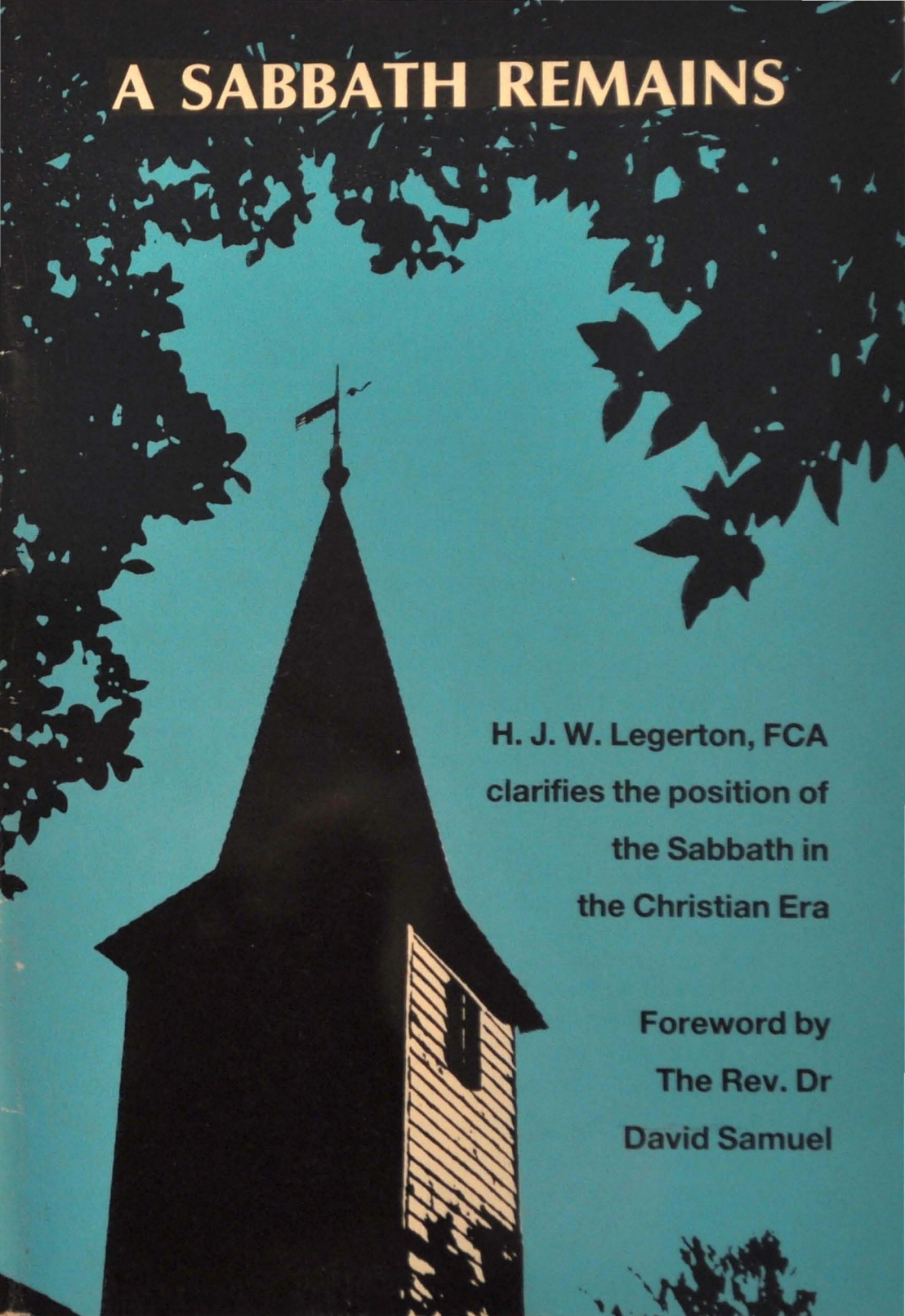
A SABBATH REMAINS



H. J. W. Legerton, FCA clarifies the position of the Sabbath in the Christian Era

Foreword by The Rev. Dr David Samuel

FOREWORD

I count it a privilege to be asked to write a foreword to Mr Legerton's excellent booklet for two reasons. First, I have the highest regard for Mr Legarton personally and for the work he has done in seeking to maintain the observance of the Lord's Day in our country.

Secondly, the booklet itself is a most valuable work and contribution to the proper understanding of the subject of the Sabbath. Much has been lost by the Christian churches and by our society as a whole through the adoption of mistaken ideas about the true nature of the Lord's Day. The teaching that the commandment of God regarding the Sabbath Day no longer applies to Christians, nor even to people in general, has gained ground and has been one of the principal causes of a growing laxity regarding the observance of the Lord's Day. It has brought about a situation in which the special character of Sunday was almost removed by parliament in favour of unrestricted Sunday trading.

In this booklet, Mr Legerton argues cogently and convincingly against such mistaken ideas and teaching. It should therefore be in the hands and minds of Christian people, and of pastors in particular. The principles and arguments which Mr Legerton marshalls should be deployed in the pulpits for, as the prophet has said, 'My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge' (Hosea 4:6). Through the defeat of the Sunday trading bill, God has given us a further opportunity to make His Sabbath 'a delight'. Let us redeem the time by dispelling ignorance and spreading a true understanding of the Lord's Day. The widespread circulation of this booklet will do much to that end.

December 1986 David Samuel

A SABBATH REMAINS

A reply to the theory that the Sabbath Day is abolished

CHAPTER ONE

A Literal Sabbath for Christians

IN an article entitled 'The Lord's Day or Christian Sabbath?' an evangelical minister advocated the theory that the Sabbath was only a shadow. Here are his actual words on this subject: — 'Since by His death and resurrection Christ has brought the true rest to which the Sabbath points, the Sabbath itself passes away. Indeed, the continual observance of it would be a denial of its fulfilment. In Colossians 2, Paul shows that just as circumcision, which pointed to the fulfilment in Christ, is done away with, so also is the Sabbath. It is a 'shadow' in contrast to the 'body' or 'reality' in Christ. 'He is the . . . body, at the sight of which the shadows disappear' (Calvin's Institutes book 2, chapter 8, paragraph 31)'. We will comment later on the brief extract out of its context from Calvin, but in this chapter we will endeavour to show that the Christian Church has a Sabbath which is one day in seven, just as much as the Jewish church enjoyed a similar Sabbath.

We desire to draw our readers' attention to the familiar words in Revelation, chapter 1, verse 10, 'I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day'. Here at the end of the first century AD. John is speaking of a certain literal day, familiarly known as 'the Lord's Day'. That this is a literal day and not a mere shadow is evident

from the context. The Apostle states **the place,** namely, Patmos, where he was situated when he received his vision from God. Similarly he states **the actual day** on which this revelation was given to him. It can safely be assumed that all Christians to whom, for example, the letters to the seven churches would have been sent would understand clearly what John meant by 'The Lord's Day'. It is necessary to note carefully the actual Greek phraseology used for this term; it is: *en tee kuriakee heemera.* Some have interpreted this as meaning the day of the Lord, namely, the future day when the Lord shall return, but this is not borne out by comparison with those passages which specifically refer to such a day. For example, in 1 Thessalonians 5, 2 and again in 1 Corinthians 5, 5, the phraseology is: *tee heemera tou kuriou.* Such phraseology expresses literally 'the day of the Lord' whereas that in Revelation 1, 10 expresses it in such manner as can only be translated in English, 'The Lord's Day', meaning the day belonging to the Lord and Master. An interesting comparison with the two Greek expressions is to be found in the New Testament references to the Lord's Supper. In 1 Corinthians 11, 20 the words used for the Lord's Supper are *kuriakon deipnon,* which is precisely the same construction as is used of the Lord's Day in Revelation 1, 10. We may well compare with this the expression used in Revelation 19, 17 of 'the supper of the great God' or in the Greek *deipnon tou theou* which is the equivalent of the construction relating to the Day of the Lord in, for example, 1 Thessalonians 5, 2. Nobody would lay claim that the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 11, 20 means the Supper of the Lord according to the meaning of

Revelation 19, 17, for that would be a complete disregard of the Greek construction. We must therefore conclude that John's reference in Revelation 1, 10 is to a literal day of twenty-four hours which Christians at that early stage were keeping as the day of special Christian significance.

Turning to the Old Testament we find that the Sabbath is often described as the day belonging to the Lord. In the Fourth Commandment (Exodus 20, 10) there is the expression 'The Sabbath of the Lord thy God'; again in Isaiah 58, 13 the Sabbath is called 'The holy of the Lord'. These and other Old Testament references distinguish the Sabbath as the day which was specifically belonging to God. It is interesting that our Lord speaks in similar terms in, for example, Mark 2, 28 where he says 'The Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath' (the Greek, *kurios tou sabbatou*). We see, therefore, that both the Old Testament Sabbath and the New Testament Sabbath have that particular characteristic in common whereby the day is described as belonging to the Lord. **In this respect,** the Lord's Day of the Christian era is exactly the same as the Sabbath of the pre-Christian era.

We will now draw the reader's attention to references to the Lord's Day in patristic writings in which we shall see that the same construction used by John in Revelation 1, 10 is used of a literal day by those early Christian writers, and we shall also see how the Christian Church recognised that day as the Christian Sabbath.

Ignatius, writing immediately after the time of the Apostle John, states 'Let every one that loveth Christ observe the Lord's Day, the queen and first of days

on which also our Life arose'. Here Ignatius uses the term which John uses of the Lord's Day and identifies it with the first day of the week, which puts beyond question the change of the day belonging to the Lord from the day of the week on which the Jews were keeping it to the first day of the week with its special significance for Christians. We follow this with the following quotation from Irenaeus who wrote in the second half of the second century: 'The mystery (sacramentum) of the Lord resurrection ought to be kept only on the Lord's Day' (*hee kuriakee heemera*). We note in the first place that Irenaeus continues the description which John used for this specific and literal day and we note further that Irenaeus is emphasising the fact that that is the day, the first day of the week, which is to be kept by Christians and none other. A further interesting deduction from these words of Irenaeus is that he uses the expression 'sacramentum', or mystery, to describe the remembrance of the Lord's resurrection. There is, of course, no desire to claim that there are more than two sacraments, but it is useful to note that this word 'sacramentum' is used of the Lord's Day and, if we believe that a sacrament is that which was ordained directly by the Lord Himself, we have clear testimony to the fact that the Lord's Day has Divine authority which is an even greater authority than that of the Church.

Only about a quarter of a century after Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria wrote about the Lord's Day and used these words: 'The enlightened Christian (*gnostikos*), when he has fully observed that which is the Lord's Day according to the Gospel, keeps that day the Commandment when he casts away low

worldly thought and lays hold of that which is spiritual and enlightened, glorifying in this the resurrection of the Lord'. We see a stage further here, wherein 'the Lord's Day according to the Gospel' is associated with 'the Commandment'. Although there has been some controversy as to what Commandment is referred to here, there seems very little doubt indeed that it is a reference to the Fourth Commandment. If *entolen* does not refer to the decalogue and the Sabbath of its Fourth Commandment, what is it that Clement makes the Lord's Day of the Gospel to be? What, in short, is the meaning of the sentence? Surely, the plain meaning is that, in keeping the Lord's Day in the manner described by the writer, Christians are obeying the Fourth Commandment which, of course, indicates that the Fourth Commandment refers not merely to a Jewish Sabbath, but to the Sabbath belonging to the Lord. It is perhaps worthy of note that Clement refers to the *gnostikos* and we could indeed wish that every Christian were enlightened and manifested evidence of such enlightenment by the uncompromising observance of the Christian Sabbath.

We now turn to the writer Origen who lived in the third century AD and quote as follows, 'Therefore relinquishing judaical observances of the Sabbath, let us see of what sort **the observance of the Sabbath** ought to be to the Christian. On the day of the Sabbath it behoves that nothing of all worldly works should be done. If therefore you cease from all secular employment and carry on nothing worldly and are at leisure for spiritual occupations and go to church, giving ear to the reading and treating of the Divine Word and think of heavenly things and are

solicitous about the future hope and have before your eyes the coming judgment and have not respect to present and visible things, but to the unseen and future, this is the observance of **the Christian Sabbath'.** This quotation is of great importance and of equal interest. It will be seen that Origen draws attention to the fact that something has been shed in the Christian era from the Sabbath. He refers to the relinquishing of 'Judaical observances', but he does not maintain that the Sabbath itself has been abolished. On the contrary, he gives a detailed description of the proper observance of the Sabbath to the Christian. Incidentally, it is good for Christians of the twentieth century to take careful heed to what Origen has to say about the proper observance of the Sabbath. In our quotation Origen concludes with that very expression to which the writer (mentioned at the commencement of this chapter) and his fellows object, namely, 'the Christian Sabbath'. It is very evident that at this early period there was a wide-spread belief that the first day of the week was to be regarded as the Christian Sabbath.

Our last quotation from the early fathers in this chapter will be from a writing which is attributed to Athanasius who lived in the first half of the fourth century, by which time the Christian Church had taken shape and its observances were fairly generally agreed upon and settled. Athanasius uses these words: 'We are met on a Sabbath Day, not morbidly affecting Judaism, for we do not touch spurious Sabbaths; but we have come together **upon a Sabbath** worshipping Jesus the Lord of the Sabbath. For of old there was among the ancients the prized sabbaths, but the Lord changed the day of the Sabbath to the

Lord's Day'. It seems that here in this quotation we have, as it were, the final and complete word on the status and significance of the Christian Sabbath. Athanasius openly says that the Christians met on 'a Sabbath Day'. he proceeds to apply the words of the Lord to the Christian Sabbath indicating that he was referring in his actual words to the Sabbath of all ages and not merely to that which the Jews were keeping in His time upon earth. And the third thing that Athanasius shows so clearly is that the change of the day on which the Sabbath is kept is by the authority of the Lord Jesus Himself. Again, it is emphatically shown that the Sabbath continues though the day on which it is kept has been changed. In a further reference to the Sabbath, Athanasius states, 'The Sabbath, then, is not primarily a law of abstaining from work, but of knowledge and of atonement and of abstaining from working wickedness of any kind. The Sabbath indeed was, therefore, an end of the first creation, but the Lord's Day the beginning of the second in which He has renewed and renovated the old'. We think Athanasius makes plain here that, whilst the Sabbath in the Christian era has taken on a new meaning, and a spiritual meaning at that, it is still in existence and still has a law of abstaining from work, but that law in not the **primary** purpose of the Christian Sabbath. Athanasius goes on to show the special significance of the Christian Sabbath as marking the beginning of the second creation. Thus the Christian Sabbath has no less authority or significance than the Sabbath as kept before the Christian era, but rather immensely more.

There Remains a Sabbath

THE Epistle to the Hebrews contains a section which is important to us in our argument as it provides teaching concerning the significance of the Sabbath. This teaching is contained mainly in chapter 4. The date of this Epistle is a matter of dispute amongst scholars, but it would appear that is was certainly not later than AD90 and probably nearer AD70. Some attribute it to the pen of the apostle Paul himself. Thus the teaching of this Epistle is of Apostolic status and that which particularly applies to the Sabbath should receive the careful attention which such status deserves.

In our English Bible it will be noted that the word 'rest' is used quite frequently in chapter 4, but it must be borne in mind as a matter of major importance that there are two different Greek words used for 'rest' in these verses. One of these words is used only once and that is in verse 9 which, in our English version, reads, 'There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God'. A study of the other word which occurs in the Greek will show that it signifies **the rest itself** which is enjoyed in Christ. But the word used in verse 9 (*Sabbatismos*) speaks of **the act of resting,** the keeping a sabbath or sabbatising. In the argument of these verses the writer uses the word *katapausis* for rest, speaking of it in the abstract as portraying the great blessings of the Gospel and the great prize of our redemption; but in the conclusion he uses the word *sabbatismos,* speaking of it in its concrete manifestation in the institution of the Sabbath, as its

standing pledge and type. By varying the word in the conclusion, he adds completeness as well as colour to his argument, and brings within its comprehension the 'rest' of the Lord's Day, as a standing pledge and type of the eternal rest.

Dr Owen considers that here there is an argument for the continuous observance of the Sabbath under the evangelical dispensation. Here are his actual words: 'There are two things apart from the evidence that arises from a consideration of the whole context which make it undeniably evident that the apostle asserts an evangelical Sabbath or day of rest, to be constantly observed in and for the worship of God under the Gospel. For first, without this design there can be no tolerable reason assigned why he should mention the works of God from the foundation of the world, with His rest that ensued thereon, and refer us to the seventh day, which, without respect unto another day to be introduced, doth greatly involve his whole discourse. Again, his use of this word *sabbatismos*, 'a sabbatism' — which is framed, and as it were coined on purpose, that it might both comprise the spiritual rest aimed at, and also a Sabbath-keeping or observation of a Sabbath rest — manifests his purpose. When he speaks of our rest in general, he still does it by *katapausis*, adding that there was an especial day for its enjoyment. Here he introduces *sabbatismos* which his way of arguing would not have allowed had he not designed the Christian Sabbath'.

Owen's argument seems to us perfectly sound and surely we see in the use of this word *sabbatismos* the link between the Sabbath of the Old Testament and another Sabbath which continues. The Sabbath of the Christian is not the seventh but the first day of the

week. It does not look back upon the six days' work of creation and the covenant of works under which man was placed, but forward to the completion of the new heaven and the new earth, and has respect to man as put under the new covenant of grace in Christ Jesus. It is a standing memorial to us of the resurrection of our blessed Lord, and of the great work of redemption which was finished on that day. As such, it is a prophecy and a pledge to the church of the great work which is going on in time in restoring the old creation and making all things new. In the word *katapausis* we have the theological significance of the Sabbath and in the word *sabbatismos* we have the eschatological significance of the present Sabbath which continues. We have surely here the dual significance of the Sabbath as a whole: namely, in the first place, the manner in which it was a shadow and, in the second place, the manner in which, its shadow significance having been fulfilled in the rest into which Christ entered after His work of redemption, it continues as a practical blessing and still constitutes a measure of shadow significance in that it points forward to the Sabbath yet to come.

Many of the best commentators consider that the words in verse 10 of Hebrews 4, namely, 'For He that is entered into His rest, he also hath ceased from His own works, as God did from His', refer not to the believer but to the entrance of our Lord into His rest at the completion of His great work. Earlier in the chapter there is a reference to the believers entering rest, namely in verse 3, where the plural is used, 'For **we** which have believed do enter into rest'. Certainly there is a closer analogy between the Redeemer's entrance into rest after completing the work of

redemption and the Creator's entrance into rest at the close of the six days' work of Creation, than between the latter and the believer's rest through faith. The Apostle here assigns a reason why a sabbatism remains to the people of God, that is, because Christ has finished the great work of redemption and entered into **His** rest. The Sabbath of the new, then, like the Sabbath of the old covenant, is founded upon a Divine rest. The words are in a great measure tautological when understood in general as referring to the believer's entrace into the rest of faith. And yet it is gloriously true, as the third verse makes plain, that the believer by faith has entered into the same rest that God entered, namely, the rest from works. He is, as it were, buried with Christ and risen with Him also into spiritual rest.

We feel a word is needed here on the expression 'remaineth', found in the ninth verse of Hebrews 4: 'There remaineth therefore a keeping of the Sabbath'. So often we assume that this word, 'remaineth', means only that there is a Sabbath to be yet fulfilled. Truly, we may accept that meaning quite justifiably, but the word in the Greek *apoleipetai* means more than that. The meaning is, 'is left over' or 'is left behind'. This surely signifies that, not only is there a Sabbath yet to come, but a Sabbath that continues week by week to point forward to that Sabbath Day that is to come when we shall enter fully into that rest which Christ has provided.

A. W. Pink comments: 'There *remaineth* therefore a sabbath-keeping for the people of God'. The reference is not to something future, but to what is present. The Greek verb (in its passive form) is never rendered by any other English equivalent than

'remaineth'. It occurs again in Hebrews 10:26. The word 'remaineth' signifies 'to be left over after others have withdrawn, to continue unchanged'. Here then is a plain, positive, unequivocal declaration by the Spirit of God: 'There remaineth therefore a sabbath-keeping'. Nothing could be simpler, nothing less ambiguous. The striking thing is that this statement occurs in the very epistle whose theme is the superiority of *Christianity* over Judaism, written to those addressed as 'holy brethren, partakers of the *heavenly* calling'. Therefore, it cannot be gainsaid that Hebrews 4:9 refers directly to *the Christian Sabbath.* Hence we solemnly and emphatically declare that any man, who says there is no Christian Sabbath, takes direct issue with the NT scriptures.

Paul's Attitude

THERE are three main passages in the Epistles which advocates of the 'shadow' theory produce in order to support their views. These are Romans 14, 1-7; Galatians 4, 9-11 and Colossians 2, 16 and 17. In these passages Paul is deprecating the observance of sundry days as works of the law which have already had their fulfilment and were of a temporary nature. Where 'sabbaths' are mentioned in these passages we may take it that they refer to the main various sabbaths which were ordained under the ceremonial law. These are referred to, for example, in 1 Chronicles 23, 31 and in II Chronicles 31, 3. They do not refer to the weekly Sabbath as the Divinely ordained day of rest; they refer to the sabbaths which occurred from time to time in the course of the various feasts of the Lord. Morris Fuller in one of his excellent sermons on the subject of the Lord's Day says on this aspect: 'St Paul is evidently writing about the observance of Jewish days, and other Mosaic ordinances alone. The sequence of words, as in the quotation from Chronicles, proves this; they are all Jewish terms, and follow in orderly and logical precision. If this were not so — if, for instance, in reproving the Galatians for 'observing days', the Apostle meant the observance of all days as such, Christian as well as Jewish, then this would prove too much; for it would prove that Paul himself was wrong in observing, and encouraging others to observe, the first day of the week, as he did at Troas and at Corinth (the day of breaking bread, and

almsgiving); and that St John and other Christians were to blame for their habitual observance of that day, which the name of 'the Lord's Day' indicates. And even the observance of a Sunday, which Alford and his school approve of, as a day of Church obligation, would be included under this apostolic condemnation. For it must be borne in mind that St Paul does not merely tell the Galatians that they were under no divine obligation to observe these days and times, but he reproves them for observing them at all. If he is speaking here of all days as such, then the observation of all religious days whatever is condemned as unchristian and wrong. But this is not so and would have been abhorrent to the apostolic mind as well as practice.' The mistake into which so many good men have fallen seems to be due to their not distinguishing between the sabbath which was essentially Jewish and that Sabbath which the Jews had in common with the rest of mankind; in confounding the Sabbath of God's moral law, which is binding on all men, and that of Moses' ceremonial law, which affected the Jews only; in making the history of the Sabbath begin with the fourth commandment, instead of tracing it through the patriarchal age, up to its true origin and beginning, the rest of Creation, the Sabbath of the Lord our God, Who after His six days' work, sanctified the seventh for Adam in Paradise and filled it full of benediction for him and his posterity to the end of time.'

As far as the reference in Colossians, chapter 2, is concerned, we venture to suggest that those who turn these verses against the weekly Sabbath are reading into them what is not there. Not only is it very doubtful if the word 'sabbaths' refers to the

weekly Sabbath, but the main purpose of the Apostle in writing these verses at all was not to teach the abolition of anything but to bid those to whom he wrote to 'Let no man judge you'. If our friends ceased to take texts out of their context they would find in this particular instance that there is also a reference in later verses to meats and herbs and it would appear that the Apostle is asking us to be charitable towards those who indulge in certain religious practices of taboos even though we may not agree with them. Let us not act as judges. Nevertheless, we think the following words of Fausset on these verses are helpful in distinguishing the sabbaths referred to: 'Sabbaths of the Day of Atonement and Feast of Tabernacles have come to an end with the Jewish service to which they belonged (Leviticus 23, 32 and 37-39). The weekly Sabbaths rest on a more permament foundation, having been instituted in Paradise to commemorate the completion of Creation in six days. Leviticus 23, 38 expressly distinguishes the Sabbath of the Lord from the other Sabbaths'. Morris Fuller then gives us the following explanation: 'What, then, is the transient shadow of the Sabbath which has passed away? We reply unhesitatingly, not the Sabbath of Eden, the memorial of creation, the patriarchal Sabbath of Noah and Abraham; not the Sabbath incorporated in the moral code, in its very heart and core; not the Sabbath of the Lord our God, but the Jewish sabbath, the ritual sabbath of Mosaic economy, coming with Sinaitic obligation; the weekly sabbaths, the monthly sabbaths, the yearly sabbaths, with the new moons and jubilees.' Even Robertson of Brighton, that strong anti-Sabbatarian, with whom many of our Evangelical friends who entertain

anti-Sabbatical views would not like to be associated, even he says, 'to recklessly loosen the hold of a nation on the sanctity of the Lord's Day would be most mischievous, to do so wilfully would be an act almost diabolical. For, if we must choose between Puritan over-precision on the one hand and on the other that laxity, which in many parts of the continent has marked the day from other days by more riotous worldliness and a more entire abandonment of the whole community to amusement, no Christian would hesitate, no English Christian at least, to whom that day is hallowed by all that is endearing in early associations and who feels how much it is the very bulwark of his country's moral purity'. We commend these words as being very apt to the present situation, for, if the dismissal of the Sabbath Day so lightly as a shadow and nothing more is accepted, those who thus dismiss it have a very heavy weight of responsibility. Robertson again exposes the unpractical attitude of those who would destroy the Sabbath in the following words: 'If the Sabbath rest on the needs of human nature, and we accept this decision that the Sabbath was made for man, then you have an eternal ground to rest on from which you cannot be shaken. A son of man may be the lord of the Sabbath Day, but he is not lord of his own nature. He cannot make one hair whi† , or black. You may abrogate the formal rule, but you cannot abrogate the needs of your own soul. Eternal as the constitution of the soul of man, is the necessity for the existence of a day of rest. Just because the Sabbath was made, not because man was ordained to keep the Sabbath day, you cannot tamper even with the iota, one day in seven'.

With reference to institutions which partake of the nature of a shadow, symbol or type, as well as having a permanent value, we might consider the institution of marriage. To quote the New Bible Dictionary: 'The record of the creation of Eve (Genesis 2, 18-24) indicates the unique relationship of husband and wife, and serves as a picture of the relationship between God and His people (Jeremiah 3; Ezekiel 16; Hosea 1-3) and between Christ and His Church (Ephesians 5, 22-23). Jeremiah's call to remain unmarried (Jeremiah 16, 2) is a unique prophetic sign, but in the New Testament it is recognised that for specific purposes celibacy can be God's call to Christians (Matthew 19, 10-12; 1 Corinthians 7, 7-9), although marriage and family life are the normal call (John 2, 1-11; Ephesians 5, 22-6, 4; 1 Timothy 3, 2; 4, 3; 5, 14).' If we took Paul's reference to marriage in Ephesians 5 in its isolation so far as he illustrates Christ and His Church thereby, we might possibly say that the sign or symbol of marriage was but a shadow, foretelling Christ's relation to His Church, but no one would take us seriously, since it is obvious that marriage has a permament value while time shall last. Further, if again we took Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 7 with regard to celibacy in isolation we would be inclined to say that Paul declares that marriage is abolished! We might just as well give marriage this treatment as those who give a like treatment to the Sabbath, taking references, such as those which we have been considering in this chapter, in isolation.

We will now turn our attention more specifically to Paul's reference in Romans 14. Some would interpret the early verses of this chapter as meaning that the

Sabbath has been abolished and others would suggest that Paul is teaching that it just does not matter whether we keep a day or whether we do not. We have already endeavoured to show that Paul nowhere in his teaching suggests that the Sabbath is abolished and it would be most unlike the Apostle Paul, as we know him through his Epistles, to trouble to write in order to suggest that it just does not matter what we do with an institution which has Divine authority. Earlier in this work we suggested that the writer to whom we referred had taken a sentence or even half-sentence from Calvin's reference to the Sabbath in his Institutes entirely out of its context. Calvin's chapter devoted to the Fourth Commandment must be read with the utmost care. A superficial reading could easily lead one to believe that Calvin is on the side of the antinomians and anti-sabbatarians, but a careful study of this section of the Reformer's monumental work, will reveal that he is teaching that only the ceremonial and symbolic **aspects** of the Sabbath are abolished, while the basic elements of the institution remain. We quote from the 33rd section of Chapter 8, Book 2, as follows: 'But they say, Paul teaches that those who observe it (Sabbath) are not to be accounted Christians, because it is a shadow of something future. Therefore, he is afraid lest he has bestowed on the Galatians labour in vain, because they continued to 'observe days'. And in the Epistle to the Romans he asserts him to be 'weak in the faith' who 'esteemeth one day above another'. But who, these furious zealots only excepted, does not see what observance the Apostle intends? For they did not observe them for the sake of political and ecclesiastical order; but, because they

retained them as shadows of spiritual things, they were guilty of obscuring the glory of Christ and the light of the Gospel. They did not therefore rest from their manual labours as from employments which would divert them from sacred duties and meditations; but from a principle of superstition, imagining their cessation from labour to be still an expression of reverence for the mysteries formerly represented by it. This preposterous distinction of days the Apostle strenuously opposes; and not that legitimate difference which promotes the peace of the Christian Church. For, in the churches which he founded, the Sabbath was retained for this purpose. He prescribes the same day to the Corinthians for making collections for the relief of the brethren at Jerusalem. If superstition be an object of fear, there was more danger in the feasts of the Jews, than in the Lord's Days now observed by Christians. Now, whereas it was expedient for the destruction of superstition, **the day which the Jews** kept holy was abolished; and, it being necessary for the preservation of decorum, order, and peace in the Christian Church, another day was appointed **for the same use.'** Surely it is obvious from these words of Calvin that he was expounding the change of the day from Jewish ceremonialism back to the purposeful Sabbath of creation and forward to the new Christian significance of the day.

There has been an unfortunate tendency of late years to propound a theory that the Reformers were advocates of anti-sabbatarianism, but this cannot be substantiated for one moment. The great theme of the Reformers was, of course, the doctrine of Justification by Faith, and they rightly emphasise in

their writings that no works of the law can justify and they include in this the observance of the Sabbath. Surely every Protestant will support the Reformers in this, but this cannot be held to indicate that either Reformers or present-day Evangelical Christians entertain the idea that the Sabbath has been abolished. The views of the English Reformers are well summarised in the Homily on the 'Place and Time of Prayer'. It is believed that this Homily was written by Bishop Jewel and it includes the following paragraph which, though lengthy, we feel is worth reproducing here: 'As concerning the time which Almighty God hath appointed his people to assemble together solemnly, it doth appear by the Fourth Commandment of God, Remember, said God, that thou keep holy the Sabbath Day. Upon the which day, as is plain in the Acts of the Apostles, the people accustomably resorted together and heard diligently the law and the prophets read among them. And, albeit this Commandment of God doth not bind Christian people so straitly to observe and keep the utter ceremonies of the Sabbath Day, as it was given unto the Jews, as touching the forebearing of work and labour in time of great necessity, and as touching the precise keeping of the seventh day after the manner of the Jews — for we keep now the first day, which is our Sunday, and make that our Sabbath, that is, our day of rest, in the honour of our Saviour Christ, Who, as upon that day, rose from death, conquering the same most triumphantly — yet, notwithstanding, whatsoever is found in the Commandment appertaining to the law of nature, as a thing most godly, most just, and needful for the setting forth of God's glory, it ought to be retained

and kept of all good Christian people. And therefore by this commandment we ought to have a time, as one day in the week, wherein we ought to rest, yea, from our lawful and needful works. For, like as it appeareth by this Commandment that no man in the six days ought to be slothful or idle, but diligently to labour in that state wherein God hath set him, even so God hath given express charge to all men that upon the Sabbath Day, which is now our Sunday, they should cease from all weekly and workday labour, to the intent that, like as God Himself wrought six days and rested the seventh and blessed and sanctified it and consecrated it to quietness and rest from labour, even so God's obedient people should use the Sunday holily, and rest from their common and daily business, and also give themselves wholly to heavenly exercises of God's true religion and service. So that God doth not only command the observation of this holy Day, but also by His own example doth stir and provoke us to the diligent keeping of the same. Good natural children will not only become obedient to the commandment of their parents, but also have a diligent eye to their doings, and gladly follow the same. So, if we be the children of our Heavenly Father, we must be careful to keep the Christian Sabbath Day, which is the Sunday, not only for that it is God's express Commandment, but also to declare ourselves to be loving children in following the example of our gracious Lord and Father'.

Bishop Handley C. G. Moule in his Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans deals with the reference to the Sabbath in Romans 14 as follows: 'There seems to be a broad and intelligible difference between the

Sabbath-keeping of the Jewish law and the Sabbath-keeping of man, the enjoyment and holy use of the primeval rest for man and beast. We take it that **that** duty and privilege is not in question here at all. The "weak" Christian was the anxious scholar of the Rabbis, not the man simply loyal to the Decalogue'. Bishop Daniel Wilson, in commenting upon the passages in Galatians, Colossians and Romans to which we have been referring in this chapter, says: 'How these passages could ever be supposed to be meant to abolish the moral and essential law of the Sabbath (or the Lord's Day, which was the name it assumed immediately upon the Resurrection's drawing it to the first day of the week), it is difficult to conceive. No doubt, if the anticipated history be received, and the assertion of the merely ceremonial nature of the Sabbath be admitted, this or any other consequence may be shown to follow. But having now a right to take for granted the actual institution of the day of rest in Paradise — its primary moral character and obligation, from its incorporation into the Decalogue — its essential dignity and importance, even when surrounded with the appendages of the intervening economy of Moses — its inherent authority as urged by the most evangelical of the prophets — and its entire authority and force when purified from the corruptions of the Pharisees by our Saviour — having a right to take all this for granted, the passages just cited strongly confirm our general argument, by showing that nothing but the ceremonies and shadows connected with it are dispersed, the substance "still remains".'

The First of the Sabbaths

THAT the Sabbath is no mere shadow is abundantly demonstrated from the peculiar expression that is used in the New Testament for the Christian's Sabbath. In Acts 20, which narrates events that took place some twenty or thirty years after the Resurrection of the Lord, we are told in verses 6 and 7: 'We sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to 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 unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight'. Here the fact that the believers met on the first day of the week is mentioned quite casually as obviously their usual day of meeting. It is however, this expression, 'the first day of the week', which needs careful attention, for the translation in our Authorised Version does not altogether demonstrate the meaningful expression in the Greek. The expression in the Greek is put thus, *mia ton sabbaton*. Literally translated this should read 'first of the sabbaths'. Commenting on these verses in Acts 20 Paley says: 'In a Christian Church at a great distance from Jerusalem when Christianity had begun to assume a more settled form something of this sort occurred. St Paul and his companions arrived there, and abode seven days, and upon the first day of the sabbaths when the disciples came together to break bread Paul preached unto them. The manner in which the historian mentions the

disciples coming together to break bread on the first day of the week, shows, I think, that the practice (i.e., of assembling on the first day of the sabbaths) by this time was familiar and established'. Why should St Luke in writing this account specifically mention 'the first of the sabbaths'? Surely it is to indicate very clearly that the Christian Sabbath is referred to. Some modern translations have completely lost the significance of this expression in the Greek by paraphrasing (not translating) the reference here as 'on the Saturday night'. There is, of course, no authority whatsoever for this rendering and, indeed, it is a distortion of the Inspired Word at this point. It is significant that Paul and his companions 'abode seven days', for we see here the septenary division of time recognised in the Christian era. Evidently the last of those seven days was regarded as a day of rest ere Paul departed to continue his journeys and equally evidently that day of rest was put to the use of a day for the gathering together of Christians. That day was the day we are keeping at the present time as the Christian Sabbath or the first day of the week.

Now this expression 'the first day of the week' demands further consideration as it occurs a number of times in the New Testament and in all four Gospels. The word which is translated 'week' in the Authorised Version is the same in the original as 'sabbath'. The Greek word is *sabbaton* and two meanings are given to this word. Firstly, 'sabbath' or 'rest' and, secondly, 'A week'. The word used in the New Testament stands for the whole sabbatical week or period of six working days and one day of worship which corresponds to the general arrangement of Old

Testament times. Thus we see that the retention of this word in the New Testament signifies that the Sabbath institution is interwoven in the Christian dispensation and that our present week corresponds to it as it provides a hebdomadal division of time and harmonises with the law which allotted a seventh part of this division or week for worship as the Sabbath Day, whilst the other six days are allocated to our temporal pursuits. The sabbatic arrangement in both Old and New Testaments is an imitation of God's work of creation in the same ratio of one period of cessation and six periods of creative activity. The words 'sabbath' and 'week' are convertible terms and, as an example of this, we may quote the prayer of the Pharisee in which it will be remembered he stated, 'I fast twice in the week'. The word in the Greek, which has been translated 'week' is *'sabbaton'* and obviously refers to the entire period of seven days. The word stands, therefore, both for the one day and also for the whole week of seven days. There is no difference in the week whether computed from the Adamic, Mosaic or Christian standpoints, the sole distinguishing mark, however, being that part of the sabbath (week) which should be the especially reverenced day, whether it should begin or end the week.

All four evangelists used this same expression in narrating the events of the Resurrection, assigning that event to 'the first day of the week' (*sabbaton*). We think Luke's wording is particularly graphic when the significance of this word 'week' is remembered. 'They rested the Sabbath Day according to the Commandment. Now upon the first of the sabbaths . . .' (Luke, 23, 56; 24, 1). This seems to

describe the end of one era and the commencement of another. The old order changing and giving place to the new, yet, at the same time, the eternal principle of the sabbath law remaining identified by reason of the word *sabbaton*. In the account of these events given by St Matthew we have perhaps an even more interesting example of the permanency of the Sabbath. In his Gospel chapter 28 verses 1-6, in which the Authorised Version translates (verse 1) 'In the end of the Sabbath as it began to dawn towards the first day of the week', the plural is used in both cases (sabbaths). In other words it could be translated 'In the end of the Sabbaths as it began to dawn towards the first of the Sabbaths'. Here the two ends of the sabbaths, that is the close of one and the beginning of another set of seven days, in which sets of seven days or sabbaths there is no difference between the Sabbaths of the Old and the New Testaments, between, as it were, those of Adam and those of Christ. The difference does not concern the sabbath or sabbatical week as a whole but which end of it, the first or the last day in it, shall be the specially sanctified day of rest and worship; whether, in other words, the sabbath or week shall have its sacred day at the beginning before the six days of work, as was the case with Adam since he was not created until the end of the creation week, or whether the six days work shall precede the day of rest. So we see in this verse in Matthew 28 the account of the first Resurrection Day which began the difference between the Jewish and Christian methods of keeping the same Sabbath, namely, the difference between the Law and the Gospel, both of which had their sabbaths as a literal one day in seven.

From Seventh to First

It seems to us that the connection between the Old Testament Sabbath and the New Testament Sabbath is made clear and distinct by reason of the reference to an eighth day in a number of passages in the Pentateuch and in the Prophets. For example, in Leviticus 23, which gives an account of the institution of the Feast of Pentecost (verses 15-21), the statement is made, 'And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave-offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete: Even *unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath* shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat-offering unto the Lord . . . And ye shall proclaim *on the selfsame day, that it may be an holy convocation unto you: ye shall do no servile work therein:* it shall be a statute for ever in all your dwellings throughout your generations'. Here there is a definite reference to an occasion when two sabbaths are kept together one after the other and now the purpose of this has been made clear to us by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, which was that very day following the Sabbath referred to in this chapter. We see an obvious prophecy of the change of the Sabbath from the last day to the first day of the week, noting that this is not an abolishment of the sabbath but a change, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit being one of the occasions for such a change. In the same chapter of Leviticus (vv. 39-40) we have the account of the Feast of Tabernacles. In the course of the directions given for this feast the sacred account states: 'Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast

unto the Lord seven days: *on the first day shall be a sabbath and on the eighth day shall be a sabbath.* And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days'. Again we have a reference to an eighth day and a sabbath which is kept immediately after the regular sabbath; on this occasion to indicate that day that should come which would mark the fact that Christ is the firstfruits. This is not in itself a shadow, but is forecasting the day which Christians would keep when the glorious event had occurred as, indeed, it did by virtue of the resurrection of the Lord. In the same chapter 23 of Leviticus, in the account of the Feast of Tabernacles (verses 34-36), we have these words: 'The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days unto the Lord. *On the first day shall be an holy convocation:* ye shall do no servile work therein. Seven days ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord: *on the eighth day shall be an holy convocation unto you;* and ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord: it is a solemn assembly; and ye shall do no servile work therein'. The marginal reading for the words 'a solemn assembly' is 'day of restraint'. Thus in the Feast of Tabernacles, which again points forward to the glorious resurrection of the Lord, we find the eighth day to be a most significant one, evidently pointing forward to the change of the Sabbath from one day to another, but saying nothing whatever about its abolition. In addition it is interesting to note that in Ezekiel 43:27 there is a further reference, in the directions for the purging of the altar, to an eighth

day: 'Seven days shall they purge the altar and purify it; and they shall consecrate themselves. 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'. Again, how significant that the eighth day should be mentioned and, in addition, that it should be stated that the new order of sacrifices would be 'and so forward'.

In closing this chapter we would revert to a reference to the term with which we opened the chapter, namely, 'first of the sabbaths'. As we stated before, this is a term which has been described in the Authorised Version as 'the first day of the week'. We find this term used nowhere else for the week. It does not appear in the Septuagint. The term is used in the New Testament and in early Christian writings always for the **first** day of the week. For example, you never find a reference to 'the second of the sabbaths' or 'the third, fourth, fifth, etc., of the sabbaths', referring to other days of the week. It is significant indeed that this term is used only of the first day of the week and we do not think we are taking liberties when we say that this is a sure indication of the change of the Sabbath from the last to the first day of the week or from the end to the beginning of what is technically known as 'sabbath' or week*. Here again we must emphasise that the Sabbath is shown to be not merely a shadow but that, having fulfilled its nature of a shadow in pointing forward to the Resurrection of Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, it continues in its nature of a permanent institution, serving mankind in meeting his physical,

*See Appendix on page 45 for more detailed argument.

mental and spiritual need, and also still bearing something in the nature of a shadow of that which is yet to come, namely, the return of that same Lord Jesus of Whose Resurrection the day continues to speak.

'That learned and judicious divine, Mr Richard Hooker' shall sum up our argument: 'The moral law requiring a seventh part throughout the age of the whole world to be that way employed, although with us the day be changed, in regard to a new revolution begun by our Saviour Christ, yet the same proportion of time continueth which was before, because in reference to the benefit of creation, and now much more of Renovation thereunto added by Him which was Prince of the World to come, we are now to account the sanctification of one Day in seven the duty which God's immutable law doth exact for ever'.

Shadow Theory Dangers

IN this concluding chapter it is our aim to set out some of the principal dangers which result from this theory that the Sabbath is only a shadow.

I. As I see it, the first danger is that **the theory removes all Divine authority for the Lord's Day.** According to the theory the Sabbath has ceased to exist because it was fulfilled when Christ provided the way of rest for the believer. On the other hand the Christian Church continues to reverence one day in seven. How do we account for this? The 'shadow' theorists tell us that this is because the Church has set aside the first day of the week as a commemoration of the Resurrection of the Lord. Some would refer us to the very early Christians and to the fact that they were not free on the first day of the week, or Sunday, to observe this day as a rest day or sabbath. Many of them met in the early morning in order to celebrate the Communion and perhaps they were able to meet again in the late evening, but the day as a whole was just an ordinary day apart from this spiritual significance. We know, of course, that the first few centuries of the Christian era were times when slavery existed and when there was no recognition of the Christian faith and little provision made for the observance of its ceremonies. It should, of course, be observed that there was such a strong conviction on the part of the Christians that the first day of the week should be observed by them, that by the time the Roman Empire was governed by a professed Christian Emperor, he realised the urgent need to

protect his Christian subjects so that they might keep that day as a day of freedom from their ordinary work. It was not Constantine the Great who invented the idea of observing Sunday as a sabbath or day of cessation from ordinary employment. This was the general practice of Christians whenever they could do it. Undoubtedly the Jewish Christians in many cases continued to observe the Jewish Sabbath as their rest day, but also regarded the first day of the week with special spiritual significance. Equally certainly, those Christians who were of the Gentiles, and who never had observed the Jewish Sabbath, only reverenced the first day of the week and yet it was undoubtedly they who desired to keep that day as a sabbath or rest day. Thus it would appear that there was conviction concerning the Christian Sabbath and that that had deepened in as short a period as two and a half centuries. This does not look like an arrangement of a voluntary kind on the part of the Christian Church, but rather the persuasion that the principle of the Sabbath Day remained though the day of the week was changed. If the 'shadow' theory is correct, then we have no right whatsover to speak of the first day of the week as the Lord's Day or as that day which God claims as His own or as the day which He commands to be kept holy. In that case, the day has no Divine authority and therefore we have no grounds for its defence. The consequence would obviously be that in these times when secularism and vested interests would exploit Sunday, the Christian Church must remain silent and do nothing whatsover to preserve the Day. Such an institution depends much upon authority, but a sabbathless Lord's Day has no authority whatsover to back it. Our 'Shadow'

friends are therefore doing a grave disservice to their nation as well as to the Christian Church in removing the authority of God's Commandment and God's institution from the Lord's Day.

II. **The 'shadow' theory would 'spiritualise' this benevolent gift of God to mankind and lose sight of its physical and practical purposes.** Medically, socially, economically and in every way, it has been demonstrated time and time again that the one day in seven is essential for man's well-being. Such evidence has endorsed our Lord's statement that 'The Sabbath was made for man', but the 'shadow' friends would do away with all this and present us only with the shadow and with nothing to meet our practical, physical, everyday needs in this life. God, they would say, is only interested in the spiritual well-being of mankind, he has no thought for our physical and for our social well-being. This seems indeed a hopeless ministry for the church to present to mankind. We are second to none, we trust, in the realisation that the spiritual is the most real; we trust we are amongst the foremost to proclaim the necessity for the spiritual rebirth and to present to mankind those spiritual riches which are in Christ, but we cannot, and, indeed, do not desire, to stifle the clear indications in God's Word that God has provided for our material needs whilst we live in the flesh. If we were to carry the shadow friends' theories to their logical conclusions we would even deny that God is interested in the provision of our daily bread or in the natural laws upon which we depend every moment of our lives. The 'shadow' theory is spiritualisation gone mad!

III. **The next danger of the shadow theory to which we must draw attention arises from the idea that the Sabbath, as kept by Christians, has no Divine authority, but that the first day of the week is observed by an arrangement or decree of the Church.** How easily such a theory can run into the arms of the Church of Rome and her claims! We only need to read the decrees of the Council of Trent as well as other more modern pronouncements by the Roman Church to learn that the Church is exalted above the Word of God. According to that source, not only is the Bible dependent upon the Church for interpretation, but the very commands of the Church are superior to the Commands of God as found in the Bible. Rome teaches that the Church (that is she herself) instituted Sunday as the Christian day of observance and that is followed by her other interpretations of the use of the day, abstaining from servile work and attending mass. Not for one moment would we accuse our 'shadow' brethren of being Romanists in disguise. Nevertheless, such friends, together with all classes of antinomians, are running very close to Rome's path when they tell us that Sunday as the Lord's Day has no Divine authority, but is only kept by custom or tradition of the Church. We see here a grave danger and if this is allowed to menace the obligation of the Lord's Day, why not interpret other portions of God's Word and Commandments of the Lord in a similar way? Do this and we hand over lock, stock and barrel to Rome.

We think it is remarkable that, not only is there an approach to the Roman Catholic attitude towards Sunday on the part of those who hold the 'shadow' theory, but these friends also come very near to the

modernist attitude towards the Sabbath. Here again, we are quite sure there is no intention to adopt infidelity and yet the so-called higher critic and liberal delights to undermine the Divine authority of the Lord's Day. According to him the Sabbath was an institution of doubtful origin, probably copied by the Jews from the Babylonians, or some remote civilisation, and, as for the Sabbath institution being traceable to creation, this is only based upon a myth. According to these people the Lord's Day is an arrangement of the Church. The spiritualisers of the Sabbath are thus found to have strange bedfellows indeed! How noticeable it is that the vast majority of writers from the Reformation onwards who have held the basic doctrines of the historic Christian faith have supported the truth that the Sabbath is of Divine authority and perpetual obligation! It is sad indeed to discover good Christian men drifting into that strange unpractical and unscriptural theory which is held by all manner of erroneous schools of theological thought.

IV. When the Christian Sabbath, or Lord's Day, is robbed of its Divine authority and torn from its place in the heart of God's moral law, the result is **a serious danger to the Christian's own use and observance of that day.** The day being robbed of its authority, it is also robbed of its fullest positive use by Christians. Most serious minded Christians will confess that, at the present time, there is a very slack attitude on the part of many churchgoers and even some professed Christians towards the observance of God's Day. The matter is not treated seriously, and, in consequence, the behaviour of many Christians towards the Lord's Day is deplorable. We believe it is this forsaking of

the law which is largely to blame for such an attitude. This accounts for the all-too-common 'oncer'; the shortage of Sunday School teachers and other Christian workers; the Sunday outing after attendance at a morning service or, perhaps prior to an attendance at a late Sunday evening Service; the decreased Sunday School attendance, which decrease has reached alarming proportions; the reduction of Bible study and prayerfulness; and the all-too-evident lack of consideration for others which is manifest not only by the worldling, but by very many Christian people at the present time. After all, if there is no Divine authority for the Lord's Day, why should we be concerned about its use? Why should we voluntarily tie ourselves down to rules which have not, as their source, God's decrees and commandments? The Lord's Day or the Christian Sabbath, proclaimed with all its Divine authority, must surely be precious in every part to the believer who will use each of its sacred hours conscientiously as toward God. A day with the very flimsy authority of the Church and with the shadowy characteristic of tradition will earn little respect, even from a believer.

V. **The 'shadow' theory robs the believer of still more Spiritual blessing.** As we endeavoured to show earlier in this work, the Sabbath continues, not only as meeting a practical necessity, but also as a sign still pointing forward to that which is to come. The Christian Sabbath speaks to the believer of that which has been done; it is a memorial to him of the creative act of God; it speaks to him of that even greater creative act in the new creation in Christ Jesus by virtue of His death and resurrection; yet it remains in order to point the Christian on to that glorious

Sabbath which is his aim and his heart's desire. If there is no such thing as a Christian Sabbath then the believer is deprived of this weekly signpost, giving him encouragement from that which the Lord has already done and stirring his heart with the promise of that which lies ahead. The believer would indeed be worse off in this respect than those who enjoyed a Sabbath as the sign between God and His people. Let us heed John Owen again here: 'Believers under the New Testament have lost nothing, no privilege that was enjoyed by them under the old. Many things they have gained and those of unspeakable excellency, but they have lost nothing at all. Whatever they had of privilege in any ordinance, that is continued; and whatever was of burden or bondage, that is taken away . . How is it, then, that this people of God, made so by Jeses Christ in the Gospel, should have their charter, upon its renewal, razed with a deprivation of one of their choicest rights and privileges? Assuredly it is not so. And therefore, if believers are now, as the apostle says they are, 'the people of God', their children have a right to the initial seal of the covenant.'

VI. The final danger which we see in this theory is that **it becomes a means of salving men's guilty consciences.** Man is no longer reminded that he is a sinner against the Commandment of God, for there is no such Commandment, if the theory be correct. This means whereby the Holy Spirit convicts of sin is removed and thus men are deprived of such a hope of heaven. We are told much these days that we should preach the Gospel and not trouble people with what is right or wrong concerning Sunday. But what is the Gospel? Is it merely a matter of exhorting

people to put their trust in Christ? That is only a part of the Gospel. What reason is there for putting one's trust in Christ? Let that other important part of the Gospel be made known whereby man is declared to be a sinner and, as such, in need of salvation from his sin and his guilt so that by the ministry of the Holy Spirit there may come a realisation of the need for the Saviour. Paul, writing to the Romans and in the seventh chapter, says: *'Without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me, Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.'* Paul is making it perfectly clear here that God's commandment is used to convict of sin and to drive the sinner to the Saviour. Sabbath-breaking is disobedience to one of God's Commandments; Sabbath-breaking is all too common; Sabbath-breaking is therefore evidence of universal sin; Sabbath-breaking is used by the Holy Spirit to convict of sin, for sin is disobedience to the law. If the Sabbath has been abolished, if the Lord's Day has no authority, at least ten per cent of the law of God has been removed and the sinner has that much less as an instrument to bring him to his sense of need. If such an abuse can be applied to one of the Commandments, what is there to prevent similar abolishments of the other nine? There is no need to

ask such a question, for we can see all nine of the remaining Commandments abused and disobeyed today and, indeed, explained away in very much the same manner as these theorists would vapourise the Fourth Commandment and the beneficent institution of the Sabbath which is its subject matter.

Bishop E. H. Bickersteth in his Bible Commentary makes the following remarks in connection with Isaiah chapter 56. Commenting upon verse 2, he says: 'This must refer to the moral duties specified in the preceding verse; so that, as the passage refers to the future times of the Christian Church, it is deserving of particular notice that the Sabbath is not only spoken of as an institution still existing in that more enlarged and spiritual condition of society, but as partaking of a moral character, which, indeed from its place in the midst of the Decalogue, it possessed from the first, and demanding a sacred observance . . . This prophecy pointed to a period when the house of God was to be called an house of prayer for all people; and at that period the man who should keep the Sabbath from polluting it should inherit the blessing of God.' Again, in his comment upon verse 6, he says: 'This is a particular phase of the same prophecy containing a distinct promise of the Divine favour and acceptance being extended to Gentile converts, and in this part of it a repetition of the Sabbath, in a manner so explicit that it is scarcely possible to imagine a stronger testimony could be given to the continued observance of the Sabbath in the Christian church.'

We close our work by quoting the following extract from a Resolution which was passed on February 8th, 1831 at the meeting when the Lord's Day Observance Society was founded. This resolution sets forth the scriptural principles relating to the Sabbath which are applicable for all time and which we feel will

summarise our argument in the most positive manner. The statement was as follows:

'This meeting is firmly persuaded that the dedication of one day in every seven to religious rest and the worship of Almighty God is of **Divine authority and perpetual obligation, as a characteristic of revealed religion during all its successive periods;** having been enjoined upon man at the creation — recognised and confirmed in the most solemn manner in the Ten Commandments — urged by the prophets as an essential duty, about to form a part of the institutions of the Messiah's kingdom — vindicated by our Divine Lord from the unauthorised additions and impositions of the Jewish teachers — transferred by Him and His Apostles, upon the abrogation of the ceremonies of the Mosaic law, to the first day of the week, in commemoration of the Resurrection of Christ, and on that account called THE LORD'S DAY — and **finally established in more than all its primitive glory as an ordinance of the spiritual universal church of the New Testament** as a standing pledge and foretaste of the eternal rest of heaven. And this meeting believes that every person in a Christian country is bound in conscience to devote this seventh portion of his time to the honour of God, by resting from the business of his calling, by abstaining altogether from the pursuit of gain and from ordinary pastimes and recreations; by guarding against every worldly avocation and interruption; and by spending the entire day in the public and private duties of religion, with the exception of such works of necessity and charity as our Saviour by His example was pleased to allow and commend; so as to designate this one day of rest and

Divine service, after six days of labour, as **a more distinguishing privilege of the Christian, than it was of the Patriarchal and Jewish dispensations.'**

First of the Sabbaths

Some contend that, because the word *mia* (in the Greek NT references to the phrase which is commonly translated 'the first day of the week') is feminine gender, it is absolutely necessary to supply the word *heemera* (day) which is also feminine but not in the Greek text. Whilst we are fully aware that both words are feminine, we cannot so readily agree that *mia sabbaton* is **necessarily** only rightly translated 'first (day) of the week' and not 'first (day) of the sabbaths'.

Heemera is not in the original but is generally taken to be understood. The assumption made is that the Jews of our Lord's time used this expression to indicate the days of the week, but, strangely enough, we have failed to discover any confirmation of this proposition. If it were so, why is there no vestige of the other days of the week being so named; duo sabbaton, treis sabbaton, tessares sabbaton, pente sabbaton, hex sabbaton? Do we ask too much. Or are we only being logical? There is no trace of this in the Septuagint OT or in the Greek NT. There is the possibility that it may have been so, but in the absence of evidence to the contrary, we prefer to think that this is an expression chosen purposefully by the Holy Spirit to announce the new order of sabbaths.

It is interesting to refer to the Septuagint Greek. The word 'week' or 'weeks' occurs about 18 times. The Greek word used in all but one case is: *hebdomas* — literally 'a number of seven'. The only exception is Leviticus 12:5, where the expression is: *hepta heemeras* — seven days (cf. Genesis 8:10 and 12, Sept.). There is not one case where *sabbaton* is used: which is strange if the Jews of the 2nd and 1st centuries BC, who made this translation, used sabbaton for 'week'! It may here be remarked that there does not appear to be any example in the Sept. OT where there was any need to mention a particular day of the week. Precisely!

The particular days were always identified as 'the tenth (fourteen, etc.), day of the MONTH' — and that was the Jewish manner of reckoning. Nevertheless, there is an interesting reference in Exodus 20:9, 10 and 11 (Greek). *Hex heemeras* (six days), verse nine; *Tee heemera tee hebdomee* (the day the seventh), verse ten; *tee heemeratee hebdomee* and *teen heemeran teen hebdomeen,* verse eleven. You will notice that the operative word in numbering the days of the week is hebdomas *not* sabbaton.

We grant that the word 'day' may be understood, even though it is not in the text. Nevertheless, we also claim that we may with perhaps more justification understand the meaning of the expression as 'the first (day) of the (new) sabbaths' ('day' understood, 'new' understood). Here the feminine 'day' is present to satisfy the feminine 'first', but in no way disturbs the meaning we feel the expression holds.

Taking Matthew 28:1, Hops de sabbatoon tee epiphooskousee eis mian sabbatoon . . . 'Now late of the sabbaths as it began to dawn toward one of the sabbaths' (literal). Is this not a graphic description of the passing of the old order giving placing to the new? Here it is obscured by the — in the writer's submission — unjustified introduction of the words 'day' and 'week'.

Notice that there is a careful distinction in Mark 16. In verse 2, we have the word *mia* — better translated 'one', and yet, in verse 9, we have *protee* — correctly translated 'first'. Are these interchangeable words or is there some significance in the use of different numeral words? *Protee* bears the sense of 'First in order' (cf. prototype, protocol, protoplasm, protomartyr). This would bear out the contention that we have here an account of the observance of the first-in-order of the new sabbaths, even if evidence can be produced that *sabbaton* was **commonly** used for 'week' — which evidence has not yet been forthcoming.

Incidentally *'sabbatou'* in Mark 16:9 is Gentive Singular, all

the other NT references being Genitive Plural. Hence some may contend that a comparison with Luke 8:12, 'I fast *dis tou sabbatou*' (Gen. Sing.) bears out that the meaning is 'week'. This lone case could be taken in this way because it is hardly sensible to talk of fasting twice in a single day! In this particular text the meaning is clear — a week — a hebdomad — but that does not by any means necessitate that we are to take it thus in the other cases (most of which are in the plural) when the meaning of 'week' is not so clear.

'Heemera' is feminine, true, and so is 'mia', but these facts in no way contradict the contention that the expression in the NT 'first of the sabbaths' *at least* hints at the prototype of the new order of sabbaths. I believe this interpretation is far more likely to be correct and is certainly nearest to the original.

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