moral and instructed people, pressed outwards beyond the narrow bounds of their country, and rose into offices of trust and importance in all the nations of the world. There were no societies for the diffusion of useful knowledge in those days. But the Sabbath was kept holy; it was a day from which every dissipating frivolity was excluded by a stern sense of duty. The popular mind, with weight imparted to it by its religious earnestness, and direction by the pulpit addresses of the day, expatiated on matters of grave import, of which the tendency was to concentrate and strengthen, not to scatter and weaken, the faculties; and the secular agitations of the week came to bear, in consequence, a Sabbath-day stamp of depth and solidity. The one day in seven struck the tone of the other

six. Our modern apostles of popular instruction rear up no such men among the masses as were developed under the Sabbatarian system in Scotland. Their aptest pupils prove but the loquacious *gabbers* of their respective workshops—shallow superficialists, that bear on the surface of their minds a thin diffusion of ill-remembered facts and crude theories; and rarely, indeed, do we see them rising in the scale of society; they become Socialists by hundreds and Chartists by thousands, and get no higher. The disseminator of mere useful knowledge takes aim at the popular ignorance, but his inept and unscientific gunnery does not include in its calculations the parabolic curve of man's spiritual nature, and so, aiming direct at the mark, he aims too low, and the charge falls short.³

In reference to that portion of our German population which is connected with the Church of Rome, we need add nothing, as what has already been said of the sort of reverence for the Lord's day entertained by that church admits of the same application to them. Rome has reverence for nothing but her own inventions. In this respect she is truly, always and everywhere, and in all her votaries, the same, and always will be, till the Son of God shall destroy her "by the brightness of his coming" [2 Thess. 2:8]. In reference to the Protestant portion of the German population (we allude, of course, to those who have not been long in the country), a similar want of reverence for the Lord's day must, to a great extent, be acknowledged. Whatever may have been the cause, whether the misapprehension of some of the leading Reformers in regard to the true relation of the fourth commandment to the law of Moses, and their consequent doubt as to its perpetual binding force to the end of the world—a misapprehension arising, perhaps, from some passages of the New Testament, and strengthened by the authority of some of the early writers in the church, as well as by the preposterous abuse on the part of Rome of holy days—whatever account we may give of the fact, the fact itself is unquestionable, that the Sabbath has not been held in reverence as it should have been among the churches on the continent of Europe, Lutheran and Reformed. And the case is far worse, since the formulae and practical results of the modern pantheistic philosophy have come down to the masses of the people. Thousands who understand, and can understand, nothing of the processes of reasoning by which

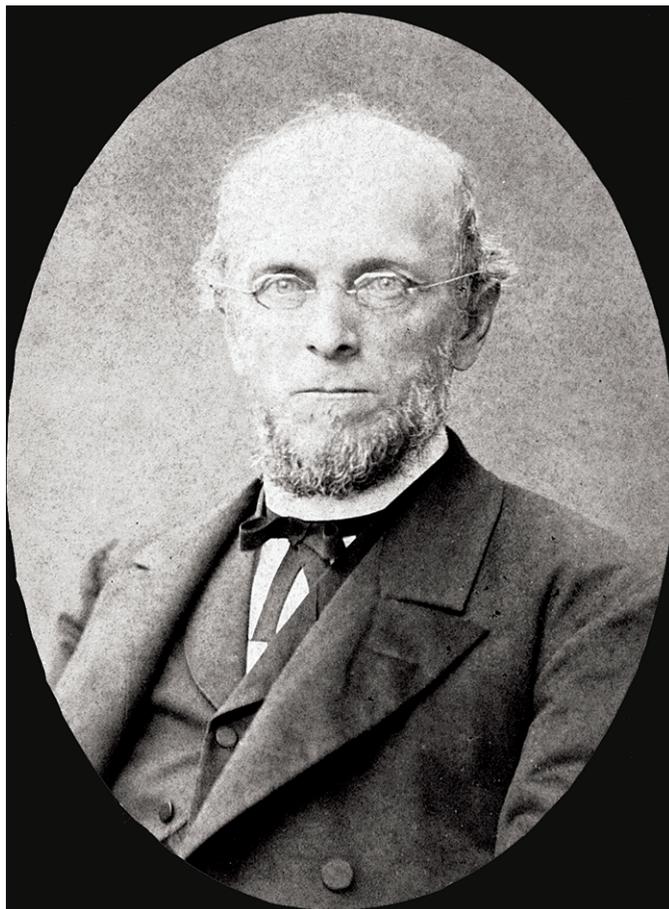
3. *First Impressions of England*, etc., Chap. iii [Hugh Miller, *First Impressions of England and its People* (Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1851) 70–71].

the startling conclusion has been reached, that every man is God, are able to perceive and feel the bearing of that conclusion upon the great questions of law, of personal immortality, of personal responsibility. Nothing can be idler than to talk to such men of moral obligation, and especially of moral obligation to observe a positive institution of God. The assembly of Germans who, a few years ago, issued their manifesto from Cleveland, and those who responded to them on this side [of] the mountains, evidently regarded themselves as Olympian divinities, sovereign and supreme, and, therefore, subject to no law but that of their own will, and to be restrained by no bounds except those imposed by the clashing of interests which must of necessity occur among a plurality of independent and

lawless gods. It is greatly to be feared that these sentiments extensively prevail; that many of the secret associations amongst us have been organized upon the atheistic, radical, anarchical principles which, at the close of the last century, were cherished in the Jacobin clubs of Paris and the societies of the Illuminati, and finally deluged, like burning lava, the institutions and governments of Europe. The Germans of St. Louis, or a portion of them, have already protested formally against the Sabbath laws, as unconstitutional encroachments upon their civil rights; and others, in other parts of the country, if published documents can be relied on, seem to regard laws of any sort as unjust restraints upon their liberties. When such doctrines as these are unblushingly avowed, it is time that the church should utter a voice of remonstrance and protest, and say, with our General Assembly, to the world, that the "Sabbath

is essential to the prosperity of the state, as well as to the purity and progress of the church," and that not only "is a church without the Sabbath apostate," but

that "a people who habitually desecrate this divine institution have abandoned one of the grand foundations of social order and political freedom." No wonder is it, brethren, that the lovers of their country on these happy shores are organizing themselves to resist and roll back the foreign influence which threatens to swallow up the precious inheritance of regulated liberty left us by our fathers, and sealed and consecrated with their blood! We will have nothing to do, by the grace of God, with continental religion, or continental politics, except by our instruction and example to rebuke, and, if possible, to mend them.



Dr. Thomas E. Peck (1822–1893). Professor of Theology, Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Va. Courtesy of C. N. Willborn.

As the government of this country is eminently one of law and of opinion, as contra-distinguished from military force, it is evident that public morality is of the very last importance to our safety. But in what nation has public morality survived the degradation of the Sabbath? We have already alluded to the connection between the Sabbath and the institution of marriage, as the common and only survivors of the fall; and the experience of the world demonstrates that when the first falls into contempt, the last, which is the great bulwark of morality and social order, will share in its disgrace. The only people in Christendom who have attempted to abolish the Sabbath formally, and by law, were so far abandoned as to place a shameless strumpet upon the throne of God; and their short and melancholy reign is written in blood. If we give up the fourth commandment, which is the citadel of the first

table of the law, we must soon surrender the seventh commandment, which is the citadel of the second table; all personal and public morality will be prostrate; our countrymen will become "brute-beasts, fit only to be taken and destroyed," "living in divers hurtful lusts and pleasures, hateful, and hating one another." God forbid that it should ever be said of us, as Napoleon said of the people just referred to, "Their great want is *mothers*," chaste and noble matrons, who, like Caesar's wife, must not even be suspected, faithfully and laboriously polishing their jewels, and then, with confidence in God, giving them to their country, to adorn and bless it.

In illustration of this point, let us recur for a moment to the present condition of some parts of Germany. In a recent number of one of the leading British quarterlies, it is stated that "in Breslau, the stronghold of Silesian Lutheranism, only a third of the Protestant population are church-going, the public houses are forty times the number of places of worship, and the proportion of illegitimate births is one in four. Stettin, the chief city of Pomerania, seems now sunk to the most deplorable depth of pagan, and worse than pagan, immorality. In a population of 50,000, the church attendance is only seven per cent. The number of persons in jail has doubled since 1851, their crimes being mostly committed under the influence of strong drink. One person in seventy lives by prostitution. The number of divorces yearly (which the Prussian law allows) is one hundred," etc. The statistics of Paris, the royal residence of his Christian majesty, would doubtless make a more appalling commentary upon the connection of the fourth and seventh commandments. Without the public worship of God, there can be no religion. "Without the Sabbath," says Daniel Webster (Arg. in Girard case),⁴ "there can be no public worship," and where these are not, there cannot be morality. "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful" (Rom. 1:28-31). Can we read this catalogue of the fruits of despising God, and not tremble? Be assured, brethren, no people ever robbed God of his time, or of the glory of his name, without paying for it. Remember the eagle in the fable, which

stole a coal from the altar, and thereby kindled a fire in her nest, which involved herself and her young in common conflagration and ruin. "The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked; but he blesseth the habitation of the just." (Prov. 3:33).

We had intended to say something to you in regard to another point in the resolutions of the Assembly, the responsibility of those who own "stock or other interests in our railroad or other corporations" which violate the Sabbath, but must content ourselves with only a word or two.

There seems to be an aggravation of human guilt in the use of our iron roads and copper wires. God, in opening these fields of discovery and improvement, has added greatly to the length of human life, if life is to be measured by the successions of the mind, instead of astronomical revolutions, has made a very large addition practically to the six days which he gave to man, while his proportion, his *one* day, remains the same, and yet men rob him of this little. "Will he not avenge such a *sacrilege* as this? Remember, brethren, that an omnipresent responsibility invests you. In all relations, in every place, at all times, you are accountable to God. If you have but one share in a joint-stock company, God will look into the manner in which you have managed that trust; and a few dollars here will be but a poor compensation for the frown of your Maker on that day.

Finally, brethren, we say to you that the Sabbath is the sign of God's covenant with us (Exod. 31:13-17; Ezek. 20:12). It is a brilliant bow of promise upon the very darkest cloud that hangs upon the horizon of our country. So long as we observe it, so long shall the floods of popery and despotism, infidelity and anarchy, threaten us in vain. If we abandon it, or treat it with contempt, then comes merited vengeance: the opening of the windows of heaven, the breaking up of the foundations of the deep, and a shoreless ocean, engulfing all that has exalted us, and made us prosperous as a people, and the brightest hopes and anticipations of the nations of the earth. ■

4. ["And where there is no observance of the Christian Sabbath, there will of course be no public worship of God." "The Girard Will Case: The Christian Ministry and the Religious Instruction of the Young," in *The Writings and Speeches of Daniel Webster, National Edition, in eighteen volumes* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1903), 11.156.]

The Lord's Day, The Christian Sabbath

By T. V. Moore

A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

Thomas Verner Moore was born in Newville, Pennsylvania, February 1, 1818. His father, John, was an Irish immigrant who owned and/or operated a mill, and his mother was named Rachel. He began his studies in Hanover College in Indiana, but after a year, he transferred to Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Having completed his studies at Dickinson, he prepared for the ministry in Princeton Theological Seminary, after which he served for the American Colonization Society in Pennsylvania for about a year. Serving for a few years in what became a troubled pastoral situation in Second Presbyterian Church, Carlisle, that almost ended with his leaving the ministry, he then moved for a brief pastorate in the church in nearby Greencastle. Following the resignation of William S. Plumer from his call to First Presbyterian Church, Richmond, Virginia, T. V. Moore accepted the call to shepherd the congregation in 1847. He was married twice, first, to Sarah Blythe, who was the daughter of President James Blythe of Hanover College, and then second, to Matilda Gwathmey who was the daughter of a First Church, Richmond, elder. Rev. Thomas Verner Moore, D.D., left Richmond in 1868 and concluded his life of ministry in First Church, Nashville, Tennessee, dying August 5, 1871, after a steady decline in health for several years. Dr. Moore is best known today for his two books published by Banner of Truth, *The Last Days of Jesus* (1981), and *A Commentary*

on *Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi* (1993). For further reading on T. V. Moore see, "An Introduction to T. V. Moore Through his Essay on Juvenile Delinquency," *The Confessional Presbyterian* 7 (2011), 87–98.

The following article, "The Lord's Day, The Christian Sabbath," was published anonymously in the *Methodist Review* (v31, 1849) but designated his work by his son, T. V. (Verner) Moore, who was a professor at San Francisco Theological Seminary. It was introduced with six bibliographic entries about the Sabbath, not one of which is mentioned in the article. The titles are—1. Samuel Davison of the Seventh Day Baptist Church published, *The True Sabbath Embraced and Observed* (New York: American Sabbath Tract Society, after 1840); 2. *Religious Liberty Endangered by Legislative Enactments. An Appeal to the Friends of Equal Rights and Religious Freedom in the United States, from the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference*, number 11 (New York: American Sabbath Tract Society, 1846); 3. Justin Edward, *The Sabbath Manual*, numbers 1-3 (New York: American Tract Society, before 1849); 4. *Tracts of the Lord's Day Society*, numbers 1-31 (London: The Lord's Day Society); 5. "Tracts of the Times" on the Sabbath, numbers 1-5 (Glasgow, Scotland); and 6. Robert K. Greville, *Statement of the Proceedings of the Sabbath Alliance* (Edinburgh: Sabbath Alliance Office, circa 1847).

BARRY WAUGH

The Lord's Day, The Christian Sabbath

The fact to which we refer is a profound conviction of the vital relation existing between the Christian Sabbath and the Christian religion. Infidelity begins to perceive clearly that this broad outwork of the Church must fall before the citadel can be reached; and that if a clear breach be made here, the remaining work of desolation

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will be easy and brief. Hence, in the conventions, anniversaries, and periodicals by which it is aping the outward organization and agencies of the Church, the Sabbath is one of the great grievances complained of, and one of the great "abuses" attacked. The tyranny of allowing man and beast one day in seven to rest from the toils of life, and the injustice of laws that prevent the daring fanatic and the unscrupulous employer from invading the peaceful enjoyment of this privilege, are proclaimed with a rueful length of visage, and a dolorous tone of complaint, that are supremely ludicrous. The farce in this case, however, is rather broad, even for "a discerning public." The complaint, that laws protecting the Christian community in the enjoyment of a quiet Sabbath are tyrannical—coming not from those who regard these laws and feel their operation, but from those who disregard and disobey them; and from those who in the next breath will not obscurely hint that they feel the same tyranny in the laws that protect you in the enjoyment of your own farm, your own homestead, and your own wife; and that the freedom they claim in the one case is but a step toward the freedom they desire in the other—has something in it so utterly and ridiculously preposterous, that we marvel the father of lies should have ever fallen upon an expedient so barefaced, so insolent, and so clumsy. It sounds too much like the conscientious objections we might conceive wolves making to sheep-folds, and burglars to patent locks and salamander safes.

Despairing of success in this mode of attack, infidelity has adopted another more ingenious, if not more effectual. Discovering that the religious feeling of the American people lies too deep to allow any institution that is rooted in it to be overturned, it has determined to assail the Sabbath through the very feeling that forms its strongest support. Accordingly it has exchanged the hoof and horns for the sheep's clothing, and in the wig and gown of criticism undertakes to show that there is no Divine warrant for keeping holy the first day of the week. Books and pamphlets advocating this view, with some show of argument, have been circulated extensively through the country; and in some instances laid in large numbers, by the hands of avowed infidels, on the desks of our legislative halls, for the purpose of procuring the obliteration of every recognition of the Lord's Day that now appears on the statute-books of our States.

On the other hand, Christians, both in England and America, manifest with equal clearness a growing sense of the importance of the Sabbath, and their determination to cling to it as at once the hope, the privilege, and the right of the Christian world. Hence alliances

and unions have been formed, conventions held, tracts written, premiums offered for dissertations on particular aspects of the subject, and a wide and active interest excited in the mind of the Church in favor of a better observance of the Sabbath.

It is not to be concealed, however, that in spite of the awakened intelligence of Christians to this subject, there is still much indistinctness of conception as to the real strength of the warrant on which we observe the first day of the week as the day of rest. With many, who are intelligent readers of the Bible, it is received as a matter of authority rather than a matter of argument; and they are unable to assign the same clear and satisfactory reason for their practice in this case, that they can in others.

We propose, therefore, to present some of the grounds on which we base the right and duty of observing the first day of the week, or the Lord's Day, as the Christian Sabbath.

In order that the ground of discussion may be narrowed as much as possible, we premise that we do not intend to argue at length the moral nature and perpetual obligation of the law of the Sabbath. If it be true that our physical and moral powers demand its hallowed repose, as imperiously as they demand any other institution that God has given us—if without it those powers deteriorate and suffer, and if this necessity is so great that "the Sabbath was made for man"—it were a most surprising thing if a benevolent Creator had left man without a Sabbath in any age of the Church. And so strong is this presumption, that we would demand dear assurance of so cruel and fatal a neglect. But if, instead of such assurance, we see its hallowed light resting in quiet beauty on the sinless scenes of Paradise; if we see it stand side by side with the marriage relation, a relic of Eden's purity and Eden's peace; if we see its traces, like gleams of sunshine, appear along the dim line of patriarchal history in the stated seasons of worship, and the hebdomadal division of time which appears repeatedly after the flood, in both sacred and profane records; if we find its observance restored from the universal prostration of ordinances and institutions in Egypt, *before* the giving of either the Decalogue or the Ceremonial Law; if we find it restored and appearing in the Sinaitic Law, in terms that evidently point back to a previous knowledge and observance of it; if we find it standing among nine other enactments in that sacred statute-book, whose enduring tablets were graven by the finger of the Eternal, and one jot or tittle of whose demands shall never pass away; if we find it afterward kept distinct from all ceremonial usages, and appearing in high and royal authority above every other

institution, in the earnestness and frequency of its inculcation, in the variety of reasons urged for its reverent observance, in the garland of song wreathed around it in the Psalms, and in the girdling wall of menace and warning, promise and blessing, with which it is fenced in the prophecies; if when Christ came he recognized its obligation both by precept and example, vindicated it from Pharisaical superstitions, rescued it from an overlying mass of traditional bigotry, placed it on a higher basis of dignity and authority than before, and gave it submissive reverence in more than half a score of distinctly recorded instances in his ministry—if all these facts cluster around the history and law of the Sabbath, we are forced to regard it as an institution always existing, and always binding on the Church. Hence we assume this point without any farther argument.

We also concede that no merely human power can alter the law of the Sabbath in any particular; and that, if altered at all, it must be by the same authority on which it was originally instituted. The only question then that remains is, *Has God made a transfer of the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week?*

The evidence on which we are warranted to receive this transfer must be similar to that on which we receive other articles of our faith. God has declared his will by various modes of manifestation. Sometimes he has announced it in the most explicit terms; at other times he has left it to be gathered by inference from several particulars. Thus, before the utterance of the fourth commandment, the Sabbath was binding on the patriarchs; but this obligation was with many of them not a matter of direct revelation, but an inference that such was the primitive revelation.

There are many things likewise in New Testament times, concerning which we are left to infer the will of God from different facts, rather than informed of it by a formal statement. Thus, we infer the passing away of many Jewish rites and ceremonies; the right of women to the Lord's Supper; the duty of social and family prayer; and the discipline and worship of the house of God. It is thus, also, with the canonical authority of much of the Scriptures. Let the man who demands the will of God, *in ipsissimus verbis*, that the Sabbath shall be transferred from the seventh to the first day of the week, furnish similar proof of the canonical authority of the Epistle of James, the Epistle of Jude, or the Revelation, and we will comply with his demand. If, however, he receives these books as canonical, mainly, if not exclusively, because they were so received by the primitive Church during the continuance of inspired men, he could not fairly object if we furnished him with no

other evidence than this in regard to the Lord's Day. If, however, we can furnish him not only the same kind of proof in a stronger degree, but also independent evidence of this transfer, he surely cannot demur to the Divine authority of the Lord's Day as the Christian Sabbath. Such evidence we think will be afforded by establishing a few propositions.

I. The change in question could be made without destroying the institution of the Sabbath.

The slightest inspection of the Sabbatic law will show us that it includes two things essentially distinct:—first, the Sabbath or rest itself; and, secondly, the day on which that Sabbath is placed. It is declared in the fourth commandment, that in six days the Lord created the heavens and the earth, and rested on the seventh; wherefore the Lord blessed, not *the seventh day*, as such, but the Sabbath day, and hallowed it. If, as is alleged in this controversy, the seventh day and the Sabbath are identical and therefore interchangeable terms, we reduce the fourth commandment to an absurdity. Let us make the substitution, and see the result: "Remember the seventh day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the seventh day of the Lord thy God," etc. This substitution converts the command into sheer nonsense, and proves unanswerably that the Sabbath is distinct from the day on which it is placed, and could originally, or at any subsequent time, have been placed on a different day without destroying the institution.

The same thing appears from a fact in the Jewish history. We are told (2 Chron. 36:20, 21) that the Jews were carried into captivity "to fulfil the word of the Lord by Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath to fulfil threescore and ten years." Here, then, is a specific instance of the transfer of the Sabbaths neglected by the Jews, to the days and years of their captivity in Babylon. Such a transfer, however, would be impossible, unless the Sabbath or rest were distinct from the period on which it was placed,

The same principle is recognized by men in similar observances. When our national Independence is celebrated on the third or fifth of July, in consequence of the fourth falling on the Sabbath, no one dreams that the celebration is vitiated, for the observance is distinct from the day.

An examination of the fourth commandment more narrowly will confirm this view. What is its main object? Plainly not to render sacred any particular day, because of its position in a numerical series, but to sanctify the Sabbath, and to state that one-seventh of our time shall constitute that Sabbath. It does not determine any order

of enumeration, but commands simply that after laboring six days we shall rest on the seventh. Hence those who keep the Lord's Day, obey the letter of the command; for they labor six days and rest on the seventh, in precise obedience to the law. It may be said, however, that we know that this enumeration began on a certain day. We grant it; but the fixing of this enumeration is something extraneous to the commandment itself, which does not contain within itself any particular series, but is adapted to whatever date it may please God to affix as the period of the weekly Sabbath.

But, more than this, it would be impossible for the command to prescribe any such definite time as the seventh-day theory demands, without involving an inextricable difficulty. If a particular set of hours is made sacred, and not one-seventh of our time, according to the common reckoning, those who are on opposite sides of the earth from the place where the command was first promulgated, will be involved in great embarrassment. It has been said, in extenuation of this difficulty, that as there was a first day in Eden, so there was a first day to its antipodes; and that the seventh day from that would be holy. But this does not reach the difficulty. It arises from the fact that in circumnavigating the globe a day is always lost or gained, according to the direction in which the voyager sails; so two parties sailing in opposite directions and meeting on the other side of the globe, will find a day's difference in their reckoning. Nor is this an imaginary difficulty. When the English sailors first visited Pitcairn's Island they arrived on Saturday, according to their reckoning, but found the natives, with John Adams at their head, keeping the Sabbath, because they had reached the island from the opposite direction. This must occur with every band of missionaries or emigrants sailing in opposite directions. If, then, it be a particular set of hours, and not every seventh day that is made holy, whose reckoning must be adopted? This fact presents the very curious case of a theological dispute which would be completely destroyed by a voyage round the globe. If our brethren who keep Saturday were to sail to the Sandwich Islands by way of the Cape of Good Hope, and we who keep the Lord's Day should sail thither by way of Cape Horn, on reaching the Sandwich Islands our dispute would be annihilated; for we should both be found keeping the same day. A principle which leads to such confusion and difficulty, cannot be embodied in a law of God, The difficulty does not press on the view we have taken of the commandment; for, according to that view, it only requires the setting apart of one-seventh of our time to holy purposes, according to the common reckoning.

For these reasons, we allege that the Sabbath is entirely distinct from the day on which it is placed; that it can be placed on any day, according to any series that God may determine, without affecting a letter of the fourth command; and that, should God see fit to place the hebdomadal season of rest on the eighth instead of the seventh day in the Jewish reckoning, it could be done not only without destroying the Sabbatic institution, but without affecting in the slightest degree the terms of the Sabbatic law; for still we should obey the law that says, "Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work; but the seventh is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God." This point, which is rightly made a vital one in the argument by the Sabbatarian, being clearly established, we are prepared for the next step in the proof.

II. There are strong reasons for such a change of the day, leading us to expect that it would be made.

The first reason is drawn from the nature of the Sabbath. The grand object of the Sabbatic institution is to afford a season of holy rest. In order that motives and recollections suitable for this purpose may be furnished, a day is selected which brings to our memory some of the wonderful works of God. During the Patriarchal dispensation, the work of Creation was selected, as the greatest with which the Church was then acquainted, and made the basis of Sabbath memories and meditations. But if any greater work than this should be wrought by God for his people, whether it was greater absolutely in itself, or relatively to the conceptions of the Church, it would seem proper that this work should also be commemorated by the Church in her Sabbatic observances. Accordingly, when the Mosaic Dispensation was set up, we find it ushered in by the stupendous scenes of the Exodus, in which God revealed himself more gloriously and wonderfully to his chosen people than he had done in the work of creation. When, therefore, we come to examine the record of the restoration of Sabbath observance, we find not only that it is associated with the magnificent scenes of the Exodus, but that it was probably placed on the day when this deliverance was completed. That this day was the seventh in an astronomical series stretching from the creation, is a fact that does not appear on the record, and ought not to be assumed without proof. Having then been placed on a day in the Patriarchal Dispensation to commemorate its greatest benefit, and being in like manner placed on a day, as it would seem, in the Mosaic Dispensation to commemorate its greatest benefit; if, in the Christian Dispensation, there shall be a still greater benefit, we should naturally expect it to be commemorated in like manner. It must, however, be granted, that the work of

redemption is a still grander display of God than either of the others; for it is the deliverance of souls, for the loss of one of which we are assured, by One who knew well their worth, the whole world would be a wretched compensation. Now, as if in express allusion to this point, the work of redemption is called in Scripture, “the new creation,” “the making all things new,” “the regeneration of all things,” “the creation of a new heavens and a new earth;” it will therefore follow, not only that it is a greater work than any that preceded it, but that the same reasons that required *their* commemoration on the Sabbath day, will, *a fortiori*, require it to be commemorated in like manner.

We find some of these reasons also in the prophetic Scriptures. The intimations here must of course be conveyed with some obscurity but they are too clear to be omitted in the argument. There appears to be a reference to it in Isaiah 65:17–18: “For behold I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, neither shall it come into mind. But ye shall be glad and rejoice for ever, in that I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.” Whatever meaning we may attach to the phrase, “new heavens and a new earth,” it is plain that they refer to some development of the plan of redemption, which is explained more fully in the 18th verse. The passage then seems distinctly to assert, first, that this creation is more important than the old; and, secondly, that it shall supplant the old in the commemorations of the Church. Now if the institution designed originally to commemorate the first creation, has been put forward to a day which commemorates the second, we have a clear and striking fulfilment of the prophecy; if not, the whole passage is wrapped in obscurity.

Psalms 118 seems also to intimate this fact with still greater distinctness. This Psalm is referred to our Savior frequently throughout the New Testament. He himself declares, (Matt. 24:39), that the Jews should see him no more until they should say, “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.” Having thus applied it to himself, and sanctioned that application by others, he has fixed its Messianic character beyond dispute. In Matthew 21:42, and Acts 4: 11, we find Christ and his apostles appropriating verse 22 specifically to the Messiah, and declaring that he was the stone which the builders refused. But when did he become the headstone of the corner? Not during his life, for he was still laboring at the great work; not at his death, for the universe was still uncertain whether that death would be accepted; but at his resurrection, when he burst the bars of death, and crowned his redeeming work with this

act of completion. It is then added in verse 24, “This is *the day* the Lord hath made; we will be glad and rejoice in it.” It is not said in general terms, “this is *a day*,” but “this is *the day*,” יה־הַיּוֹם an emphatic definite in the Hebrew, referring necessarily to some particular day. What day, then, is this? It can be no other than the day of Christ’s resurrection, and it declares that this day shall be one of rejoicing and one of worship; for it is added that on this day the gates of righteousness should be opened,—the righteous should enter into them and bless the name of the Lord. This passage, then, we conceive to furnish strong presumption beforehand that such a change as that asserted would take place in the Sabbatic law.

Another very remarkable passage occurs in Ezekiel 43:27: “And when these days are expired, it shall be that upon the eighth day, and so forward, the priests shall make your burnt-offerings upon the altar, and your peace-offerings; and I will accept you, saith the Lord.” The meaning of this verse depends on the interpretation given to the whole context, which is obscure. But whether we regard this as a symbolical description of gospel times, or a literal statement of what shall be done by the Jews, on their conversion to Christianity, it seems to declare, in express terms, that the former hallowing of the seventh day shall be supplanted in the observance of those to whom it refers—either the whole Christian Church or the converted Jews—by a religious observance of the day succeeding, whether we term that day the eighth or the first; both of which designations we find in the New Testament. We should also expect it from the general principles on which God proceeded in taking down the Old, and setting up the New Dispensation.

The Mosaic Dispensation was adapted to the Jews, situated as they were, until the coming of Christ; but was wholly unfit to be a universal religion. Hence, when the economy of religion designed for all nations was established, it became necessary to lay aside the forms of the Mosaic system, for others more enlarged and catholic in their structure. This change became the more necessary, because the Jews had perverted these useful forms from their original intention, into instruments of bigotry and superstition. Hence, even where these Mosaic forms were adapted to more general use, they were laid aside because of this fatal tendency to formality, with which they were inseparably connected in the mind of the Jew. Both of these reasons would lead us to expect some change in the law of the Sabbath.

It would seem that the day on which the Israelites came up from the Red Sea in safety, was the Sabbath.

Hence, in the recapitulation of the Ten Commandments in Deuteronomy 5, we find in verses 12–15 another reason assigned for keeping the fourth commandment, which is given here, perhaps, because this recapitulation of the law was intended specially for the Jews. “And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence, through a mighty hand and a stretched-out arm; *therefore* the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day.” The attaching of this reason to the fourth command does not, of course, affect the moral and perpetual nature of the law, any more than the connection of a similar national blessing with the fifth commandment affects the moral nature of the law that prescribes duties existing between parent and child. But because the Sabbath had become linked in the mind of the Church with Jewish facts, some change of its accessories was necessary. The deliverance from Egypt was, in a sense, typical of the deliverance of the Church from the bondage of sin; and hence it was most natural to expect that this partial, national, and typical redemption should give place, in the day of its commemoration, to the great, universal, antitypical redemption of the world by the blood of Christ. The same reasons that required a change of the sacraments of the Church from circumcision and the Passover, to Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, required a corresponding change in the law of the Sabbath.

But the second reason operated as strongly in reference to the Sabbath, as it did in reference to any part of the Mosaic Law. There was no part of the Old Testament institutes to which the Jews had made larger superstitions and traditional appendages than the Sabbath. Now, as the fourth command of the Decalogue could not be repealed, or the Sabbath destroyed, there remained no more effectual mode of breaking up this association of austere bigotry and servile superstition with the Sabbath law, than by removing it from that day which was deemed so mysteriously sacred by the Jew, and placing it on one that suggested no facts or ideas peculiar to the Jewish Dispensation, but the great, enlarged, and universal facts of the New Dispensation. The strong and obstinate tendency of the Primitive Church to a Judaizing spirit, proves that this consideration is one of by no means a minor importance.

For these reasons, then, we should naturally expect that some change would be made in the law of the Sabbath in the New Dispensation, in accordance with those intimations. We grant, however, that these considerations would not have warranted the Church to make such a change, except on the same express authority that made the other changes in the economy of redemption.

We must have the same warrant in the one case that we have in all others for laying aside the perishing forms of the Church’s pupilage. But as there exists far more anterior ground for expecting such a change in regard to the Sabbath, than in regard to many other temporary forms, we are prepared to examine the evidence for such a change with some peculiar advantages.

III. There is satisfactory evidence, from the records of the New Testament and the writings of the primitive Christians, that such a change actually was made, by the same authority that ordained the form and features of the New Testament Church.

The first question that meets us here is, in what way should we naturally expect this change to be made and indicated? We answer, precisely as many other changes were made and indicated at the same time. The line of transition between the old and new economies was not drawn sharply except in a few leading particulars. The dispensations overlapped each other, so that, as to many matters, it is next to impossible to say when the one ended and the other began. Gradual development, during the existence of inspired men, was the law of the New Dispensation. Hence, its features were continually unfolding themselves with increasing clearness until the death of the last apostle. Who can say precisely when the Old Testament form of worship ceased, and the New Testament form was set up? Who can say precisely when the Scriptures of the Old Testament ceased to be the only rule of faith and practice, and the revelations of the New Testament began to be binding on the Church? It is impossible to determine the precise chronology of many of the changes that were made, for the apostles wisely did not give prominence to any of the features of the New Dispensation that were not absolutely essential. The violence of Jewish prejudices occasioned most of the difficulties and disputes in the Apostolic Church, and in every possible particular these prejudices were spared. To propitiate them, Paul went even so far as to circumcise Timothy. Hence, as to a matter like the one in dispute, which was not vital to Christianity, we should not expect to find the apostles giving it any especial prominence, lest the Jews should be prejudiced against more important truths. Just, then, as we determine the canonical authority of any particular book in the New Testament; as we make out the right to use any particular kind of psalmody or unwritten prayers in public worship; as we determine many of the details of ecclesiastical discipline and government; so must we determine this question. As in these cases, however, we demand not direct, explicit, and formal statements, but are content with incidental facts and

intimations, rendered more clear and intelligible, by carefully attending to the faith and practice of the Primitive Church, so, *a fortiori*, in a case where the ancient law remained unchanged, and the only change was in the Mosaic day and the Mosaic observance, must we be satisfied with similar evidence. That this change did occur by the same authority that made all other changes in the New Testament Church, we think will be evident from several particulars.

1. The whole Mosaic Dispensation was altered, and we should infer the same thing of the Sabbath.

It would be natural that when there were a new church, a new gospel, a new Mediator, new sacraments, new forms of worship, and new commandments; in a word, when, in the language of the Messiah, "All things" were "made new," the same rule should be extended to the Sabbath. But as the essential character of the Sabbath could not be altered, since it was of immutable morality; and as the proportion of time could not be altered, since this was a part of the original institution, and wisely adapted to the physical constitution of man, there remained nothing to alter but the day of its observance. The patriarchal Sabbath having been so placed as to commemorate the creation; the Mosaic, the Exodus; we should naturally infer that the Christian Sabbath would be so altered, with every other feature of the dispensation, as to commemorate the great fact of redemption.

2. Our Savior, although bound to keep the whole law, and, therefore, the law of the Sabbath, lay in the grave during the Jewish Sabbath, and thus virtually abolished it.

There are two declarations of the Lord Jesus that establish this proposition. The first is his memorable assertion, when defending his disciples from the charge of Sabbath-breaking (Luke 6:5), "The Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath." Why make this assertion, unless he meant to make some change in the law of the Sabbath? It was a triumphant defense of the disciples to refer to the great principle of necessity and mercy involved in the case of David; why, then, advance a claim to the power of changing the law of the Sabbath, unless he had determined to use this power? Unless we regard this as an implied prediction of an exercise of his sovereignty over the Sabbath, it appears irrelevant, weakening to the argument, and at variance with the uniform habit of the Savior.

The second declaration is that contained in Matt. 9:15, that when the bridegroom was taken away, then would the children of the bride chamber mourn. He was taken away, however, during the Jewish Sabbath. The Sabbath

being, in its very nature, a festival, and a time of rejoicing, this act of the Head of the Church made it impossible for the Church to keep it according to its nature. It was to "the little flock" a day of gloom, defeat, and mourning; and not until the light of the first day of the week revealed to their sight the Lord of the Sabbath, were they able to enjoy its quiet rest. In, therefore, so ordering his death, that it should prevent the possibility of keeping the Sabbath; in causing the whole of the mighty machinery of the plan of redemption to stand still, and the ancient order of things to cease on this day, as to its typical efficacy, he did virtually abolish the Jewish, and establish the Christian Sabbath.

3. The Redeemer rose from the dead on the first day of the week, and by his resurrection completed the work of redemption; and thus consecrated this day to rest by the mightiest work the world ever saw.

It is marvelous that even prejudice should have induced men, in this discussion, to deny either of these premised facts. In regard to the first, it will be sufficient to refer to the account of the resurrection, and especially to Mark 16:9—"Now when Jesus had risen early, *the first day of the week*, he appeared to Mary Magdalene"—for the most positive assertion of the fact. The second fact, that the resurrection was the completion of the work of redemption in its purchase, appears from the reasonings of Paul in 1 Cor. 15: 17-18: "And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep are perished." This averment can be true only on the ground that the resurrection was the crowning act of the work of redemption: the fact which, if it be established, Christianity is safe; if it be overthrown, Christianity is destroyed.

This, then, being the completion of the new creation, which, by the afore-cited prophecy of Isaiah, was to supplant the old in the commemorations of the Church; and this being the mightiest benefit ever bestowed upon the world, it *ipso facto* consecrated the first day, as before the old creation had consecrated the seventh, as a day of rest. Had Christ designed that the commemorating festival of the Christian Church should remain the same with the Jewish, he would surely have risen on the seventh day, and not left his great work undone, and the day of joyous rest a day of anxious mourning. But having not completed his work until after the seventh day, we infer that he designed us, after his example, to rest and rejoice, not on the seventh day, but on the first, the glorious day when "the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy."

4. Our Lord Jesus Christ consecrated this day to worship, by meeting with his disciples for that purpose.

Four times during this day did he meet with his disciples in some way, and the last interview is minutely recorded. The disciples were met in the evening of the first day, when Christ came into their midst, and, breathing upon them, said, "Receive the Holy Ghost." This interview and bestowal of the Holy Ghost sanctified their assembly, and consecrated the day of that memorable assembling to worship. Had our Savior designed them to observe the Jewish Sabbath, we should naturally expect to find him meeting with them that day for this purpose. But when was their next meeting? On that day, week, or, in Jewish phrase, after eight days. It is manifest that this meeting was by appointment, for Thomas was there with them, to have his doubts removed. At this meeting, also, Christ gave them his blessing, and thus hallowed the day. Why did he not meet with them on the seventh day, and observe the Jewish Sabbath with his disciples? The only answer that can be given is, that he did not design them to observe it, but intended, by these significant marks of favor, to consecrate the day of his resurrection to worship, as the Lord's Day, and the Christian Sabbath.

5. It was farther consecrated to the peculiar promise of the Sabbath by the first proclamation of the gospel, the setting up of the Church, and the wonderful outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

That the day of Pentecost fell on the first day of the week appears from Leviticus. 23:15-16: "And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the Sabbath... even unto the morrow after the seventh Sabbath, shall ye number fifty days." This, however, was the day selected for the downfall of the Old Dispensation and the establishment of the New; for the first preaching of the gospel, which was one of the most important duties of the Sabbath; for the outpouring of the Spirit and the conversion of souls, which are the highest blessings the Sabbath can confer; and for the joy that went up from every part of the holy city at these "wonderful works of God." Can we conceive of a nobler consecration of the day than this? Has ever a day since the morning of the creation been so wonderfully honored, and so evidently set apart for hallowed purposes? If, then, we imitate the apostles in the observance of this day in this manner, can we possibly be wrong?

6. Its consecration is farther evident from the example of the apostles.

The record we possess of the acts of the apostles is so brief, that much is omitted which would otherwise satisfy our queries on this subject. But there is one negative fact of great value in this investigation. We never find the apostles meeting Christians for worship on the seventh

day. We find them meeting the Jews, because this was the only day they could have full access to them; and meeting the Gentiles, who frequented the synagogues on this day, for the same reason. But this is only what a missionary to the Jews would do in our own day on the Jewish Sabbath, or a missionary to the Mohammedans on the Mussulman Sabbath, without sanctioning, for a moment, the claim set up by either for the sixth or seventh day as the day of rest.

But the facts are different in regard to the first day of the week. In Acts 20:6-7, it is stated by Luke, "We came unto Troas in five days, where we abode seven days. And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached to them, ready to depart on the morrow."

Several points are manifest on the face of the record. It appears that Paul tarried until the first day, for the purpose of preaching to the disciples, and uniting in the Lord's Supper. This proves that they were accustomed to meet for this purpose, on that day. The same thing appears from the form of expression used. It is not said, "On the first day of the week the disciples came together;" as if this was a special meeting called to hear Paul; but, "On the first day of the week, *when* they came together;" when they were accustomed to come together for this purpose;¹ just as we should say, "on the fourth of July, when we came together to celebrate our national Independence." Being mentioned thus as a common custom, and a matter of course, it proves that they kept the first day of the week, by assembling for worship, preaching the word, and celebrating the Lord's Supper, This being done under the authority of inspired men, we have the same warrant for keeping the first day of the week that we have for the other parts of the New Testament worship.

The next indication of apostolic example is found in 1 Cor. 16:2: "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come."

The argument from this passage is misunderstood in the objection, that this is a mere private laying aside of money, which cannot hallow the day on which it was done. But, in the first place, this was an act of worship, for it was an offering to God for the benefit of the poor saints at Jerusalem. We learn from Philo and Josephus, that the Jews were accustomed to make these offerings on the Sabbath, as a part of the worship of the

1. For this use of the participle, see Winer's Idioms, part iii, §46, 1, 9, and Buttman's Larger Greek Grammar, §114, note 7. [Cf. Georg Benedikt Winer, *A Grammar of the Idioms of the Greek Language of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: H. Hooker, 1840). Philip Karl Buttman, *Intermediate or Larger Greek Grammar* (London: 1840).]

synagogue. And, as Paul informs the Corinthians that he had given the same command to the distant churches of Galatia, we infer that it was a general regulation all over the Church, thus engrafting a well-known Sabbath custom on the first day of the week. Now this must have been a collection made when they came together for worship, because this was a Jewish act of worship, and because, if they simply laid aside their bounty at home, this would not save gatherings when the apostle came; and the reason given for his injunction would be irrelevant and absurd. It is therefore implied, that in doing this act they were assembled for worship. But why was the first day specified? Had it been a private laying by of the savings of the week, the most natural time would have been the close of the week, the sixth day, when the week's business was done. If the seventh day had been kept as the day of worship, it would also have been named as the day of this collection. The placing of these collections on the first day of the week proves conclusively that they kept it, by apostolic authority, as the day of worship, or, the Christian Sabbath.

The next indication we find in Revelation 1:10: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day."

The object of the apostle John was to state on what day of the week the vision was seen; and hence he gives it this designation. This proves that the name was well known to Christians at this time, otherwise the use of it to point out a particular day would have been a mockery. Now what day was it? Not surely the seventh, for it is never so designated by any writer, sacred or profane. It could not be an indefinite time for any day, for it would then convey no information such as was required. It must, therefore, have been a day belonging to the Lord in a peculiar sense; a day set apart for the service of Him who claimed to be the Lord of the Sabbath; which is but to say, that the Lord's Day is the Christian Sabbath.

7. We gather the same thing from the doctrinal teachings of the apostles.

In Heb. 4:9–10, it is stated that Christ's resting from his works (which he did not do until the resurrection) was parallel with God's ceasing from his works of creation; and, therefore, he infers that there remaineth a *σαββατισμὸς*, a keeping of the Sabbath to the people of God. Whether this refers to the Sabbath rest of heaven

or that of earth, it, in either case, teaches that it follows the rule not of the "rest" of the creation, but that of Christ, which took place at his resurrection.

The only other passage we adduce is Col. 2:16–17: "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days, which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is Christ." The "Sabbath days" here mentioned cannot be all the Jewish festivals, for they are included in the former terms, "holy day and new moon"; and the word Sabbath is not so used in the New Testament. It could not be the general duty of keeping the Sabbath, for this was a moral precept unrepealed. It must, therefore, be the Jewish Sabbath, as far as it was possible to alter it, and adapt it to the New Dispensation; and this was only as to the day of its observance. He then asserts that the Jewish Sabbath, being but a shadow, in its commemoration of the Exodus, of the great deliverance that was made at the resurrection, must give place to a fuller embodying of the substance, in making the Lord's Day the Christian Sabbath. The only incident connected with the law of the Sabbath that partook of this shadowy character was the day; and hence this alone could be changed, in throwing aside the Mosaic regulations concerning the day of rest.

8. We infer the same thing from the universal practice of the Christian Church.

There is no fact in ecclesiastical history more undoubted, than the unanimous consent of the Primitive Church in keeping holy the Lord's Day. In some of the churches composed of Jewish converts, the observance of the seventh day was tolerated, for the same reason that circumcision, and some other Jewish rites, were permitted during the existence of the temple. But where the seventh day was observed, it was accompanied by the observance of the Lord's Day. About this fact ecclesiastical historians are agreed.²

We propose to take up the chain of testimony which we have traced to the last of the apostles, and carry it forward to a date when the observance of this day becomes a part of the legal history of the Roman Empire. There are but few writings remaining from the close of the New Testament canon to the time of Constantine; but it is remarkable that there is scarcely one which does not contain a recognition of the practice of the Church in this particular. We subjoin a few of these testimonies, giving, as nearly as possible the date of the writer's birth, and omitting controverted details.

Barnabas, the companion of Paul, and one of the seventy, thus speaks in his catholic epistle:—"For which cause" [namely, the declarations of God in prophecy]

2. Murdoch's *Mosheim*, vol. i, p. 85; Torrey's *Neander*, vol. i, p. 295. [Johann Mosheim *Institutes of Ecclesiastical History, Ancient and Modern: In Four Books, Much Corrected, Enlarged, and Improved from the Primary Authorities*, trans. James Murdock (New York: Harper & Bros, 1847), 85; *General History of the Christian Religion and Church, from the German of Augustus Neander*, trans. Joseph Torrey (1847; Boston: Crocker & Brewster, etc., etc, 1854), 295.]

“we keep the eighth day with gladness, in which Jesus rose from the dead, and having manifested himself, (to his disciples), ascended into heaven.”³

Ignatius of Antioch, whom tradition declares to have been one of the children blessed by our Lord, and therefore from before the middle of the first century, thus writes:—“Let us no longer Sabbatize,” [that is, keep the Jewish Sabbath], “but keep the Lord’s Day, on which our life arose by him.”⁴

Justin Martyr, born about A. D. 114, in his Second Apology for the Christians, says:—“On the day that is called Sunday, all both of country and city assemble together, and the commentaries of the apostles and the writings of the prophets are read, as time and occasion permit.”⁵ “On Sunday we all assemble together, because it is the first day (of the week) on which God, transforming the darkness and chaos, made the world; and Jesus Christ, our Savior, on that day arose from the dead: for on Friday he was crucified, and on Sunday, appearing to his disciples, he taught them those things which we now present to you as our belief.”⁶

Tertullian, who was born about A. D. 160, declares: “On the day of our Lord’s resurrection, we ought not only to avoid this, (namely, bowing the knee in prayer), but every species of anxiety; and also lay aside our ordinary business, lest we give place to the devil.”⁷

Irenæus, the disciple of Polycarp, who was born about A. D. 120, wrote an express treatise on this point, as we learn from Eusebius:—“Among these, also, was Irenæus, who, in the name of those brethren in Gaul over whom he presided, wrote an epistle, in which he maintains the duty of celebrating the mystery of the resurrection of our Lord, only on the day of the Lord.”⁸

Theophilus of Antioch, contemporary with Irenæus, declares:—“Both custom and reason challenge from us that we should honor the Lord’s Day, seeing it was on that day that our Lord Jesus Christ completed his resurrection from the dead.”⁹

Dionysius of Corinth, who flourished about A. D. 170, declares:—“Now we keep the Lord’s Day holy.”¹⁰

Melito of Sardis, who is one of our most important witnesses concerning the canon of Scripture, wrote a work on the Lord’s Day.¹¹

Origen, born A. D. 185, says, in his Homily on Exodus:—“But if it appears from the Holy Scriptures that God rained manna from heaven on the Lord’s Day, and did not on the Sabbath, the Jews can thereby understand that our Lord’s Day is preferred to the Jewish Sabbath.”¹²

The Apostolical Constitutions, which, though not of apostolic origin, are yet of very great antiquity, and

date about this period, declare:—“What apology will he make to God, who does not assemble on the Lord’s Day to hear the saving word concerning the resurrection,” etc.¹³

3. και ἄγομεν τὴν ἡμέραν τὴν ὀγόνῃ εἰς εὐφροσύνην, ἐν ἣ καὶ ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἀνέστη ἐκ νεκρῶν καὶ φανερωθεὶς ἀνέβη εἰς τοὺς [sic?] οὐρανοίς, —*Epistle of Barnabas*, chapter 15. Cf. “The Epistle of Barnabas,” in *The Apostolic Fathers with an English Translation by Kirsopp Lake in Two Volumes*, Loeb Classical Library (London: William Heinemann; New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1919) 1.396–397. The Loeb text omits τοὺς.

4. μηκέτι σαββατίζοντες, ἀλλὰ κατὰ κυριακὴν ζῶντες, ἐν ἣ καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἡμῶν ἀνέτειλεν δι’ αὐτοῦ,—*Ep. ad Magnes*, c. 9. Cf. “Ignatius to the Magnesians,” in *The Apostolic Fathers*, 1.204–205.

5. τῇ δὲ [sic] τοῦ ἡλίου λεγομένη ἡμέρα πάντων κατὰ πόλεις ἢ ἀγροῦς μενόντων ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ συνέλευσις γίνεται, καὶ τὰ, etc.—*Pro Christianis Apologia*, II, *Opera*, p. 98. [The δὲ is not in the text and likely came in error from the next citation. *Sancti Iustini philosophi et martyris opera* (Lutetiae Parisiorum : apud Michaelem Sonnum, 1615), 98. See this edition online at <http://www.e-rara.ch/doi/10.3931/e-rara-9781>. Cf. *St. Justin Martyr The First and Second Apologies*, translated with introduction and notes by Leslie William Barnard (New York: Paulus Press, 1997) 71.]

6. τὴν δὲ τοῦ ἡλίου ἡμέραν κοινῇ πάντες τὴν συνέλευσιν ποιούμεθα, ἐπειδὴ πρώτη ἐστὶν ἡμέρα, ἐν ἣ ὁ θεὸς τὸ σκότος καὶ τὴν ὕλην τρέψας κόσμον ἐποίησε, καὶ Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς ὁ ἡμέτερος σωτὴρ τῇ αὐτῇ ἡμέρα ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀνέστη, i.g.s. p. 99. See also, *Dialog. cum Tryphone Judæo*, pp. 241, 245, 260; and the unknown author of *Quæst. et Respons. ad Orthodox.*, p. 469. [Barnard, *ibid.*; 1615 ed., p. 99, 241, 245, 260; question cxv regarding the Lord’s Day appears on page 468 in the 1615 edition. See *Justin Martyr’s Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, translated by Henry Brown (Cambridge: Deightons, 1846) 62, 69–72, 97. *Quæstiones et responsiones ad orthodoxos* which is now classed as Pseudo Justin, has not been translated into English.]

7. “Solo die dominico resurrectionis non ab isto tantum, sed omni anxietatis habitu et officio carere debemus, differentes etiam negotia, ne quem diabolo locum demus.”—*Tertullian de Oratione*, c. 23. Migne, PL 1 (1844), col. 1191; Garnier reissue (1879) col. 1298. Translation by Ernest Evans, *De oratione liber. Tract on the Prayer* (London: S.P.C.K., 1953); online, http://www.tertullian.org/articles/evans_orat/evans_orat_04english.htm.

8. Eusebius, *Eccles. Hist.*, lib. v, cap. 24. [Cf. *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, second series*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Buffalo: The Christian Literature Company, 1890–1900), 1.243.]

9. Quoted in Bingham, *Orig. Eccles.*, lib. xx, cap. ii, para. 5. [“Both custom and decency require us to keep the Lord’s day a festival, and to give honour to it, because on this day our Lord Jesus Christ procured for us the resurrection from the dead.” Joseph Bingham, *Origines Ecclesiasticae: or, The Antiquities of the Christian Church and other works*, 9 vols. (London: 1840) 7.40.]

10. See Original in Bingham, *ut supra*. [*Ibid.*, 7.16. “Today we observed the Lord’s holy day.”]

11. Eusebius, *Eccles. Hist.*, lib. iv, cap. 26. [NPNF2-01, p. 204.]

12. Quoted in Bingham, lib. xx, cap. ii, para. 1. [*Ibid.*, 7.16–17.]

13. Lib. ii, cap. 59, quoted in Pearce’s *Vindication of the Dissenters*, p. 499. [James Peirce, *A Vindication of the Dissenters: In Answer to Dr. William Nichols’s Defence of the Doctrine and Discipline of the Church of England*, second edition (1718), 499. Cf. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts et al. 10 vols. (Buffalo: Christian literature Co, 1887), 7.423.]

Clement of Alexandria, who flourished during the latter part of the second and beginning of the third century, says that “Plato predicts the Lord’s Day as holy, and explains the proper mode of keeping the day.”¹⁴

Athanasius, born about A. D. 298, declares:—“We assemble on the Sabbath day, not returning again to Judaism, for we do not keep false Sabbaths; but we come together on the Sabbath, adoring Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath. Formerly among the ancients the (Jewish) Sabbath was honored, but the Lord changed the day of the Sabbath into the Lord’s Day.”¹⁵

This testimony brings us to the time of Constantine, when the Lord’s Day was ordained to be a *dies non juridicus*, and its observance made a part of the laws of the Roman Empire. In the edict proclaiming this ordinance, we find it recognized as an ancient and unquestioned institution; and although agricultural labors are allowed on that day, it is distinctly stated that it was only as works of necessity and mercy; and even this permission, in the unguarded form in which it was given in the law, was protested against by many councils, the canons of seven of which are given by Bingham.¹⁶

From the time of Constantine the usage is conceded; although the language of Christian writers does not materially vary from that used in the testimonies already quoted.

We ask any candid mind to look at this chain of evidence, showing an unvarying observance of this day from the time of the apostles, and of apostolic men down to the present day; and evincing a unanimity on this point that we scarcely find on any other, except the essentials of Christianity; and explain it fairly on any other ground than that the Lord’s Day was made the Christian Sabbath, by the same authority that ordained every other part of the New Dispensation.

9. Our last argument is drawn from the blessing of God on the observance of the Lord’s Day.

It is difficult to conceive that God could allow the Church to remain in so serious an error as this would be for eighteen hundred years; and that this error, unlike

any other that has ever been held, should produce no perceptible evil. If the Church is mistaken on this point, it is the most gigantic Sabbath-breaking institution the world ever saw; and the God who so fearfully punished the Sabbath violations of the Old Testament Church, could not but frown upon this stupendous crime of the New. But, instead of this, the observance of the day has been pre-eminently blessed. The holiest names that glow in the Church’s history are blended with its halloved scenes; the richest ingatherings of souls that have ever been made, were made during its hours; the lands that have most sacredly cherished its observance have been the greenest spots among the nations; and the sweetest memories of piety, the richest trophies of grace, the prayers of the sainted dead, the blood of the noble martyred, the bright recollections of the past, and the brighter anticipations of the future; in a word, all that is most lovely, most glorious, and most precious, in the heritage of the Church, cluster around and consecrate the observance of this “queen of the week.” Would God thus endorse a lie? Has he ever thus blessed an error? What, then, is all the wondrous history of Lord’s-day blessings and Lord’s-day judgments, that stretches its belt of light along the past, but the permanent, cumulative testimony of the Great Head of the Church, that this change has been made by his direction, and according to his purpose?

Gathering together all these multiplied items of proof, we regard the conclusion as irresistible, that the Lord’s Day is, by the authority of God, the Christian Sabbath.

We had intended, as a corollary to this argument, to subjoin some remarks on the proper means of promoting the observance of the Lord’s Day; but our limits forbid farther enlargement. We will only remark, in conclusion, that while we most earnestly resist the fanatical crusade that Infidelity is now waging against all laws prohibiting certain violations of the Sabbath, we have no confidence in any effort of civil law to enforce its observance. The province of human legislation here, as on all similar subjects, is negative rather than positive; preventing the invasion of right, rather than enforcing the performance of duty. We hold the Sabbath to be the Paradise of the poor man’s week; and all that we ask of those who bear the sword of earthly authority, is to take their stand at the portals of this “garden enclosed,” and, with “the flaming brand,” prohibit the unhallowed intrusion of King, or Congress, or lawless rapacity, to invade its sweet seclusion or disturb its holy rest. But we desire not that this guard shall itself intrude, to drive unwilling feet to these grateful

14. Clem. *Stromata*, vii, quoted in Bingham, *ut supra*. [Ibid., 714-15. There has been some conflation; Plato is not mentioned here by Bingham, nor does Clement mention him at this place, though he is adduced elsewhere in this and other books of *Stromata*. See book 7 online, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/02107.htm>.]

15. Augusti Archäologie, die Feste der Heretiker, 3, 346, note. [Johann Christian Wilhelm Augusti, *Die Feste der alten Christen: für Religions-Lehrer und gebildete Leser aus allen Confessionen* 3, *Denkwürdigkeiten aus der christlichen Archäologie* (Leipzig: Dyk, 1820), 346. Pseudo Athanasius, “Homily de Semente,” Migne, *PG* 28.144.]

16. Bingham, lib. xx, cap. ii, para. iii. [Cf. vol. 7, pp. 21ff.]

shades, as to a weekly prison; and enforce where they are at liberty only to protect. And this we may rightfully demand: for the majority of every political community, be it Christian, Pagan, Mussulman, or Jewish, have a right to enact laws for the protection of their lawful privileges; and a minority have no right to disturb them in its peaceful exercise.

It is trifling with our common sense to say, that the rights of the poor artisan, laborer, or shop-keeper, are not seriously invaded by permitting his rapacious employer to force him to labor seven days in the week or lose his place; or by allowing his unscrupulous neighbor to open his shop beside him, attract his customers, and diminish his sales, as well as disturb his Sabbath quiet by the noise and bustle of trade. To protect the weary laborer and the humble trader from this petty, but, in the aggregate, most formidable oppression, we have a right to demand the interpos-

ing arm of legal prohibition, and to resist every effort to break down this munition of laws, as the beginning of a tyranny the most cruel and heartless, because its sorest pressure must be felt in the end by the poor, the defenseless, and the unfriended.

To secure the proper observance of the Sabbath, we must look to other agencies than human law. We must teach men to love the Sabbath, as the lent day of Eden, and the prophetic type of Heaven, embodying a relic of the peace of the one, and a promise of the rest of the other. We must convince them that it is not only an obligation, but a blessing; that it is God's great gift to toiling man and beast; the link he has given to bind together things sacred and profane, things temporal and eternal; and by interfusing a heavenly spirit into our earthly life, to elevate, civilize, and refine society. We must teach the

poor man to hail its soft light, as it steals into his cottage window, as the glad signal of Heaven to welcome him

to the bosom of his family; to sweeten the joys of his humble home; to call him to the house of God, where his mind shall expand and his heart soften, as his hopes are remembered and his cares forgotten; while his toilsome lot on earth is gilded with a calm and holy light, as there rises to his gladdened vision the heritage of rest above. We must convince the rich man of the wise political economy of the Sabbath; its relation to a nation's wealth and greatness; its action as a great balance-wheel in human affairs, checking over-production and under-payment; preventing over-working and deterioration; restoring wasted energies; keeping alive the pure and powerful influence of domestic joys; compensating for the neglect of early education; and preparing the laborer to return refreshed, elevated, and cheered to the toil of another week. We

must cause them to feel that the violation of Sabbath rest is as blind, suicidal, and ruinous an economy, as the robbery of the refreshing sleep of the night. When to this pervading sense of the value and sweetness of the Sabbath, there shall be added a waking church; a ministry burning with light as well as love; a membership emulous of the fervent spirit of their spiritual chiefs; a sanctified press; a purified literature, and a Christianized education; then shall we hope to see that Sabbath which is "a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable;" that Sabbath whose golden promise has brightened the horizon of the future to the eye of prophecy; and which, when it weekly draws its girdle of light around the glad earth, shall aptly prefigure that blessed Sabbatism, where "the wicked shall cease from troubling, and the weary be at rest." ■



T. V. Moore, Southern Presbyterian minister and author (1818–1871), This portrait was published in *The centennial memorial of the Presbytery of Carlisle: a series of papers, historical and biographical, relating to the origin and growth of Presbyterianism in the central and eastern part of southern Pennsylvania*, vol. 2 (Harrisburg: Meyers Print. and Pub. House, 1889), after page 233. Moore served as moderator of the PCUS General Assembly in 1867 and for a time owned and edited the *Central Presbyterian* with M. D. Hoge.

Pastoral Letter on the Observance of the Sabbath

By Benjamin Morgan Palmer

INTRODUCTION

“Benjamin Morgan Palmer was born in Charleston, SC on January 25, 1818 to parents Edward and Sarah Bunce Palmer. He later attended Amherst College, 1832–34, taught from 1834–36, attended the University of Georgia in 1838 and Columbia Theological Seminary from 1839–41. He was licensed to preach in 1841 by Charleston Presbytery and ordained in 1842 by Georgia Presbytery. His first pastorate was at the First Presbyterian Church of Savannah, GA, 1841–42. From there he pastored the First Presbyterian Church of Columbia, SC from 1843–55, served as a professor at Columbia Theological Seminary from 1853–56, and finally assumed the post of his last church, First Presbyterian of New Orleans, in 1856, serving there until his death in 1902. He was struck by a street car on 5 May 1902 and died on 25 May 1902.

Dr. Palmer preached the opening sermon at the first General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church U.S. and served as Moderator of that first Assembly (4 Dec 1861). His published works include: *Life and Letters of J.H. Thornwell; the Family in Its Civil and Churchly Aspects; Theology of Prayer; the Broken Home or Lessons in Sorrow; Formation of Character*; and two volumes of Sermons.”¹

This letter was published initially in the *Minutes of the Synod of South Carolina, at their Sessions in Winnsborough, Fairfield District, S.C., Nov. 1851*, and found as part of the Appendix to those *Minutes*, on pages 64–71. [Columbia, SC: Steam-power Press of A.S. Johnston,

1852]. This pastoral letter was subsequently issued as an off-print under the title *Pastoral Letter on the Observance of the Sabbath*, and was again printed in Columbia, South Carolina by the Steam-Power Press of A.S. Johnston, dated 1852. Two extant copies have been located on WorldCat, one at the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary and the other, somewhat surprisingly, at the State Library of New South Wales.

CONTEXT

Minutes of The Synod of South Carolina, at their sessions in Camden, S.C., November, 1849 with an Appendix (Columbia, SC: Printed by A.S. Johnston), Sixth Session, Saturday, 3½ o'clock, P.M., pages 12–13

The Committee of Bills and Overtures, to whom was referred the memorial to the Legislature on the violation of the Sabbath, by the South Carolina Rail Road Company, made the following report, which was adopted

“The Synod has learned with deep interest that the citizens of the several Districts propose to memorialize the Legislature on the violation of the Sabbath by the Railroad Company, within the limits of the State. In view of the fact that these operations of the Company on the Sabbath, directly contravene the law of God, which holds the Sabbath exempt from all such labor, whether performed by private persons or corporate bodies; and in view of the anticipated influence of the oldest Railroad Company in the State upon other Companies controlling Roads, soon to go into operation: therefore

“Resolved, That this Synod express its hearty concurrence in such a proposed movement on the part of the citizens, which has for its object the observance of the Sabbath by Railroad Companies within the State.

THE EDITOR: The text for this piece is provided by Wayne Sparkman, director of The PCA Historical Center in Saint Louis, Mo.

1. This biographical entry was “redrafted from the entry in the *Ministerial Directory of the Presbyterian Church, U.S., 1861–1941* (Austin, TX: Press of Von Boeckmann-Jones Co., 1942), page 551.” <http://www.pcahistory.org/biography/palmerbm.html> (accessed February 15, 2016). The background was provided by Wayne Sparkman.

“The Committee would further recommend the appointment of a special Committee, to draft a Pastoral letter to the Churches within our bounds; which letter shall embrace all questions connected with the violation of the Sabbath, by public bodies or private individuals in our midst, and a discussion of the civil law, so far as it may conflict with the strict observance of the Lord’s day.”

Rev. Messrs. J. H. Thornwell, D.D., and B. M. Palmer, with Mr. G. T. Snowden, were appointed the special Committee, in accordance with the above suggestion, with instructions to report at the next meeting of the Synod.

Minutes of The Synod of South Carolina, at their sessions in Upper Long Cane Church, Abbeville District, S.C., November, 1850 with an Appendix (Columbia, SC: Printed by A.S. Johnston, 1851), page 9.

The committee appointed to prepare a Pastoral letter on the observance of the Sabbath, not being prepared to report, was continued with instructions to report next year.

Minutes of the Synod of South Carolina, at their Sessions in Winnsborough, Fairfield District, S.C., Nov. 1851 (Columbia, SC: Steam-power Press of A.S. Johnston, 1852]. This pastoral letter was subsequently issued as an off-print under the title *Pastoral Letter on the Observance of the*), page 13:

Friday, Nov. 7, 1851, 8 1-2 o’clock, P.M.

After divine service, Synod came to order. The Committee appointed to draft a pastoral letter on the subject of the Sabbath, presented and read such a letter, which was adopted and ordered to be printed in the appendix to the minutes; also that 1,000 copies be published in the form of a circular, and that the Pastors of Churches read the same to their congregations.

Pastoral Letter on the Observance of the Sabbath

To the Churches and Church members within the Synod of South Carolina:

Dearly beloved brethren—In drawing your attention to the subject of the Christian Sabbath, we only fulfil the duty of a faithful Pastor, who bringeth out of his treasure, things old as well as new. “*Gutta cavat lapidem*”—and upon the operation of this law, by giving line upon

line, must we chiefly rely to wear an abiding moral impression upon the face of society. It is a consolation to know that what is old is not necessarily trite; as it is no slender proof of the divine origin of Christianity, that no reiteration of its sacred topics can exhaust their interest or importance. While, therefore, it may not be possible to throw light upon the *doctrine* of the Sabbath, it will perhaps be easy to enforce its *practical observance*, by much that is peculiar to the age in which we live.

In the discussion of a familiar subject, this special advantage will sometimes accrue, that its fundamental principles may be assumed as already proved and acknowledged. We shall not, for example, pause at the threshold to establish the divine institution of a day of rest. It is a fact now distinctly recognized by the Christian world, that God did cease from the work of creation at the close of the sixth day, and did thus consecrate the seventh as a holy rest to man. Even the light labours of Paradise, which never brought fatigue, were, on this day, remitted; and man’s constant worship became more emphatic and devout as, on this day, he contemplated the glory of the Creator in the glory of His works.

It is equally unnecessary to array the physiological proof, that a weekly vacation from toil is required to repair the energies both of man and beast. To the sceptical it must suffice here to say, that a large induction of particular facts has fully established the natural law, that the sons of toil, in addition to the hours of repose which night affords, need the supplemental rest of a weekly Sabbath. In all departments of labor, whether mental or mechanical, both the schemer and the operative, and the very beasts of burden, wear out the faster for unremitting exertion. Even while retaining their physical capacity, there is cumulative evidence to show, that through a given term of sufficient length, the amount of productive labour will be in favour of those who intercalate one day of rest amidst six of toil. For a similar reason, we pass over the subordinate advantages of the Sabbath, in the cleanliness it promotes, the health it invigorates, its kindly influence upon the affections and charities of home, and the general benefits, intellectual and moral, which it diffuses through all orders of society. We omit these minor topics, for the sake of brevity, to ascend directly to the religious uses of this holy day.

It is worthy of note, that in every form of religion established by God among men, the Sabbath has stood forth its most conspicuous monument. In the religion of nature, which was strictly a religion of law, and had respect to man in his primitive holiness, the Sabbath was the only ordinance of worship. There was the law written upon Adam’s heart; there was the tree of temptation

for the proof of his obedience; there was the sacramental tree of life, the seal of the covenant and its blessings, instantly forfeited upon transgression; but amidst them all rose the Sabbath, itself the sign of a more perfect rest, the great comprehensive institute of natural religion, embodying the worship which man owes to God, and embracing that obedience to His law, which was its fundamental element. It was eminently proper that man should thus bring, in the *worship* of the Sabbath, a pledge of his soul's deepest homage to God. But this was not all; in its *repose* also, he brought a religious tribute of that very life and being which God had bestowed. In the gift of Immortality, God set the seal of His own image upon the existence which He gave to man. If it was not self-being, since this could not be given, it was at least ceaseless being; and this natural endowment is placed as the stake of man's obedience, which the law covers with its mortgage. Now, it is of this very being, thus consecrated by the seal of God's image, and placed as the pawn to be redeemed only by perfect obedience to the divine law, that man, in the repose of the first Sabbath, offered the first fruits to God; and ever as this weekly day of rest recurs, is there presented a perpetual wave-offering before the Lord, by which our whole time and life are surrendered to Him, and anew received at His hands.

After the apostacy, the Sabbath was still left, the only portion of time exempted from the curse of labour, which doomed the transgressor to live by the sweat of his brow. Thus as a symbol of the grace which should effect a final and perfect deliverance from the entailed curse, it passed from the religion of nature into the religion of grace. It gleams with sufficient distinctness amidst the fragmentary records of the Patriarchal age, and was incorporated in the Mosaic dispensation, with such fullness, as to give occasion for the theory, that all earlier notices of it were in anticipation of this its only true inauguration. It has been remarked by another, that "the observance of the Sabbath was the first moral duty enjoined upon the Israelites after the Exodus, and was made the memorial of that event, as previously it had commemorated the creation of the world: "Remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched-out arm; *therefore*, the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day." (Deut. 5: 15.) While it became thus the memorial to the Israelites of a particular event in their history, it was also a public declaration before the nations, of their allegiance to the true God, and a renunciation of Idolatry: "verily my Sabbaths ye shall keep; for it is a

sign between me and you throughout your generations, that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you." (Ex. 31: 12.) Indeed so manifestly did the Sabbath enter among the institutes of Judaism, that the boldest assault made upon it in after ages was the doctrine, that it was peculiarly a Jewish ordinance, and passed into oblivion with the other shadows of the same economy.

It can however be made apparent, that instead of becoming thus obsolete, it passed over a permanent statute into the Christian dispensation. As in Judaism, the Sabbath was a monumental pillar bearing the record of Israel's redemption from Egypt, so Christianity engraves upon it the sinner's redemption from hell, through a Saviour's resurrection. By a change only in what was positive, and not moral, in the command, its transfer from the seventh to the first day of the week proclaims "this same Jesus hath God raised up, whereof I am witness." But the Sabbath which commemorates the consummating act, is equally the memorial of that entire redeeming work undertaken by Christ upon the earth. Thus in the religion of grace, as in the religion of nature, the Sabbath lifts itself like some proud obelisk, all covered with inscriptions of man's duties to his God, and of God's rich grace to man. So complete is the identity between the Sabbath and the gospel it attests, as to have extorted the confession, that till the former was destroyed, it was hopeless to overturn the latter; and infidel France was instigated to rob it of its sacred associations, by the substitution of a tenth day of rest and pleasure.

To neglect the Sabbath, therefore, is to ignore the Deity as the object of worship; while to cancel it, would be to efface all religion, whether of law or of Grace. It is upon this, the highest ground, we suppose, that God vindicates His Sabbaths with such holy jealousy. Said Nehemiah to the nobles of Judah after the captivity, "What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath day? Did not your fathers thus, and did not the Lord our God bring all this evil upon us and upon this city? Yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel, by profaning the Sabbath." (Neh. 13: 17,18.) Or, if we prefer to read it in the language of blessing and promise, "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a Delight, the Holy of the Lord, Honourable; and shalt honour Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: thou shalt then delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob, thy father; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." (Isa. 58: 13, 14.) Upon this, then,

we build the strongest appeal to a pious heart, for the conscientious observance of this day. If in the rest of the Sabbath, we bring, as it were, a handful of our very life to consume it upon God's altar, who shall advocate the sacrilege of withdrawing the sacrifice? If in its holy worship, we bring a pledge of perpetual homage to our maker, who that has a soul will cancel that devotion? If it is the memorial of our Saviour's rest in the work of redemption, who that has had fellowship with Him in his passion, will despise the token? If it be the earnest of final deliverance from sin and death, who that has a hope of pardon will refuse the guaranty? If it points the weary Christian through all his pilgrimage to the rest and worship of the upper Temple, who will not lean with comfort upon this staff and find support? In a word, if the Sabbath be thus blended with a Christian's most pleasant associations, with his present joys and future hopes, who that has been renewed by the Holy Ghost can be found to depreciate it? It must, therefore, be from superficial acquaintance with the obligations of this day, and from oversight of its relations to Christian life and worship, that all violation of it within the Church must be traced. We cannot believe that an enlightened conscience will surrender the Sabbath to the easy pleas upon which it is so frequently profaned.

But it is not enough by these Christian motives to enlist the Christian conscience for the regulation of individual conduct; we wish further, to form and express a public sentiment against Sabbath breaking by the world. In withstanding the doctrinal assaults of Infidel opposers, the Sabbath has only resisted one of its double dangers. The more fearful hazard of obliteration through the covetousness of men, it must perpetually incur. The mountain crag which has bared its head to the storms of forty centuries, may yet be undermined at its base, and sweeping downward with the avalanche, spread ruin in its path. So the Sabbath which, from the birth of time, has lifted its testimonial spire, pointing to the heavens amidst the howlings of Atheism, may yet be washed from its base, by the unchecked currents of worldliness and vanity. We allege that this danger increases with the advance of science, and the progress of art. Occasional breaches of the Sabbatic rest, may always be expected to occur; but the very circumstance, that they are exceptional and not stated, carries along with them a check upon the evil. The very departure from one's ordinary policy will suggest an inquiry as to its propriety. The man is immediately sisted [*i.e., to delay or suspend; to stop] at the bar of his own conscience, compelled either to repudiate the settled policy of his life in keeping the Lord's day, or else to justify this

occasional violation of its sacred rest. In the same way, the apparent inconsistency between the two, brings up the whole subject for adjudication before the Christian public, who are compelled to render a decision. Thus the usual observance of the day will be a standing protest against its occasional breaches. But in those employments where there is a foreseen and fore-pledged violation of the Sabbath, in which the din of labor is unremittingly heard, it may easily fall into desuetude, and, in course of years, be forgotten. In the march of civilization, and in the consequent multiplication of the mechanical arts, those occupations become more and more numerous. It would perhaps astonish those, who have paid little attention to this matter, to know how large the catalogue of such is already swelled. In the blowing of glass, the smelting of iron, the boiling of sugar, the printing of daily newspapers, the publication of legislative records, the postal arrangements of the country, the plying of steam vessels between contiguous ports, the working of rail-roads, and the operation of the telegraph, we have sufficient examples of a large class of employments, in which, upon the plea of a coercive necessity, the Sabbath is habitually violated.

The momentous question now arises, how shall the Christian world act in regard to these occupations? Can any broad principles be stated, which shall guide Christian men in their individual conduct, and direct the Church in the exercise of salutary discipline? God's reservation of the Sabbath to his own use is so clear, and his propriety in it so indefeasible, that the whole question must be remitted to his decision. According to the Scriptures, there are but two grounds upon which the Sabbath can be vacated, either *the law of necessity*, or *the plea of mercy*. These pursuits will scarcely be covered by the mantle of the latter, nor be successfully advocated upon the authority of the former. Grant, for example, that by the intermission of the Sabbath, the furnaces of glass and iron cool down to such a temperature, that an entire day will be consumed in heating them again to the working point; nothing more is proved than the disadvantage arising from the loss of one-sixth of time, during which labour and capital are unproductive. All kinds of business lie under peculiar disadvantages, of one kind or another, which are taken into account in estimating the value of their productions. If a Christian man, labouring productively five-sixths of his time, cannot compete with those who labour seven-sixths, there is perhaps no alternative but to exchange his calling for another, in which he may have less profits, and a sounder conscience. In other words, we uncover an important distinction, that to make out a sacrifice is

not to prove a necessity. We greatly fear that a large proportion of Sabbath breaking, especially on the part of professing Christians, is traceable to the neglect of this distinction. A man, for instance, is unexpectedly delayed upon a journey, perhaps almost within sight of his home—to tarry by the way will involve much inconvenience and discomfort, and perhaps pecuniary risk or loss—then add the anxieties he may feel about wife and children, and he is at once flattered into the belief of a stringent necessity upon him to violate God's law. Beloved brethren! How often must it be repeated, that a Christian profession, from first to last, involves sacrifices frequent and severe! Whoever assumes it, does in act and in form place himself on God's altar, a whole burnt-offering. He is "bought with a price," and the vow is taken with awful solemnity, as in the court of Heaven, to "glorify God in his body and his spirit, which are God's." And surely we are inattentive observers of Divine Providence, if we do not discover many circumstances in our life ordered expressly to test the sincerity and value of this profession. We have offered all in sacrifice to God, our time and life and being, and when an emergency shall arrive, putting our religion to the proof, shall we plead against the claims of God upon His own day, the sacrifice involved in some partial loss of interest or comfort? Shall we not rather feel that God affords us a fit opportunity of practically renewing our covenant, and fulfilling our vows of self-consecration; and that ample compensation is enjoyed in the privilege of bearing an honorable testimony in behalf of all religion, in the testimony which we bear for the Sabbath?

So much for those employments, in which the issue lies only between larger and smaller degrees of profit, and where the intermission of labour one day in seven is not an insuperable bar to their prosecution. In those few and insulated cases, where this result would accrue—as, for example, in those mines where the pumps must be incessantly engaged to prevent their filling with water—a lower ground, may perhaps be taken. If a Christian man is not constrained to forsake the employment, let him perform no other labour than is required. If he must work the pumps, let him not work the mine. It is a wide leap from the necessary labour which will only keep the mine open, to the voluntary labour which adds to his wealth. And let the former be so arranged that neither man nor beast shall be entirely defrauded of the rest which God has secured to them, by the most sacred of all charters.

The cases which have been considered, are supposed to lie wholly within the individual choice and discretion;

the question of duty, however, becomes more complicated when we are implicated in a joint violation of the Sabbath, with others over whom there is little or no control. Take as examples the breach of the Sabbath, by a Stock Company, in the operations of a rail road or steam ship, and the transmission of the mail by the direction of Government. The Church and the world are so bound together by the common ties of society, that perhaps the interests of both cannot entirely be separated. The resources of a country cannot be developed, nor internal improvements conducted upon any large scale, without combining the pious and the profane, as citizens, in the same associations. The violation of the Sabbath is moreover oftentimes so collateral a result, that it could not readily be anticipated. How far Christian men should make the observance of the Lord's day a condition precedent of their co-operation, we will not here undertake to say; though we must believe the numerical importance of pious men, in this country, could they only be united in this matter, would control the whole subject. In this aspect, we cannot feel that pious stockholders in our Sabbath-breaking corporations are guiltless, unless each man can appeal to conscience, that he employs his influence in a ceaseless struggle against this injurious practice. It is freely granted, that in very extended operations, where the details are numerous and minute, and where the efficiency of the whole depends upon the nicest harmony of a great many parts, it is not easy to secure the letter of the Sabbath; and that in attempting this, the spirit of the Sabbath will sometimes be in danger of betrayal. Take, as the best illustration of this, our postal arrangements, which like a fine network, cover this continent. It will be glory enough for that Christian statesman, who shall display his administrative talent in fitting together the nice adjustments of this system, so that the whole shall come instantly to a dead pause, without derangement or shock to any of its parts. But suppose only six days in the week, and the year shortened by the subduction of its fifty Sabbaths; who can doubt but that a schedule would be framed with reference to this curtailment; and that, in this diminished period, the week's work would be done harmoniously as now? Yet in fact, man has but six days in every week. The seventh is God's, by the special reservation of it to himself, and by his solemn interdict upon all human appropriation of the same. Stock Companies and Governments, therefore, precisely as individuals, should cast their plans of labor, as though the Sabbath was not. Save for the purposes of rest and worship, the Sabbath indeed does not exist. While, however, governments continue to offer a premium for Sabbath breaking, by

the temptations which they present, it only remains that Christian men shall guard carefully against individual participation in this guilt; and that the voice of remonstrance shall go out from every heart, waking the echoes of conscience in the breasts of ungodly rulers, until the Sabbath shall be crowned over the days, even as Christ is crowned over the creatures.

In connection with this topic, it may be considered a subject of congratulation, that in this State there has been no legislation adverse to the Sabbath day; although in the successive constitutions which have been adopted, the formal notices of it have been less and less distinct. In the famous "Fundamental Constitutions," drawn up in 1669, for the Lords Proprietors, by the celebrated philosopher, John Locke, but which were never ratified by the General Assembly, no man was permitted to become a freeman in Carolina, or to hold an estate, who did not acknowledge the divine existence, and the necessity of solemn and public worship; and no assembly of men could be considered a Church, except upon the recognition of these three principles: that there is a God—that He is to be publicly worshipped—and that all men, upon the call of their rulers, are to bear witness to the truth, with such religious formalities as shall be prescribed by the communion to which they belong. The recognition of the Sabbath was equally implicit in the Constitution of 1778, which tolerated all persons and societies that acknowledged a God and a future state of retribution, and practised public worship. It moreover declared the Christian Protestant religion to be the established religion of the State, and refused to incorporate any religious society which did not subscribe the five following articles: the existence of God, and a future state of rewards and punishments—that God is to be publicly worshipped—that the Christian religion is the true religion—that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are of divine inspiration, and the rule of faith and practice—and the duty of all men to bear witness to the truth in Courts of Justice. The Constitution, however, of 1790, which is now of force, simply allows the freest exercise of religious profession and worship to all mankind; provided, that this liberty shall not degenerate into acts of licentiousness, and justify practices inconsistent with the peace and safety of the State.

If we turn from written Constitutions, which are of course the paramount law of the land, to special enactments, we shall discover the same general favour towards the Sabbath, together with the same gradual enlargement of individual liberty in its observance. All those Statutes framed during our Colonial history,

enjoining upon certain penalties, attendance upon the Parish Church, have been abrogated in the dissolution of an Established Church. Other Statutes of the same date, without formal repeal, have probably become obsolete; such as the Act forbidding all travel on the Sabbath—all sports and pastimes—and the working of a slave, except for necessary household purposes. Still, other laws, of the same venerable age, (1712,) are unquestionably operative at this day: as for example, those forbidding merchandize to be cried on the Sabbath, or exposed for sale; and that restricting all warrants, or writs, or processes, from being served on this day, except for treason, felony or breach of the peace. In the most recent published volume of Law Reports, may be found a case which excited at the time of trial a profound interest, because of the principle involved. An appeal was carried up from the Court of Law, and was argued before the Court of Errors, upon the single plea, that the verdict was rendered 50 minutes after 12 o'clock on Saturday night, and was therefore void. Although the verdict was sustained, and the decision seemed to be rendered against the letter of the Sabbath, it is gratifying to notice throughout the opinion rendered by the higher Court, a clear recognition of the legal maxim "dies Dominicus non dies juridicus," and a desire to carry out the spirit of the Sabbatic rest. It will be found upon investigation, we imagine, that the whole course of public legislation and of judicial decision has been to support the authority of the Sabbath, and that if our Legislatures and Courts of justice are offenders against this day, it is not so much by their formal deliverances, as by their practical arrangements. Their public sittings have been so appointed as to necessitate sometimes, the travelling of judges, lawyers, jurors and witnesses, certainly further than a Sabbath day's journey. This evil, however, will be considerably abated, by the facilities of travel which every day become greater; as unquestionably it might have been always abridged by greater tenderness of conscience in the parties implicated. While, however, acknowledging the wholesome drift of legislation, in this State, upon this subject, it will avoid misapprehension to mention the ground upon which this legislation is based. If we mistake not, the Sabbath is brought under the shield of the law, and its authority upheld, solely upon the footing of a municipal institution. To enforce its claims as a religious ordinance, would, in the opinion of our civilians, encroach upon that unrestricted liberty of conscience guaranteed [*sic*] to all men. We will not take up, on the heel of this letter, already too extended, so difficult a subject as the

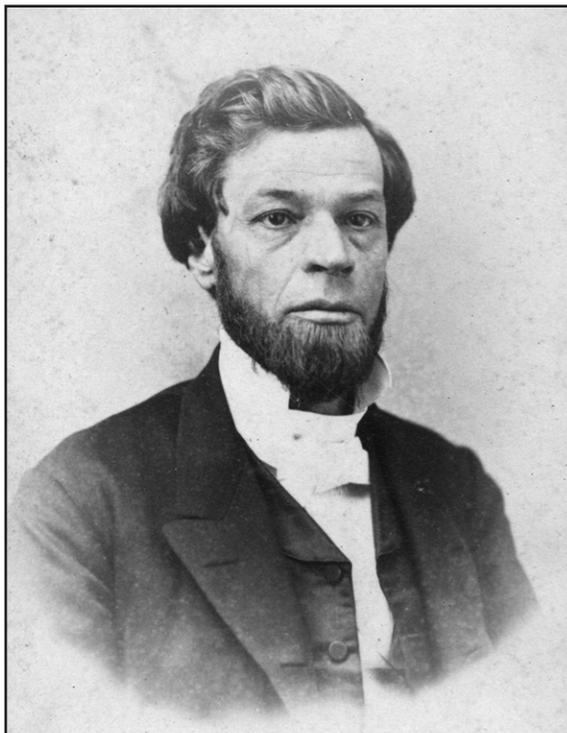
proper relations of civil government to religion. But as man's religious nature, and his subjection to the divine law, afford the only basis of human government, we do not see why our magistrates, our judges, and our law-givers, should hesitate in avowing themselves the representatives of a Christian people. Though it be civil government which they administer, it is the civil government of a Christian nation; and whatever be the statutes and decisions of rulers and judges, a government must practically bow to the deep religious convictions of the masses, or else sweep away the only foundation of its own power.

In conclusion, beloved brethren, we suggest, without attempting to expand them, several general motives, by which the strict observance of the Lord's day may be urged upon the consciences of Christian men.

1. The first is, as has been fully represented above, that this day is the memorial of all worship of the living God; under every form of religion it has been distinctly recognized, and must, therefore, be cherished as the munition and defence of Christianity.

2. The only pleas upon which the rest of the Sabbath can be invaded, are those of necessity and mercy; and these, from the nature of the case, must be left to the judgment and conscience of each individual. In the great majority of cases, the circumstances upon which the decision must rest, cannot be fully known, save to the person himself. This throws a Christian man upon his conscience, as men of the world are sometimes thrown upon their honor. Whenever we are called thus to defer to the conscientiousness of others, and to suspend our own right of judgment, this imposes a corresponding obligation upon all who are thus trusted, not to deceive the confidence which is felt in their integrity.

3. Sabbath-breaking, on the part of professing Christians, unquestionably falls within the proper discipline of the Church; and yet all such discipline is void, and



Benjamin Morgan Palmer, Southern Presbyterian minister, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of New Orleans, and first moderator of of the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America (1818–1902). Used by permission, PCA Historical Center, St. Louis, Missouri.

perhaps hurtful, if not supported by a deep religious conviction underlying it. The forms in which the Sabbath is likely to be dishonored by members of the Church, are not those more gross and profane breaches of which ungodly men are guilty, but, on the contrary, violations in defence of which much can plausibly be urged. If, therefore, a deep and pervading conviction of the sinfulness of these has not obtained, the discipline of the Church will be set at naught. The Church is thereby thrown into this unpleasant dilemma: either by suppressing discipline, to connive at the breach of God's law in her communion; or else by enforcing it, to divide and alienate those whom she desires to restrain and guide.

4. There is no reasonable hope of rescuing the Sabbath from open profanation by the world, unless the Church shall be strenuous in its defence. The honest and unswerving convictions of pious men, must form the nucleus of a correct and powerful public sentiment, if it is ever created.

5. It is idle to expect the Sabbath to be kept even with decent external respect, when the institutions of the gospel are not enjoyed. Not to insist upon the fact fully developed in the preceding pages, that the Sabbath is appointed as a day of worship, as well as of rest, it does not secure even the latter, where the gospel is not preached, and its ordinances are not enjoyed. The great aim must be to provide ample means of religious instruction to every community; and by their silent yet resistless operation, to secure that reverence for this day, which the law of God requires. ■