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# **THE FIRST-DAY SABBATH**

By

*Wilson T. Hogue*

*“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without  
which no man shall see the Lord” Heb 12:14*

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# **THE FIRST-DAY SABBATH**

By  
**Wilson T. Hogue**

An Outline Argument  
In Defense of The First Day of the Week  
As the Proper Christian Sabbath

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## PREFATORY NOTE

The principal matter of this booklet was originally published as a series of editorials in the "Free Methodist" in October 1895. Numerous calls have since been made from time to time for its publication in a cheap and convenient form for general circulation. This circumstance, together with the fact that the publishers find there is a demand for a cheap publication outlining the argument in defense of the First-day Sabbath such as they have been unable to furnish, has determined the author to revise the articles, add a chapter on "Hallowing the Sabbath," and give them to the public in their present form.

Due credit has generally been given in the body of the work for verbal extracts from other writers, but in addition thereto the author acknowledges indebtedness to "Watson's Institutes," "Lee's Theology," "Faussett's Bible Cyclopaedia," Briggs on "The Sabbath," and Besse on "The Sabbath and its Changes with the Chronology of the Ages," for much which enters into the structure of the general argument. Nothing like a complete discussion of the subject is attempted, the argument in defense of the first day of the week, or "Lord's Day," as the true Christian Sabbath being given only in outline.

Trusting, however, that, unpretentious as it is, it maybe found adapted in some measure to refuting the error of those who still contend for the observance of the Jewish Sabbath, thereby endeavoring to bring Christians under the yoke of Legalism, and that it may also be a means of confirming those whose faith in the First-day Sabbath has been in any wise disturbed in the belief and assurance that our Lord's Resurrection day is the true and proper Sabbath of the new dispensation, this little treatise is committed to a charitable Christian public by

The Author.

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# **THE FIRST-DAY SABBATH**

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## **Chapter 1** **MEANING OF THE SABBATH**

We are often asked if there is Scriptural authority for observing the first day of the week, or Sunday, as the Sabbath. If we answer in the affirmative we are usually challenged at once to produce the authority. The question has been raised anew of late, and by some who are perplexed and honest inquirers after light. Complete discussion of the question would require a more pretentious volume and cannot be attempted within the limits here allowed. An outline of the proofs in support of the First-day Sabbath as divinely authorized may, however, be of value to some who are in perplexity, and such an outline we venture herewith to present.

The meaning of the Sabbath is the first thing to be determined in order to an intelligent discussion of the subject. Is the term Sabbath the name of a particular and an unchangeable sacred day, or is it the name of a sacred institution with which the association of a particular day as appropriate for its celebration is incidental rather than essential? That Sabbath is to be understood in the latter sense is our firm belief, and for reasons which we now proceed to show.

1. The term Sabbath contains nothing in its orthography which limits its meaning to that of a particular sacred day. Dr. Young, in his Analytical Concordance, gives the meaning of the Hebrew word Shabbath as "cessation." Dr. Smith, in his Dictionary of the Bible, says the term is from Shabbath, "to cease to do, to rest." Canon Faussett, in his Bible Cyclopaedia, defines it as "rest." This being the root idea of the word it will readily be seen that its orthography does not carry with it any thought or suggestion of a particular day, but, abstractly considered, Sabbath is a name which applies to any rest observed at any time.

2. There is nothing in the original scriptural use of the term Sabbath which limits its meaning or application to any particular day. At its institution the Sabbath was enforced by divine example, rather than by divine command. "God rested on the seventh day" (Genesis 2: 2). But that Jehovah's Sabbath was not limited to the seventh day of twenty-four hours is evident from the fact that the divine Sabbath still continues. With him all days are Sabbaths since he concluded his creative works. The seventh day was "blessed" and "sanctified" as a Sabbath of rest at the beginning because of its special fitness to memorialize the completion of God's work as Creator and the Sabbath upon which he then entered, but this was incidental rather than essential to the existence of the Sabbath itself. On the very face of the record the Sabbath appears as an institution distinguishable from the day of its celebration. In other words, there was a Sabbath before there was an appointment of a Sabbath day, just as American Independence was a fact before Independence Day was established.

3. The way in which the term Sabbath is applied to various sacred festivals and festival days in scripture is proof that its meaning is not limited to any particular day. In the twenty-third chapter of Leviticus the term is applied to various Hebrew festivals. There were Sabbath days, sabbatic months and sabbatic years. Besides the regular septenary Sabbath there were other Sabbaths as follows:

(1) The great day of atonement, which fell on the tenth day of the seventh month. This was ordained of God to be a Sabbath of solemn rest to the people of Israel throughout their generations. But according to the Hebrew calendar, as revised at the exodus, the first, eighth, fifteenth, twenty-second and twenty-ninth of the seventh month were the regular septenary Sabbaths. The great day of atonement, then, falling as it always did between the eighth and the fifteenth of the month, is one instance of a divinely appointed Sabbath, and that so sacred that we are told the Septuagint calls it "the Sabbath of the Sabbaths," which occurred between the regular septenary Sabbath days.

(2) The festival of Pentecost. This was a day of sacred rest and religious observance to which the Sabbath law forbidding all "servile work" applied, and which therefore was, to all intents and purposes, a divinely authorized Sabbath. The day of Pentecost, however, always occurred the next day after the completion of the seventh weekly Sabbath, or on the first day of the week (Lev. 23: 15-21), and so out of the regular septenary order.

(3) The scale of Hebrew sabbatic observance. Not alone was the seventh day sacred, but the seventh month, the seventh year and the year of jubilee, with the septenary Sabbaths, formed a scale or series of Sabbaths, all of divine appointment, all of a most hallowed character and all of binding authority upon the whole people of Israel. Every seventh month was sacred (Lev. 23). Every seventh year was designated as "a Sabbath unto the Lord" (Lev. 25:1-7), and every fiftieth year as a jubilee Sabbath (Lev. 25:8-17). ALL the days of the sabbatic year were certainly Sabbaths unto the Lord, and it should be particularly noted that the day of atonement, the holiest of all the Hebrew Sabbaths, came but once a year and then wholly out of the septenary order.

(4) We have now seen that Sabbath does not necessarily mean the seventh day, but that any day to which God applies the name has all the sacredness and lawfulness of the original Edenic Sabbath. Moreover, in the light of the foregoing discussion the true meaning of the term Sabbath appears, which is neither more nor less than what Dr. Briggs terms "the sacred proper name of a movable festival."

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## **Chapter 2** **THE ORIGINAL SABBATH**

The next step in the discussion is to consider several facts connected with the institution and observance of the original Sabbath.

1. The primeval Sabbath was instituted and sanctified in Eden. "And God rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made; and God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because that in it he had rested from all his work" (Gen. 2:2,3). This was the Eden Sabbath. On those who contend for the keeping of Saturday as the original Sabbath day rests the burden of proving the identity of Saturday with the primeval day which was sanctified in Eden. In all arguments for the Saturday Sabbath, so far as we know, this point is assumed with no attempt to prove it. We shall now attempt to show,

2. That the original Sabbath hallowed in Eden corresponds to the present First-day Sabbath observed by Christians:

(1) From the creation to the giving of the law the primeval weekly Sabbath was generally observed. For scriptural proof of this the reader is referred to (a) Genesis 4:3, where Cain and Abel are said to have brought their offerings unto the Lord, "at the end of days" (margin), which is generally understood as meaning at the end of a septenary, or week of seven days; (b) Genesis 8:10-12, where Noah, in sending out the dove is represented as having measured time by weeks of seven days; (c) Job 1:6 and 2:1, where a particular periodic day of appearing before the Lord for worship is mentioned as belonging to patriarchal times; and (d) Genesis 29: 27-28, where, in Jacob's negotiations for Rachel, the Hebrew custom of measuring time by weeks is unmistakably set forth. Other passages might be produced, but these will suffice to show that in patriarchal days the septenary division of time made by the hallowing of the original Sabbath day was generally observed.

The testimony of scripture on this point is corroborated by profane history, and shows the practice of observing one day in seven not to have been confined to the patriarchal line, but to have been universal. Even heathen nations held to the septenary division of time, and observed a weekly Sabbath. Says Dr. M. H. Briggs, in his work on "The Sabbath:"

"This fact we learn from Homer, Hesiod, Herodotus, and other ancient writers. Philo, the Jewish philosopher of Alexandria, says without qualification: 'The Sabbath is not a festival peculiar to my people or country, but is common to the whole world.' La Place has this strikingly philosophic statement: 'The week is perhaps the most incontestable monument of human knowledge. It appears to point out a common source whence that knowledge proceeded.' It is certain beyond attempt at contradiction that the septenary division of time prevailed among Egyptians, Phoenicians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Greeks, Italians, Celts and Indians. Chaldean cuneiform characters show

a weekly rest-day, the name of which bears a striking likeness to the Hebrew Sabbath and means 'a rest of the heart.'"

In "The Sabbath and its Changes with the Chronology of the Ages," the Rev. H. T. Besse quotes as follows from profane historians on this point:

"Porphyry says the 'Phoenicians consecrated one day in seven as holy.' Josephus says, 'There is no city, either of Greeks or Barbarians, or any other nation, where the religion of the Sabbath is not known.' Eusebius says, 'Almost all philosophers and poets acknowledge the seventh day as holy.' Grotius says, 'that the memory of the creation being performed in seven days was preserved, not only among the Greeks and Italians, but among the Celts and Indians, all of whom divide their time into weeks.'"

Dr. Smith also informs us that he found an Assyrian calendar which divides every month into four weeks, and the seventh days are marked out as days in which no work is to be done.

(2) The seventh day, observed as sacred among all nations before the giving of the law, was not the same as the seventh day afterward observed by the Hebrew race, but corresponded, if our investigations are correct, to our present First-day Sabbath. <sup>[1]</sup> A change was made in the Hebrew calendar, as we have seen, at the time of the Exodus. Compare Ex. 12:1, 2 with Ex. 23:15, and it will be seen that the month Abib became the first month of the Jewish year after the Exodus, though it had never been so reckoned before.

A little careful study will also show that a new Sabbath day was given to this liberated people with this change of calendar. Formerly they had observed the primeval Sabbath day, in common with all other nations. The observance of a Sabbath among early heathen nations can be accounted for only on the ground that they had perpetuated the primeval Sabbath, though they had perverted it to a means of propagating idolatry. The earliest and most prevalent idolatry was that of sun worship. So the primeval Sabbath was perverted into Sun's day, or the day to worship the sun. For many generations the covenant people worshipped Jehovah on the same day. At last the religion of the Israelites became corrupted by association with heathen neighbors, and they too worshipped the Sun, as represented in the golden-headed bull of Egypt. Hence their relapse into this worship while Moses tarried in the mount of God. (For proofs of the foregoing see Ex. 32:1-24, Joshua 24:14, Ezek. 20:5-9, Acts 7: 41-42.)

One object of changing the calendar when the Israelites departed from Egypt evidently was to cut them off more effectually from connection with idolaters. It was a wise and politic movement, worthy of the divine mind which ordained it. With the change of calendar Saturday (Saturn's day) became the new Hebrew Sabbath, and its observance was required to extend from evening to evening (Lev. 23:32). Those, therefore, who now keep Saturday as Sabbath are certainly not keeping the primeval Sabbath day which the Lord hallowed in Eden, but are rather observing that day which was set apart exclusively as a Jewish Sabbath day, and which, as a day for celebrating the Sabbath, was abolished when the ceremonial law was done away by Christ (See Col. 2:16, 17, and Gal. 4:9, 10).

Jehovah's Sabbath, or the Lord's day, is that which was instituted in Eden, and not the day which temporarily memorialized Israel's emancipation and separated them from the idolatry into which they had fallen. The original Sabbath day, according to the best evidence we can gather from Biblical chronology, would, if carried forward to the beginning of the Christian era, be found identical with the present First-day Sabbath, which is called preeminently "the Lord's day," as it memorializes alike the completion of the Lord's creative and redemptive work.

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## Chapter 3 THE HEBREW SABBATH

It will help us to understand more fully the grounds upon which the observance of the First-day Sabbath are justified if we now consider more particularly than we have done so far the character and significance of the Hebrew Sabbath.

1. As we have already had occasion to observe, the Hebrew Sabbath was a changed Sabbath. That is, it was not observed on the same day of the week after the Mosaic law was given as that on which they had celebrated it before. This point is generally overlooked by opposers of the First-day Sabbath who hold that no change in the day for proper Sabbath observance has ever been divinely authorized. It has been shown in a preceding section that the primeval Sabbath day sanctified in Eden was generally observed among all nations, and particularly observed among the patriarchs and the covenant people, down to the time of the Exodus. It has also been shown that, at the Exodus, the Hebrew calendar was changed, and with it the day for celebrating the Sabbath festival or rest was changed, from Sun's day to Saturn's day, which was the seventh day of the week according to the Jewish calendar as changed by Moses under divine direction. It is certain therefore that one change in the day for celebrating the Sabbath has occurred since the primeval Sabbath was instituted, and that by divine appointment. And if one change has been divinely authorized, who shall say that another similar change could never have been made? If contenders for the Seventh-day Sabbath object to the First-day Sabbath as giving Sun's day — the day of celebrating an ancient heathen festival — too much prominence, we have only to remind them that the observers of the Seventh-day Sabbath are giving equal dignity and sanction to Saturn's day — the day on which the corruptest of all heathen festivals was celebrated. The odds, therefore, in this case, is in favor of the First-day Sabbath.

2. The particular day for celebrating the Hebrew Sabbath was chosen to memorialize events which had no practical significance to any but the Hebrew people.

(1) It commemorated the covenant made with them in Horeb. "And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep and do them. The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day" (Deut. 5:1-3). This formed part of the preface to the rehearsal of the Ten Commandments, in which Israel was enjoined to "Keep the Sabbath day to sanctify it, as the Lord thy God commanded thee" (v. 13).

(2) It was expressive of their separation from idolatrous nations. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, Saying, 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, 13). Thus they were to be perpetually reminded that God had

sanctified, set apart, or separated them, by special covenant relation, from all other peoples on the earth.

(3) It memorialized their deliverance from Egypt. "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 by a stretched out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day" (Deut. 5:15).

These reasons for keeping the Hebrew Sabbath are such as could apply to no other people, and such as could have no practical significance or force after the Jewish dispensation was abolished. Hence we may reasonably infer that the observance of the Seventh-day Sabbath, as enjoined on Israel after the Exodus, was designed to be only a temporary arrangement, which should cease with the termination of the Jewish and the inauguration of the Christian dispensation.

(4) The Hebrew Sabbath, so far as their particular day of observing sabbatic rest is concerned, was abrogated by the introduction of Christianity. In the foregoing section we barely stated this point, which we now proceed to consider more fully. If it be the case, as we have endeavored to show, that the enactment of the Seventh day as the period of sabbatic rest and devotion, was a part of that ceremonialism which was binding only upon the Hebrew people and during the Jewish age, then it follows, per consequence, that with the end of the Jewish dispensation came the abrogation of the Jewish Sabbath, so far as its exclusively Jewish aspects are concerned. But let us see what the scriptures say on this point. In writing to the Colossians St. Paul, after declaring the old Jewish ordinances to have been done away by Christ, says: "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 of Christ" (Chap. 2:16, 17). The whole system of exclusively Jewish "Sabbath days" is here shown to have pointed to Christ, to have been done away in Christ, and hence to have no binding authority upon Christians. Also in Galatians 4:10, the observance of Jewish "days [Sabbaths], and months, and times, and years" is declared to be a "turning again to the weak and beggarly elements" whereunto the backsliding Galatians "desired again to be in bondage." Too bad it is, that so much Galatian apostasy prevails even in the twentieth century, in this respect, and that so many simple souls are turned thereby from freedom in Christ to the bondage of what we believe these scriptures prove to be an abrogated Jewish law.

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## Chapter 4 THE FIRST-DAY SABBATH

We now proceed to prove that the setting apart of the first day of the week, the day on which our Lord arose from the dead, as the Christian Sabbath, or "the Lord's day," has the unmistakable warrant of Scripture.

1. It is warranted by Jewish types. In the Jewish feasts mentioned in Leviticus 23 we have seen one at least in which a Sabbath observance was prescribed which came on the first day of the week. Referring to the whole system of Hebrew Sabbaths Paul says they were "a shadow of things to come" (Col. 2:16, 17). It is but fair then to regard the occasional first-day Sabbaths as types of a new dispensation.

2. It is warranted by prophecy. "The Stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it" (Psa, 118:22-24). This prophecy unmistakably refers to the resurrection of Christ. The evidence of this may be found in the utterances of both Jesus and his apostles. (See Matt. 21:42, Acts 4:10, 11, and I Peter 2:7.)

To what else do the words, "this is the day which the Lord hath made," refer, if not to the Christian Sabbath, the day commemorative of the resurrection of Christ and in which the rejected Stone was made "the head of the corner"? Some day of special and great significance is here predicted, and expositors have failed to point out any other day as of sufficient importance to be thus incorporated with the prophecy of our Lord's triumph over death and the grave and identified as the object of the same.

3. It is warranted from the fact that the change from the seventh day to the first took place under apostolic recognition and authority. Their first religious meeting after Christ's resurrection was "on the first day of the week," the day he arose, and was specially graced and blessed with his presence (John 20:19). Their next recorded religious service was held on the following "first day of the week," on which occasion Jesus again miraculously appeared in their midst and gave them his blessing (John 20: 26). Twenty-five years later we have the record of the disciples at Troas meeting "on the first day of the week to break bread," and Paul preaching to them, "ready to depart on the morrow," etc. (Acts 20:7). This was evidently a religious service, and Paul tarried and preached for them on that occasion, as he would not resume his journeying until the Christian Sabbath was past, which is indicated by the expression "ready to depart on the morrow." Commenting on this passage, the late Rev. B. T. Roberts has well and forcibly said:

"The verse plainly teaches, (1) That the Christians of that early age did not meet together for worship on Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, the seventh day of the week. For Paul was there seven days

(v. 6). He must, then, have been there on the Jewish Sabbath, but did not preach to the Christians on that day, because that was not their day for worship. No other reason can be given.

"(2) That they, the Christians, did meet for worship on the first day of the week. This was not a special meeting. It was their stated day for worship. The language plainly teaches this. It can have no other meaning. The disciples were not called together to hear Paul. They came together, according to their custom, for Christian worship. This is implied in the words, 'And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, being present, preached unto them.'

"To say that because Paul preached in the evening, they did not meet together in the day time is too absurd to need even contradiction. What possible proof can a Sunday evening meeting be that there was no religious service there in the day time?

"But in other places it is recorded that Paul preached on the Sabbath day. So it is, as in Acts 13:42, 16:13, 17:2, 18:4. Read carefully these passages and you will find that it was not to a Christian congregation that he preached, but to the Jews and to the Gentiles who met with them for worship.

"Search the New Testament carefully: you cannot find a single record of the meeting together on the seventh day of the week of a company of Christian believers for worship! There is no such record. They did not meet on that day. The day on which the primitive Christians met for worship was the first day of the week."

About a year after the meeting with the disciples at Troas Paul wrote as follows to the church at Corinth: "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. 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." (1 Cor. 16:1, 2.) It is quite evident from this that the first day of the week was observed at that time by the churches of Galatia and Corinth as the day of their principal religious "gatherings," and was considered by St. Paul as the most suitable occasion for bringing together "the collection for the saints."

4. The warrant for the First-day Sabbath is strengthened by the fact that the apostles were invested with authority to make such a change as we have seen was made under their administration. This appears when we consider (1) That they were inspired men, which no Christian denies. (2) That they were invested with this prerogative by virtue of the authority conferred upon them to organize and establish the Christian church and to reject or retain so much of the Hebrew ceremonial as they judged appropriate. This is the force of the following commission: "Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 18:18). (3) That they were guaranteed against error in their establishment of the church and its regulations by the special impartation of the Holy Spirit to be their teacher and guide. Jesus said unto them: "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26). "And when he is come, he will guide you into all truth," etc. (John 16:13).

We believe it has now been shown: (1) That there is nothing in the meaning of the term Sabbath that limits its proper observance unchangeably to any particular day; (2) that by divine appointment a change was made at the Exodus from the primeval Sabbath day, previously observed throughout the world, to a day for Sabbath observance commemorative of events pertaining particularly to the Hebrew nation; (3) that from its very character the Seventh-day Sabbath of the Hebrews was to be observed only during the Jewish dispensation; (4) that even under the Jewish economy other days than the seventh or Saturn's day (and particularly the first day of the week) were hallowed as Sabbaths by divine appointment; (5) that, so far as the best information we can get is concerned, the original day hallowed as a Sabbath in Eden would, if carried forward to the present, synchronize with the First-day Sabbath observed by Christians; and (6) that the change from the seventh day to the first after the establishment of Christianity has the warrant of scripture, in that it is typified, foretold, provided for in the authority conferred upon our Lord's apostles, authorized by the example of the apostles and the early church, and sanctioned by the special, miraculous and visible presence of the Lord with his primitive followers when first they made his resurrection day the day which they observed in Sabbath worship. These reasons we regard as sufficient to prove that the practice of Christians generally in keeping the first day of the week as the Sabbath, in commemoration of God's completed work both in creation and redemption, is in keeping with God's original plan and fully authorized by scripture.

"Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ" (Col. 2:16, 17).

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## **Chapter 5 HISTORIC EVIDENCE**

A correspondent in writing us on this subject says: "In Chambers' Encyclopedia I read that Constantine changed the day [of the Sabbath] from the seventh to the first — 321 years after Christ. If that be true, what right had man to change God's law?" etc. Sure enough! But it isn't true. Nor does Chambers say it is, as a closer scrutiny of the passage referred to will fully prove.

In the first place, we have shown by abundant scripture testimony that the change was made by the apostles of our Lord, with the divine warrant and approval. In the next place, the passage from Chambers has been misunderstood and misquoted. After rehearsing the scriptural grounds on which the primitive Christians made the first day of the week the day of holding their religious assemblies, and after quoting Justin Martyr in his Apology to Antoninus Pius, written between A.D. 138 and A.D. 150, as giving several reasons why Christians then observed the first day of the week, Chambers says:

"But whatever may have been the opinion and practice of these early Christians in regard to cessation from labor on the Sunday, unquestionably the first law, ecclesiastical or civil, by which the sabbatical observance of that day is known to have been ordained, is the edict of Constantine, 321 A.D.," etc. So Chambers clearly teaches that, instead of Constantine changing the day, he merely enacted a law requiring all his subjects to observe that day as sacred which Christians had observed ever since the resurrection of Christ. Whether ignorantly or otherwise, the pleaders for a Saturday Sabbath have committed "a flagrant falsification of history," in alleging Constantine to have changed the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week. The very terms in which his edict was expressed imply that Sunday had long been observed as a sacred day, though voluntarily and not by legal enactment. He says: "Let all judges, inhabitants of cities, and artificers rest on the venerable Sunday," etc. Thus his own words refute the charge that he first changed the Sabbath to the first day of the week.

In the earliest days of the church the term Sabbath was not applied to the first day, although the Sabbath character was ascribed to it. It was commonly called "the Lord's day," "First-day," or "Resurrection-day," to distinguish it from the day observed by the Jews and by them for ages called the Sabbath. That the first day was observed in the early church from apostolic times and that it was invested with a sabbatic character is amply proved by the testimony of the ancient Fathers, as many reputable authors have shown.

Ignatius was a disciple of St. John, and is reputed to have been made bishop of Antioch by that apostle. In his epistle to the Magnesians, he says: "If they who were brought up in these ancient laws, come nevertheless to the newness of hope, no longer observing Sabbaths [of a Jewish character] but keeping the Lord's day, in which our life is sprung up by him," etc. This proves (1) that Christians

did not then keep the Hebrew Sabbath; (2) that they did observe "the Lord's day" instead of the Sabbath of the law; and (3) that "the Lord's day" was the day our Lord arose from the dead.

Barnabas, believed to have been the companion of St. Paul as mentioned in the book of Acts, speaks in his epistle of "the eighth day" as the day of Jehovah's choice, and rest, because it is "the beginning of the other world;" and adds: "For which cause we observe the eighth day with gladness, in which Jesus arose from the dead," etc.

Justin Martyr, in the Apology already cited, assigning reasons why Christians of his day held Sunday meetings, says: "We all of us assemble together on Sunday because it is the first day, in which God changed darkness and matter, and made the world. On the same day also, Jesus Christ our Saviour arose from the dead." Justin, therefore, regarded the first day of the week as the suitable day for Sabbath observance (1) as commemorating the creation of the world, and (2) as commemorating the resurrection of Christ.

Eusebius, A.D. 267-339, referring to the heresy of the Ebionites, says: "They also observe the Sabbath and other discipline of the Jews, but also on the other hand, they celebrate the Lord's day very much like us." This shows that at that time orthodox Christians did not observe the Jewish Sabbath, and that they did observe the Lord's day instead.

Many other equally pertinent quotations might be adduced, but these must suffice. Having traced in outline the history of the Sabbath and its changes from the creation far into the Christian era, and having presented what we consider abundant scriptural and historical warrant that the observance of the First-day Sabbath by Christians is divinely authorized, we take our leave of the subject, indulging the hope that what we have written may clear up the matter in some degree to such of our readers as have been in doubt or perplexity on this important matter.

May the Christian Sabbath become ever brighter and dearer to us all, and may we ever be able confidently to say, "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it."

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## Chapter 6 HALLOWING THE SABBATH

"The Sabbath was made for man" — to meet the necessities of his physical, mental, moral and spiritual natures. Man was made for labor, and only in laborious activity can he secure his highest good for the life that now is and for the life to come. But he who labors as he should six-sevenths of the time will find that resting from secular toil the other seventh is a physical as well as a moral necessity and blessing.

While the day to be recognized as the Sabbath is based on positive law, or divine appointment, and therefore may be changed at the will of the lawgiver, the Sabbath as an institution is based on physical and moral necessity back of all positive law, and hence can never be abrogated. Having been "made for man," as an institution designed to conserve and promote his highest well-being, the requirement for hallowing it was made a part of the moral law, originally graven by the finger of God on tables of stone as significant of its permanent character. Hence it is that, though the day for celebrating the Sabbath has been changed and the gospel furnishes different motives than did the law for its observance, the hallowing of the Sabbath is as incumbent upon Christians as upon the Jews of old. While the gospel frees from the observance of the Sabbath in its purely Jewish aspects, it does not, and can not, in its abrogation of the Hebrew economy, annul or abrogate the Sabbath institution. As such it existed before the Mosaic law was given, and was designed to meet a universal necessity of the human race.

But how should the Christian Sabbath be observed? Let Isaiah, the evangelical prophet, answer: "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, honorable; and shalt honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou 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" (Chapter 58:13,14). Observe,—

### **I. THE THINGS WHICH ARE HERE PROHIBITED:**

1. We are not to do our own ways. That is, we are not to make the Sabbath a day for attending to our own lawful but secular concerns. The law of the Sabbath prohibits buying, selling, laboring, traveling, making business plans and calculations, taking inventories, footing up accounts, engaging in business correspondence, holding business interviews, etc., on the Lord's day (Exodus 20:8, etc.). Nor should we employ others to do on the Sabbath what would be unsuited in its character to our own performance. To ignore the rights of our employee or of public servants to the Sabbath and its privileges is criminal in the sight of God.

2. We are not to pursue our own pleasure. It is a grievous abuse of the Christian Sabbath to convert it from a holy day into a holiday. The tendency in this country toward the continental method



of Sabbath observance — toward making it a gala day, a day of recreation, amusement, jollification, carousal and debauchery — is an evil omen. Many kinds of pleasure wholly innocent on other days are sadly desecrating on the Sabbath. Excursions, journeys, parties, games, athletic sports, social visitation, the perusal of secular papers or books, festivity and mirth of all kinds — these are wholly unbecoming the sacredness of the holy Sabbath, and ought not to be engaged in or countenanced by the followers of Christ.

3. We are not to speak our own words. In other terms, we should not engage in secular or jocular discourse. The Sabbath is not a day for discussing matters of business, commerce, politics, science, or any other purely secular themes; and much less is it a day for the indulgence of hilarious discourse, or for the many pleasantries which might be regarded innocent on other days. The extent of the prohibition includes abstinence in action, speech and feeling from all that is unsuited to keeping the Sabbath distinctively holy.

## **II. THE THINGS WHICH ARE HERE ENJOINED:**

1. That we call the Sabbath "a delight." We are not to observe either its prohibitions or injunctions in a legal but in an evangelical Spirit. It is not a day for sadness, gloominess, long faces, penances, mortifications, or ascetic practices of any kind; but a day rather for cessation from the wearying toil of life, and for delightful engagement in those holy occupations, contemplations, exercises and fellowships, which we can scarce find time to cultivate during our busy laboring days. "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will be glad and rejoice in it."

2. That we regard it as "the holy of the Lord." It is emphatically "the Lord's day" — the day set apart as exclusively devoted to his service — and therefore a holy day, or rather the holy day of Jehovah. Hence the command to "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." We should study and exercise ourselves to spend it in all respects in a holy manner. Both negatively and positively — by refraining from all that is profane or secular, and by engagement, so far as practicable, in whatever will tend to promote the glory of God and the well-being of men — we should keep the Sabbath holy.

3. That we call it "honorable." The Christian Sabbath is the day God has honored as he has honored no other day, in making it the memorial alike of a finished creation and a finished redemption. The risen Jesus honored it; apostles honored it; the martyrs and confessors of the early church honored it; the church catholic through all the ages of Christian history has honored it; and in some degree at least all civilized nations recognize and honor it. God has also ever honored it with special promises and blessings bestowed on those who duly observe it. Shall we not then regard it as the "holy of the Lord and honorable?" If we do thus honor it, think you it will be the shortest day of the week with us? Will it be a day for sleeping, lounging, trifling, visiting, roaming, or selfish and unprofitable pursuits of any kind? Assuredly not. We shall instead give it fully to God's service, to meditation upon and exercise in divine things, and to that culture of the religious life for which the Creator has instituted and ordained it.

### III. MOTIVES TO HALLOWING THE SABBATH:

1. The delight in God resulting therefrom. "Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord" — in the sight of his countenance, in the manifestations of his grace, in abiding fellowship with him.

2. The spiritual exaltation promised. "I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth." Honor and exalt the Sabbath and God will exalt and honor thee.

3. The goodly heritage assured. "I will feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father." The God of Jacob will be thy God. This includes all temporal and spiritual blessing, our highest good in every sense, and that for time and for eternity; all of which is ratified by the immutable word of Jehovah who hath spoken it.

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## **ENDNOTE**

1 See this point discussed ably and at length in Briggs on "The Sabbath," pp. 50-65.