

The Sabbath Question.

WHAT DAY SHALL CHRISTIANS KEEP?
THE SEVENTH OR THE FIRST?

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The fact that the Seventh Day Adventists are actively engaged in propagating their notions on the Sabbath question has suggested the propriety of bringing out a tract containing in condensed form the arguments against their position on that question, and in favor of first day observance.

This class of Adventists manifest a commendable zeal in disseminating their views. They gain some converts, although according to their own showing their success is quite meagre. Their success, whatever that may be, is owing principally to two causes. The first of these is that when they enter a new field the people are unprepared to meet their issues. The question as to which day Christians should keep is considered a settled question until these people stir up investigation. Hence, these seventh day people spring upon the uninformed a new issue. They are not prepared to answer their arguments. Now, some there are who have never learned that it is the part of wisdom to hear both sides of a question before making up their minds as to which side to give in, their adhesion. It should ever be borne in mind that it is no proof that we are wrong because we cannot at once meet a new argument; and those who yield to what is to them new, without careful and patient investigation, belong to that class fitly described by the apostle as "carried about with every wind of doctrine." I do not question the motives of the Seventh Day Adventists, but it is certainly not greatly to the commendation of their cause that their success to a large extent depends on pouncing upon defenceless communities and carrying away some of its members before investigation has enabled them to look calmly on all sides of the question. That they have much of their success in this way, I know to be true from personal observation extending over the past sixteen years.

Another cause of success with these people is the false notions that prevail in most communities about the perpetuity of the fourth commandment of the Decalogue. Nearly all of the Protestant sects in this country appeal to this commandment as authority for keeping the first day of the week. Many of these sects feel that it is next to sacrilege to call the first day of the week by any name except that of Sabbath. This appealing to the fourth commandment and this calling of the first day of the week the Sabbath is a matter of astonishment. Any one who will take the trouble to make an examination will find; 1st. That in the New Testament the name Sabbath is never applied to the first day of the week; 2d. That the fourth commandment is never appealed to as authority for keeping this day till after the days of Constantine, that is, not before the middle of the fourth century; and 3d. That the prevailing custom of calling this day the Sabbath did not take its rise till near the end of the sixteenth century. In proof of these statements I refer to the New Testament in proof of the first; to Smith's Bible Dictionary in proof of the second; and to church histories generally, and to Alvan Lamson's Church of the First Three Centuries, p. 379, in particular, in proof of the third.

In view of these incontestable facts how Protestant ministers of intelligence can persist in quoting, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," when they mean the Lord's day, or the first day in the week, is what astonishes me. If the Savior, and the apostles, and the primitive church, for more than three hundred years never

referred to the fourth commandment as authority for observing the first day of the week, what right have we to do so? Are we wiser than they? This false position furnishes ground ready for the seed of the seventh day advocates. They can approach the people in this wise: "You see we all believe that the entire Decalogue is in force, and of course the fourth commandment is binding upon us. But we must bear in mind that 'Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy,' is not all of the commandment, for 'the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God,' is equally a part of it. How can we claim that one part of it is binding, and not all of it?" Some one may answer that the day is changed. But these seventh day people will quickly reply, "Where is the chapter and verse in the teaching of Christ or his apostles that authorizes us to read 'the first day is the Sabbath of the Lord'?" Then if the practice of the early church is referred to, the result is the same. Smith in his Bible Dictionary sums up the results of his investigations as to the custom of the early church for three hundred years, in these weighty words: "Finally, whatever analogy may be supposed to exist between the Lord's day and the Sabbath, in no passage that has come down to us is the fourth commandment appealed to as the ground of the obligation to observe the Lord's day."

The advocates for the observance of the Sabbath take advantage of this false position on the binding force of the fourth commandment and easily carry some good, conscientious people with them. They are not to blame for what they do. The blame rests with those who, contrary to the teaching of Christ and his apostles and the primitive church for more than three hundred years, quote the fourth commandment as authority for observing the Lord's day, and who also, contrary to the custom of the church for sixteen hundred years, call the first day of the week the Sabbath.

The position I shall endeavor to maintain is that the fourth commandment was given to the Jews at the time of their deliverance from bondage in Egypt, that it was never binding on any one but the Jews, that it ceased to be in force when the Savior died on the cross, and, finally, that Christians should observe the first day of the week, called the Lord's day, but that the ground of obligation to keep this day is entirely different from that which bound the Sabbath on the Jews.

Before passing to the direct discussion of the position just stated, it may not be amiss to call attention to one or two points, though somewhat incidental, nevertheless of importance in settling the question under discussion. The statement is made above, that nearly all the Protestant sects in this country appeal to the fourth commandment as authority for keeping the first day of the week—that they hold to the perpetuity of the Decalogue. It may appear to some that this fact weakens our arguments, on the grounds that what is the general voice of the church is to be accepted, unless strong reasons appear to the contrary. This is true, but it can be shown, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that the Americans who thus teach have arrayed themselves against the wisest and best in all ages of the church. Patrick Fairbairn, D. D., an eminent Scotch Presbyterian, and Professor of Divinity in the Free Church College, Glasgow, though an advocate of the perpetuity of the fourth commandment, yet, in his able and scholarly work on Scripture Typology, is constrained to make the following concession: "The character of universal and permanent obligation, it is argued, which we would ascribe to the Decalogue, cannot belong to it, since one of its precepts enjoins the observance of a merely ceremonial institution; an institution

strictly and rigorously binding on the Jews, but like other ceremonial and shadowy institutions, done away in Christ. It would be impossible to enumerate the authors, ancient and modern, who, in one form or another, have adopted this view. There can be no question that they embrace a very large proportion of the more learned and eminent divines of the Christian church, from the fathers to the present time."—*Scrip. Typ.*, Vol. II, p. 110. Thus it is seen that we stand with the great mass in all ages, and while this does not prove us right, it is a strong presumptive argument in favor of our position. The arguments which will be introduced in the following pages, it is believed, will show that in this case *vox populi, vox Dei*—the voice of the people is the voice of God.

It is claimed by the Seventh Day Adventists that the command to keep the seventh day was given to Adam and Eve in the garden, and is binding on all men. But it is sufficient in answer to this assumption simply to ask, where can we find chapter and verse teaching that such a command was given? They cannot be found. Then in all the history of God's people, from Adam to Moses, is there ever a mention made of anybody keeping the Sabbath? During this time was anybody ever accused of breaking the Sabbath? No mention is made of either. Is it not strange, if the command to keep the Sabbath was in force from Adam to Moses, a period of 2,513 years, that no mention is ever made of it? Besides this we never find the name Sabbath in the Bible till we come down to the time of Moses. Could one in seven be observed for 2,500 years with the sacredness with which the Jewish Sabbath was observed from the time of Moses to the time of Christ, and we not be able to find even the name by which that day was called? This seems improbable in the extreme.

Again, had the Sabbath law been given to Adam and all his posterity, as these Sabbatarians maintain, then the Gentiles would have been guilty of the sin of Sabbath-breaking. But though their catalogue of sins was great (see Rom. I: 19, 23), yet this sin is never mentioned against them. This is strange; indeed, from the Sabbatarian standpoint. Any position that has to be maintained by such an assumption is sadly in need of substantial proof.

But these Seventh Day Adventists seem to reach the acme of absurdity when they maintain that the Ten Commandments are God's moral law for all men and all ages, and were given to Adam in the garden of Eden! If the Decalogue was not given on Sinai in the days of Moses, why all the display of grandeur and power on that memorable occasion? If the law was not given then, this display cannot be accounted for.

Again, Paul's language to the Romans can not be understood if the law was given to Adam. "For until the law, sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed where there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression." Rom. v. 13, 14.

The same apostle declares, in the most unequivocal manner, that the Gentiles had not the law—were without law. "As many as have sinned without law shall perish without law." "For when the Gentiles, who have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves." Rom. ii. 12, 14. How these Sabbatarian Adventists can affirm, in the face of these Scriptures, that the law was given to Adam and is binding on all nations, is difficult for me to understand. It ought to appear to all reflecting minds that when the advocates of seventh-day keeping have to resort to such absurdities in order to maintain their

peculiar theory, their cause must be weak.

The very form of the Ten Commandments presupposes many things that could not have existed till a great while after the creation. The Fourth Commandment as we read it in Exodus 20th chapter, presupposes men having sons, daughters, and servants, and that they worked cattle, that there were strangers among God's people, that they lived within gates—walled towns.

It may be said that we find many of the principles of the Ten Commandments before the deliverance of the Jews from Egyptian bondage. So we do, but that does not prove the existence of the Decalogue from creation. We find many maxims of the New Testament in the Old, but that does not prove it to have existed coeval with the Old Testament.

It is claimed that the Jews kept the Sabbath before the law was given on Sinai. True, but how long before? Manna was not to be gathered on that day, but manna never fell till after the Israelites had crossed the Red Sea.

Smith, in his Bible Dictionary, well observes that "The perplexity of the Israelites respecting the double supply of manna on the sixth, leads us to infer that the Sabbath, for which such extra supply was designed, was not then known to them. Moreover, the language of Ezekiel (20) seems to designate it as an ordinance distinctively Hebrew and Mosaic."

The Sabbath was to be kept as a commemorative day, and for that reason should begin immediately after the event to be commemorated. By turning to Deut. v. 15, we learn that the Sabbath day was to commemorate their deliverance from bondage in 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 a stretched out arm; therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day." Here we have the reason given why the Israelites were commanded to keep the Sabbath, and since the reason of giving the command is that they were brought out of Egypt, it is clear that the command could not have existed before. By turning to Neh. ix. 13, 14, we learn that at the time of the giving of the law on Sinai, God made known to his people the holy Sabbath. "Thou camest down also upon Mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments; and madest known unto them thy holy Sabbath, and commandest them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant." Now how could it be said that the holy Sabbath was made known on Mount Sinai by the hand of Moses, if it had been given to Adam in Eden?

As an additional proof that the Ten Commandments were not given before the days of Moses, I would call attention to the fact that they were a covenant which God made with his people on Mount Sinai. Moses, referring to God's speaking out of the midst of the fire on the Mount, says: "And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, even Ten Commandments, and he wrote them upon two tables of stone." Deut. iv. 13. Here we learn that the Ten Commandments given on Sinai were a covenant, but by turning to the following chapter we read, "The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us." Deut. v. 2, 3.

Much additional proof could be given to show that the Sabbath was given to the Jews only, but it is not deemed necessary for the purposes of these papers. As the keeping of the seventh day belonged exclusively to the Jews, the question whether Christians should keep it depends not on its being found in the law of Moses,

but upon its being found in the gospel dispensation after the law of Moses was nailed to the cross. This view of the question will next be considered.

Those who wish to see the arguments in favor of a pre-Mosaic Sabbath completely refuted in a candid and scholarly manner, are referred to Smith's Bible Dictionary, article Sabbath. Our space forbids their consideration here.

Before closing this chapter I wish to call attention to a statement made by Eusebius, the father of church history, which shows that the early Christian church believed that the Sabbath came in with the law of Moses, and was never binding on any but Jews. Eusebius says: "Should any one, beginning from Abraham, and going back to the first man, pronounce those who have had the testimony of righteousness, Christians in fact, though not in name, he would not be far from the truth. . . . They did not, therefore, regard circumcision, nor observe the Sabbath, neither do we." *Ecc. Hist.*, Book I, Chap. 4. From this statement we learn the practice of the early church, and that they regarded the Sabbath as neither belonging to the patriarchs nor Christians.

As throwing some further light on the practice and views of the primitive church, another extract from Eusebius will not be amiss. In speaking of the heresy of the Ebionites, he says: "These, indeed, thought on the one hand, that all the epistles of the (Paul) ought to be rejected, calling him an apostate from the law; but on the other, using only the gospel according to the Hebrews, they esteem the others as of but little value. They also observe the Sabbath and other discipline of the Jews, just like them, but, on the other hand, they also celebrate the Lord's day very much like us, in commemoration of his resurrection." *Ib.*, Book 3, Chap. 27. Thus we learn that Sabbath keeping was regarded as a Jewish institution, and that its observance among Christians was confined to heretics, who rejected the epistles of Paul, and set but little value on the gospels, by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Let those now keep their company who wish to prefer to keep the Lord's day, as the faithful in Christ did in those days.

FORESTS IN THE UNITED STATES.—To show the necessity for protecting American forests and the need of a forestry commission, it is stated that, within ten years, no less than 12,000,000 acres of timber lands have been cut or burned over in the United States. Much of this timber is used for fuel, twenty-five cities having consumed from 5,000 to 10,000 acres each. Fences use up much timber, and railway sleepers require the product of 150,000 acres per annum. The amount of timber suitable for lumber yet standing is no longer large, and it bids fair to become so scarce as to be greatly enhanced in price. It is estimated that \$150,000,000 are invested in the lumber business of the United States, giving occupation to 200,000 men.

PILLOWS IN THE SUNLIGHT.—Do not put your pillows or feather-beds (if so fortunate as to have feather-beds) into the sun to air, but in a shady place with a clear, dry wind blowing over them. If it is cloudy—but not yet damp—and the wind strong, it is all the better. This, if practiced often, will keep well-cured feathers always sweet. Badly-cured feathers cannot be made sweet. A hot sun on the best of feathers will turn them rancid.

Two things, well considered, would prevent many quarrels; first, to have it well ascertained whether we are not disputing about terms rather than things; and secondly, to examine whether that on which we differ, is worth contending about.