



Why I believe in the Sabbath

Erroll Hulse

I deeply appreciated hearing much of this material delivered at a Westminster Conference many years ago. Since then Erroll Hulse has developed his work on the Lord's Day and has included material from a much wider spectrum of sources. It is thorough and balanced. Free from legalism Erroll urges obedience to the fourth commandment which is expressed in joyful gratitude and praise for the blessings of creation, providence and grace. At a time when many Christians are confused and in danger of losing the rich blessings of the Lord's Day this book is most timely.

Robert Oliver

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This 42-page study of what the early and later Reformers and the English Puritans believed is designed to show that the Sabbath is part of creation as well as a moral issue.

I believe the English Puritans were correct in their understanding of the Christian Sabbath. There are two commandments which do not begin with a negative such as, You shall not kill, You shall not commit adultery. One begins with the word *Remember* and that other begins with the word *Honour*. The latter, the fifth, has a promise added to it.

We are not told how to honour our parents. That would require far too much detail. Likewise we are not told how to fill in the hours of the Christian Sabbath. What we are commanded to do is to free up that day by refraining from our regular work. Works of necessity, however, continue.

We are not told in Scripture how to shape our worship services. Nor are we told how to structure our times of devotion. We have freedom to construct happy Lord's days. They are the best days. When we do this thoughtfully and prayerfully we can rejoice in the lofty praises of that day with which my study concludes.

On biblical grounds I believe it is essential to hold the threefold division of the law. The Second London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689 chapter 19 states it all so well that it is hardly needful for me to repeat it here. However I will state that it is the moral law that we have transgressed. It is that same moral law that our Lord kept perfectly. It is the moral law which defines sin and which caused him to die on the Cross in our place (2 Cor 5:21). The ceremonial law was constructed exactly

according to the specification given to Moses by our Lord. So we cannot miss its details and at the same time cannot miss the fact that it is a precise specific entity. Jesus has fulfilled all the typology of that ceremonial law and now we no longer have to observe it. No more sacrifices because *he is our sacrifice* (Heb 10:14). Civil law is specific too and will always be with us, which is why we have a police force and law courts, lawyers, barristers and magistrates.

But we do not have to make the same civil laws as Israel did. Our civil laws must be governed by the Ten Commandments. Over the years on average the English Parliament has made laws prohibiting work on the Lord's Day. The outcome is that even in our contemporary secular society we have one day a week when there is rest, families are together and the people of God can go to worship on one day that is wonderfully quiet and peaceful compared to the other six days.

Sanctifying the Lord's Day: Reformed and Puritan Attitudes

The idea of one day in seven being set apart has been with us from the creation of the world. The Hebrew practice of resting on the seventh day influenced all the surrounding nations. Josephus said 'there is not any city of the Grecians, nor any of the barbarians, nor any nation whatever, whither our custom of resting on the Sabbath day has not come,'¹ and Philo, 'for that day is the festival, not of one city or one country, but of all the earth.'²

Generally speaking by the time of the fourth century the day of rest had changed from the seventh day to the first day of the week, called the Lord's Day, which custom has prevailed in all the world ever since. We are covering a subject which spans not only human history but which is described in Scripture from

the first book of Genesis to the last, Revelation. It will greatly assist us to begin with an outline of the Biblical data relating to the Sabbath.³ We live in an age when it is common to see computers replete with keyboards and screens. The keyboard is tapped. Information is drawn from a hidden memory bank. Up on the screen there appears before our eyes the desired data. This material can be presented in a graphic way with major materials in large letters and less important data in small print. This is the method we will now employ in laying out our Biblical data on the Sabbath. Then we will look at the Reformers and their interpretation. After that we will see what the Puritans made of it. Then in the customary style we will proceed to conclusions which are relevant for us.

In holding all the Biblical data before our eyes we must focus on what has always been, and still is, the hinge upon which the whole issue turns, namely, our interpretation of the fourth commandment.

Is that commandment,

1. Moral only - The Puritan view?

established 2. Moral and ceremonial - The view of the late Reformers?

3. Ceremonial only - The view of the early Reformers, Luther, Tyndale⁴ and John Frith.⁵

1. *The Biblical data*

Before the fall of mankind in Adam and prior to the creation ordinance of marriage the Lord God the first creation ordinance of the Sabbath.

1.1. *The Creation Sabbath*

Genesis 2:1-3. God blessed the seventh day and made it holy.

The next occurrence in Scripture of the Sabbath principle is the giving of the manna, Exodus 16:23, followed by the inscription in the Decalogue of the fourth commandment which occupies about one third of the writing upon the stone tablets, and which makes specific and detailed reference to the former creation ordinance of Genesis 2:1-3.

1.2. The Moral Sabbath

The Fourth Commandment Exodus 20:8-11 (cf. Deut. 5:12-15)

The Mosaic Sabbath

The Jews were provided with detailed instructions as to how they were to behave on the Sabbath, what sacrifices they were to offer, what further Sabbath principles they were to observe, and also how they were to deal with rebellious violators of the Sabbath.

Regulations

Exodus 23:10-13. Exodus 31:12-18. The Sabbath is a sign (v. 13); 34:21; 35:1-3. Leviticus 16:31; 19:3,30, ch. 23; 24:8, ch. 25: 26:2, ch. 34-35. Numbers 15:32-36 (the Sabbath desecrator stoned), 28:9,10,25, special sacrifices on the Sabbath..

Other Old Testament references

Exodus 16; 24:16. Joshua 6:4, 1 Chronicles 9:32 (the bread set out each Sabbath). 2 Chronicles 31:3 (burnt offerings on the Sabbath). Nehemiah 9:14; 10:31-33; 13:15-22 (buying and selling outlawed). Isaiah 56:2-8 (blessed are the keepers of the Sabbath to the end of time). Isaiah 58:13,14 - the Sabbath to be a delight. Rich promises held out to those who love and keep the Sabbath. Isaiah 66:22-24 - the Sabbath principle to endure for eternity. Jeremiah 17:21-27 - not to keep the Sabbath was a sign of unfaithfulness and lack of devotion to the Lord. Ezekiel 20:12-26 - the Sabbath was a sign of the covenant. Ezekiel 22:8,26; 23:38; 44:24; 46:1-6, Amos 8:5.

1.3.3 The Christian Sabbath

Christ Lord of the Sabbath

Mark 2:27-28, Matthew 12:8, Luke 6:5

Our Lord tells us how to keep the Sabbath and how we are to regard it. Nowhere in the Gospels is it suggested that our Lord ever taught that the Sabbath principle was to be abolished. For our Lord's Sabbath practice: Matthew 12:1-12, Mark 2:23-28; 3:1-6. Luke 4:15-16, 33-34; 6:1-10; 13:10-17; 14:1-12, John 5:1-18; 9:13-16. For first day: Mark 16:1-9, Luke 24:1, John 20:1,19,26, Acts 2:1.

The Lord's Day

Revelation 1:10⁶ *τῇ κυριακῇ ἡμέρᾳ* in this text is an adjective qualifying the day. The only other occasion in the N.T. is in 1 Corinthians 11:20. The Lord's supper *kuriakou deipnou*.⁷

Christ made the first day of the week peculiarly his own by rising from the dead on this day and by sending his Holy Spirit on the first day of the week Psalm 118:24. Both Easter and Pentecost made Sunday 'The Lord's Day' John 20:1,19, 26, Acts 20:7, 1 Corinthians 16:2.

1.4. The Eternal Sabbath

Hebrews 4:1-11

The transition of the Jewish Sabbath, the seventh day, to the Lord's day, the first day of the week, has been a matter of dispute. Those who believe that the principle of the Jewish Sabbath has been abolished quote Romans 14:5 ('Some consider every day alike'), and Colossians 2:16,17 'let no one judge you with regard to a Sabbath day', and Galatians 4:10,11 'you are observing special days, I fear for you'.

A key text is in Hebrews 4:9 which can be translated, 'There remains a sabbath-keeping for the people of God.'

The Reformers and the Sanctification of the Sabbath.

In order to understand the Reformers' attitude to the Sabbath we must take into account the fact that while Augustine and the majority of Patristic theologians had taken an allegorical view of the Jewish Sabbath, that is, that it was entirely typical and therefore had been entirely cancelled, another corpus of opinion and tradition had risen and prevailed which required the keeping not only of a multitude of holy days, but also one day in seven. They succeeded in filling Sunday with legalistic ideas. The fourth commandment was used to support this view.⁸ Rome indirectly impaired the authority and influence of the Lord's Day by ranking it with her own holidays, and by imposing on her votaries both classes of institutions under the same temporal penalties as alike necessary for salvation.⁹

Laws were passed against working on Sunday. As for the moral issue, a Spanish bishop of the 14th century declared that any unnecessary work on Sunday was mortal sin. Into this category he put one's ordinary calling, the employment of an extra cook or professional musician or even washing dishes.¹⁰

Against these Romanistic errors the Reformers reacted. Luther was his usual passionate self in resisting both the legalisms of

Romanism on one hand and recurrent Jewish legalisms on the other. When he heard from his friend Count Wolfgang Schlick, of Judaizing tendencies among the Christians of Moravia, he wrote a treatise against the Sabbatarians. In his letter he sought to provide a biblical, theological and historical basis against Sabbatarianism. Luther in this treatise argued that the terms of the fourth commandment cannot apply to Christians because the Jews only were led out of Egypt.¹¹ Luther also vehemently opposed Andreas Karlstadt who insisted on Christian obedience both to the Mosaic prohibition of images and to the Mosaic Sabbath law.¹² Luther complained of Karlstadt, 'that he would truly make us Jews in all things.' Concerning any special day Luther declared, 'If anywhere anyone sets up its observance on a Jewish foundation, then I order you to work on it, to ride on it, to dance on it, to feast on it, to do anything that shall remove this encroachment on Christian liberty.'¹³ Richard Baxter apologises for the Continental Reformers saying, 'You must remember they came newly out of Popery'.¹⁴ This is not to say that Luther did not believe in observing Sunday, but he sought to base it entirely on civil, ecclesiastical and prudential grounds; that is, because it was legislated by the government as a day of rest, because worship was encouraged by the church on that day, and because it was in the interests of wisdom or prudence to do so. Luther saw the requirement of rest as the natural law content of the Sabbath commandment which now remains after the ceremonial aspect is removed. 'He who does not need rest may break the Sabbath and rest on some other day as nature allows.'¹⁵

Yet it is important to observe that, like Calvin, Luther held firmly to the Creation Sabbath principle. Declared Luther: 'If Adam had remained innocent he would have held the seventh day

sacred - and on this day given his descendants instruction about the will and worship of God.¹⁶

The Augsburg Confession of 1530 accurately represents Luther's views as well as those of Melanchthon.¹⁷

For they that think that the observation of the Lord's Day was appointed by the authority of the Church, instead of the Sabbath, as necessary, are greatly deceived. The Scripture, which teacheth that all Mosaical ceremonies can be omitted after the Gospel is revealed, has abrogated the Sabbath. And yet, because it was requisite to appoint a certain day, that the people might know when they ought to come together, it appears that the Church did for that purpose appoint the Lord's Day: which for this cause also seemed to have been pleasing, that men might have an example of Christian liberty, and might know that the observation, neither of the Sabbath, nor of another day, was of necessity.¹⁸ Tyndale maintained that no holy days were necessary if people could be taught without them, and that Christians might choose to meet on Monday, or every tenth day if they liked.¹⁹

John Calvin conceived of the decalogue as a summary of perfect righteousness summing up the whole will of God concerning our obedience for worship and for love to our neighbours.²⁰ To demonstrate the inward far-reaching moral requirements of the law he quotes our Lord's teaching in Matthew 5:21 ff. In exposition of the fourth commandment Calvin declares that the Sabbath is abrogated, but goes on to assert that it is wise and expedient for us to have our set times of worship, and for these reasons, we ought to conduct ourselves accordingly. He is anxious to refute the charge that still might be levelled, namely of retaining elements of Judaism because we observe days, especially in view of Colossians 2:16, Galatians 4:10,11 and Romans 14:5. He defines his view

only on the grounds that it is convenient and helpful. Neither does he see any significance in the number seven.²¹

In his commentary on the Creation ordinance, Genesis 2:3, he refers to the abrogation of the Jewish Sabbath, but there holds to what he describes as 'the perpetual government of human life.' 'The Sabbath,' he declares, 'was commanded to men from the beginning, that they might employ themselves in the worship of God,' and concludes that, 'it is right that it should continue to the end of the world'.²² We detect here an inconsistency with the former assertion concerning the significance of the number seven, because that proportion of six to one is inescapable in the creation ordinance. When it comes to application, Calvin leaves no room for laxity, but insists that both work and recreation should be suspended for the whole day in order that the responsibilities of worship can be properly attended to. 'If we employ the Lord's Day to make good cheer, to sport ourselves, to go to the games and pastimes, shall God in this be honoured? Is it not a mockery? Is this not an unhallowing of his name?'²³

Heinrich Bullinger (d. 1575), who succeeded Zwingli at Zurich, applied himself to detailed instruction as to what should and should not take place on Sunday. In his exposition he appeals to the fourth commandment as containing moral principles which compel their application to Sunday. 'It would,' he says, 'be against all godliness and Christian charity if we should deny to sanctify the Sunday.'²⁴

Bullinger went so far as to infer that it is the duty of the magistrate to punish Sabbath breakers, even by death.²⁵ Perhaps he was the first Protestant theologian to expound in detail on what could and what could not be done on Sunday, censuring such abuses as sleeping late.²⁶

Zacharias Ursinus (1534-1583) who was a close friend of Peter Martyr (1500-1562), became the principal of a college at Heidelberg at the early age of 28. His *magnum opus* was his famous commentary on the Catechism. Question 103 reads, 'What doth God require in the fourth command?' In reply it is asserted that there are two parts to this commandment - 'the *one* moral and perpetual; the *other* ceremonial and temporary.' The moral and perpetual part refers to the public ministry of the church, and by this means, 'that the church can be visible in the world, and be distinguished from the rest of mankind.' Specifics as to actual days in the calendar are not entered into, but it is asserted that the moral aspect is binding upon all men from the beginning to the end of time.

According to the catechism the ceremonial part is connected to Mosaic worship, the Jewish Sabbaths as a whole being a special sign for them as God's covenant people.

In expounding the words, 'keep it holy', Ursinus urges great care and conscientiousness in keeping the Christian Sabbath because, 'violation of the Sabbath is a violation of the whole worship of God,' and, 'a neglect of the ministry of the church leads most easily and directly to a neglect and corruption of the doctrine and worship of God.' The catechism goes on to state that the rigid carefulness required of the Jews was typical of the thing typified, which is the greatness and necessity of the thing signified, which was the spiritual Sabbath.' (Little room is left for antinomianism). On the section, 'Thou shall do no manner of work,' the catechism declares that this is a reference to *servile* work and Leviticus 23:25 is quoted which states just that. On this ground Christ vindicated his disciples when they were accused of Sabbath violation when they plucked ears of corn. A vigorous defence for common sense to prevail with regard to works of necessity follows. For the cessation of work

for the stranger within thy gates and thy cattle, the catechism is akin to the expositions of the English Puritans.²⁷

Zanchius (1516-1590), well-known for his work on predestination, was a professor at Heidelberg, where he acquired a reputation as one of the most learned theologians of his time. He wrote at considerable length on the fourth commandment which he emphatically regarded as moral law and natural law. He maintained that nature teaches all men that they should devote one day in seven to public worship - Zanchius gives much attention to what is prohibited on the Sabbath.²⁸

The Synod of Dort, 1618, made a statement on the fourth commandment to the effect that the ceremonial aspect is abrogated but that the moral part now applies to the Lord's Day.²⁹ Much comprehensive debate took place in Holland for a century following. The principle issue did not concern a day of rest and worship as such, but rather the status of the fourth commandment as eternal, moral law.³⁰

The Second Helvetic Confession, described by Schaff as the last and best of the Swiss family and representing the Zwingli Bullinger wing of the reformation succinctly describes their position.

The Lord's Day is consecrated from the times of the apostles to the worship of God and to sacred rest. But we observe it in Christian freedom, not with Jewish superstition; neither do we believe that one day is in itself holier than another.³¹

That the Lord's Day *is decidedly most holy* - that is, in the sense of being set apart from the other days, was believed by the Puritans, to whom we now turn.

The Puritans and the Sanctification of the Sabbath

We have seen that in the formulation of their anti-Sabbath views of the Lord's Day the reformers Tyndale, Luther and Calvin were influenced by the reactions against the scholastic and ecclesiastical traditions of Medieval Christianity, which tradition propagated the idea of accrued merit through the keeping of special or holy days, plus Sunday. In strong contrast to this, the sixteenth century Puritans, in the formulation of their Sabbatarianism for the Lord's Day, were influenced by their reactions against the riotous behaviour of the people of England on Sundays.

Richard Baxter recalled the distractions that his family experienced when he was growing up in an English village. 'We could not,' wrote Baxter, 'on the Lord's Day either read a chapter, or pray, or sing a psalm, or catechise or instruct a servant, but for the noise of the piper and taber, and shouting in the streets continually in our ears, and we were the common scorn of all the rabble in the streets, and we were called Puritans, precisionists, hypocrites because we rather chose on the Lord's Day to read the Scriptures rather than what they did.'³²

Philip Stubbs, who was a bit of a Jeremiah, in a work entitled, 'The Anatomy of abuses' (1583), described the moral and religious evils of his day. Concerning the Lord's Day Stubbs reported that, 'the people spend their time frequenting bawdy stage plays, interludes, playing May games, frequenting church ales (which seem to be feasts on saints' days in which drinking ale was a chief preoccupation) - spend their time in piping, dancing, dicing, carding, bowling, tennis playing, hawking,

hunting and such like - also in keeping of fairs and markets, and in football playing and in such other like devilish pastimes.³³

It is unlikely that we will see rioting, horseplay, immorality, bawdy stage plays, gambling or drunkenness in our Sunday markets today. In those times people would come crowding from their dancing and playing, with Morris bells jingling round their feet, into the afternoon services, to set off again as quickly as possible to resume their games.³⁴

While bishops harassed honest and conscientious ministers for not being scrupulous about church rituals there was no discipline for profane swearing, drunkenness, revelling and profanation of the Lord's Day.³⁵

The fourth commandment was to prove a powerful polemic in the hands of the Puritans to change England's Sunday. The Puritan doctrine of Sunday, which was not Calvinistic in its origins, so far advanced over the treatment given to it on the Continent, that it has been suggested that it represents the only important English contribution to the development of Reformed theology in the first century of its history.³⁶ One of the chief distinguishing marks of Puritanism was a robust doctrine and practice of the Lord's Day. The change that was to come about was powerful and profound.

As early as 1566 Thomas Becon wrote a synopsis for Sabbath responsibilities explaining that ordinary labour was excluded. Another Puritan, William Kethe, contended in the early 1570's for a stricter Sabbath. In his lectures on Hebrews (1576), Dering called for total abstinence from work on the Sabbath. The critical notes in the Tremellius, Junius Bible of 1580 stressed that the Sabbath must be viewed as perpetual and moral, not figurative.³⁷

'The essence of this early Puritan Sabbatarianism,' maintains Patrick Collinson, 'was a conviction that the fourth commandment is a perpetual moral law originating with the creation and antedating the Mosaic law. Recognition of Sunday as the Christian Sabbath was reputed to be of divine and apostolic appointment, not ecclesiastical tradition. Sabbatarianism also entailed the conviction that the entire day had to be set aside for the public and private exercise of religion, with no time devoted to labour, idleness, or recreation.'³⁸

Distinctive fourth commandment teaching found early exposition by Lancelot Andrewes (1555-1626), who held that the injunction to hallow the Sabbath was essentially moral. Andrewes associated the fourth commandment with the Exodus 16 passage (the gathering of manna), Exodus 31:12-18 (no work whatsoever), and the Jeremiah 17:21 ff. passage concerning not carrying any burdens, which in our day would outlaw all freight lorries. The alteration from the 7th to the 8th day Andrewes took to be established by apostolic authority and to commemorate the Resurrection and Pentecost.³⁹

Richard Greenham (1531-1591), a Puritan famous for comforting wounded consciences and for vigorous preaching, who was known as the one 'who had pastures green but sheep full lean,' used to rise at four and speak to his people at dawn every weekday except Saturday. Like Andrewes, Greenham was a product of Pembroke Hall, Cambridge. He knew Andrewes well, read his manuscript on the Sabbath, and incorporated most of his ideas in his own treatise on the Sabbath which he wrote in about 1590.⁴⁰

Greenham had a son-in-law by the name of Nicholas Bownde who preached on the subject of the Sabbath in 1586. He then marshalled the Sabbath-law arguments in a book which he published in 1595. This was a straightforward and balanced work on the text of the fourth commandment. It became enormously influential, appearing in an expanded edition in 1606.⁴¹ According to Neal, 'the book had a wonderful spread among the people, and wrought a mighty reformation.'⁴²

Bownde proclaimed that the fourth commandment to rest was moral and perpetual. To follow studies, do worldly business or engage in recreations or pleasures such as shooting, hawking, tennis playing, fencing and bowling was discouraged. 'Men must not come to church with their bows and arrows.'⁴³

Bownde is not without wit and was fully aware of the need of freedom. He tells the story by way of an illustration of a Jew who in the year 1257 fell into a dung pit at Tewkesbury upon a Sabbath day, who for the great reverence he had to his holy Sabbath, would not suffer himself to be plucked out: and so Lord Richard, Earl of Gloucester, hearing of it, would not suffer him to be drawn out upon the Sunday, for reverence of the holy day, and thus the wretched superstitious Jew, remaining there till Monday, was found dead in the dung.⁴⁴

Bownde's book was opposed and Archbishop Whitgift, who called in all copies, forbade it to be reprinted.⁴⁵ Although controversy raged and the doctrine was opposed by the Anglicans, the basic approach used by Bownde became standard in all Puritan works thereafter. Eventually Parliament was to legislate in great detail about the Lord's Day.⁴⁶ For instance, the House of Commons ordained on April 19, 1650 that 'No waggoner or drover shall travel on the Lord's Day on penalty of ten shillings for every offence. No persons shall travel in boats, on horses, or coaches, except to church, on

penalty of ten shillings (50 pence). The like penalty for being in a tavern.¹⁴⁷

Bownde's brother-in-law, John Dod, nick-named John Decalogue Dod, published his work on the ten commandments later. The book was very popular going to forty editions. Concerning harvesting on Sunday Dod wrote, 'What about reaping our harvests endangered by ill weather?' ask some, 'Trust in providence is the reply.' Better we hazard some part of our estate, than the wrath of God fall on us.¹⁴⁸

William Perkins (1558-1602), whose widespread influence as an early Puritan theologian is not disputed, demonstrated a clear grasp of the central issues on the Sabbath. The substance of the fourth commandment he asserted to be unalterable. He defined that which was ceremonial and not binding upon us, namely, journeys, kindling fires and carrying burdens.⁴⁹ He showed that the responsibility to glorify God is the same, but the manner of performance is different.⁵⁰

Thomas Case, in a typical, vigorous and thoroughly comprehensive sermon on Isaiah 58:13,14, is brimful of exposition and practical advice on how to regard and spend this day of holiness or apartness. Declared Case, 'when we come out of our Sabbaths, as Moses came down from the mount, with our faces shining', we truly keep the Sabbath.⁵¹

The covenantal aspect of the Sabbath did not seem to receive systematic treatment but is only implied sometimes, as with William Greenhill on Ezekiel 20:12: 'If we have no Sabbath, or no day answerable to it, we come short of the Jews, who had it given to them as a great mercy.'⁵²

The two manifestos, one by James I, in 1618, and the other by Charles I, in 1633, provoked a lot of reaction and stirred up the Sabbath issue greatly. These were by law required to be read in the churches, but the Puritans by and large refused. These declarations specified what sports could be indulged in after morning service. The 'book of sports' (as these short manifestos were termed), were designed to curtail superstitious rigour in Sabbath observance.⁵³ Many ministers, including John Cotton, Thomas Shepherd, John Davenport and Thomas Hooker emigrated to New England as a result of Charles' 'book of sports.'

The best known opposition to the Puritan view of the Sabbath came from Peter Heylyn in two books in 1636. He argued that the Sabbath was not instituted from the beginning of the world, was not known until Moses, and that the fourth commandment was for the Jews only. In his second book he argued that there is nothing in the New Testament touching keeping the Lord's Day.⁵⁴

Typical of Puritan short expositions of the Sabbath is John Flavel's exposition of the Assemblies Catechism,⁵⁵ and for more extended treatment Thomas Watson's *The Ten Commandments* which was first published in 1692 and reprinted by C.H. Spurgeon in 1890. This book circulates widely among ourselves today. It was produced by the Banner of Truth in 1959 and in revised larger print editions in 1965, 1970 and 1976. Quoting Numbers 15:35 - the man stoned for gathering sticks - Watson declares, 'But God would not have this day violated in the smallest matters.'⁵⁶

The Puritan doctrine of the Sabbath is enshrined in the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 21. The first six sections concern the public worship of God, while section 7 explains the change to the first day of the week, 'called the

Lord's Day to be continued to the end of the world as the Christian Sabbath.' Worldly thoughts about worldly employments and recreations are to be abstained from according to section 8. Exodus 20:8 is cited in support of section 7 which asserts that one day in seven is to be kept holy. The Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689 follows chapter 21 of the Westminster Confession exactly.⁵⁷

The Independents, led by Thomas Goodwin and Philip Nye, in their formulation of the Savoy Declaration, add the words, 'the observation of the last day of the week being abolished,' to ch. 22, section 7.⁵⁸

The Westminster Larger Catechism, Answers 115-121, explain the fourth commandment, applying it to the Lord's Day (A. 115), and explaining how it is to be spent, works of necessity and mercy being permissible, (A. 117). A. 120 refers to the connection between creation ordinance and the decalogue and suggests that God pledged himself to bless that day to us (A.120).⁵⁹

Two members of the Westminster Assembly, Daniel Cawdrey and Herbert Palmer, collaborated to produce *Sabbatum Redivivum. The Christian Sabbath vindicated* (1645). In two volumes this work came to 1050 pages. The authors begin by establishing the distinction between ceremonial, judicial and moral law, and early define what they mean by 'moral'.⁶⁰ Solemn worship they uphold as a moral and perpetual obligation. The decalogue represents the summary both Godward and manward of perpetual and moral obligation. The fourth commandment, being part of the first table, they assert as moral and perpetual.

Reflecting the teachings of the Westminster formularies are Thomas Brooks' (1608-1680) fourteen ways in which we should sanctify the Christian Sabbath.⁶¹ You should, he suggests, arise early as your age, strength and bodily infirmities will allow. What to meditate upon in private is most helpfully outlined, as well as all the duties of public worship. All the day's doings should be managed with a spirit of holy joy and delight. Moderate use of our comforts is advised (Phil. 4:5), and all done to serve rather than hinder the purpose of the day. Brooks gives twelve reasons why he believed the great fire of London was a judgment of God.⁶² The fire began on a Sunday in 1666. Brooks comments on the history of God's providence in providing a day and how this was largely denied for the first 300 years of the Christian church.⁶³

In 1668 *The Practical Sabbatarian* appeared. This was a 787 page exposition of instructions on the duties of Sabbath observance written by John Wells of St. Olave Jewry, London. Wells was ejected in 1662. His work is an exposition of Isaiah 58:13,14. He contends that sports and recreations on the Lord's Day easily remove the sweetness of the Word and are the debasements of spiritual mercies. The law of nature requires a total abstinence from all works of labour and pleasure during the time allotted and consecrated to God's service.⁶⁴ The very essence of the day, argues Wells, is apartness or holiness from the other days. 'Shall men fix days for themselves', he says, 'and shall not God have one?'⁶⁵ We must prepare for the day. 'Was not Mary Magdalene last at the cross and first at the sepulchre?'⁶⁶ And then with this choice saying he stresses the essential delight of the Lord's Day: 'Joy suits no person so much as the saint and no day so well as the Sabbath.'⁶⁷ In support he quotes Psalm 118:24, 'This is the day the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it.' Between morning and evening service he advises that we indulge in

luscious, sweet holy discourse.⁶⁸ We have every advantage to make more of our Sabbath than the Jews, says Wells, elaborating on that matter.⁶⁹ Finally there is the sombre note as Wells reminds his readers of judgment falling on Sabbath breakers; fourteen football players drowned by falling through an iced river, one struck by lightning and a marketeer drunk falling into a river where he drowned.⁷⁰

A warning against Sabbath extremes was given by John Owen in his most learned and powerful exposition on the Lord's Day, published in 1671. If Owen regarded fastidious rule making as a menace, he esteemed antinomianism a far greater evil.⁷¹ Owen is careful not to bind men with burdens or tie them up with strict observances. His directions are balanced and presented not as laws but as commendations.

To be fair to the Puritans, they do commend rather than make laws; but this is discovered only by careful and sympathetic readers.

Richard Baxter was eminently practical, with cheering advice such as to wear our best clothes on Sunday, indulge in moderate feasting, and the appropriateness of taking a walk to rejoice in God's creation; also he suggests music to cheer the mind and fit it for thanks and praise to God.⁷² To Baxter it was a day of rejoicing; not a tedious burden, but a joyful privilege.⁷³

Baxter's brand of Sabbatarianism was different from that of the galaxy of Westminster Puritans, as he did not regard the fourth commandment as applicable to Christians. But he extended the analogy so far as to make the Lord's Day a Sabbath.⁷⁴

The Puritans were pre-eminent in giving practical counsel as to how the Lord's Day should be spent. A typical outline of advice would run as follows.⁷⁵

1. Prepare well for the Lord's Day by prayer and meditation. 'If thou wouldest leave thy heart with God on the Saturday night,' says Swinnock, 'thou shouldst find it with him on the Lord's Day morning,' and Baxter, 'Go seasonably to bed that you may not be sleepy on the Lord's Day.'⁷⁶
2. Heads of homes are advised to gather their families in good time on Sunday mornings and prepare them all to receive maximum spiritual edification throughout the day. Public worship is central on the Lord's Day.
3. Likewise heads of families are to make sure that the sermon materials are retained. Lively discussion and repetition of the main heads of the exposition are to be repeated at the meal table.
4. Private prayer, good works, family prayers and Christian fellowship, are all to be encouraged on the Lord's Day.
5. The Puritans urged that the influences of the Lord's Day be kept upon the spirit in all the week to follow.

Conclusions

In review of the historical evidence we see that, as we would expect, the early Reformers were not in a position to grapple with the Sabbath issue with the detail and advantage of hindsight as did the later reformers and Puritans. Biographers record Luther's influence on Tyndale and Tyndale's on Frith.⁷⁷ While they did not expound comprehensively in the way later writers were to do we note that both Luther and Calvin were constructive as far as the Creation Sabbath is concerned. The implications of their conclusions on the Creation Sabbath carry us forward to the position of the later continental theologians who, by the time they had completed their formulations, came very close to the Puritans. Dort is not far from Westminster.

The latter observation leads to a practical and pastoral warning which is that needless divisions should be avoided between those whose aim it is to have a robust Sunday but who rest their conclusions on different foundations. Zealous Lord's Day keepers of different backgrounds, Dutch Reformed, Lutheran, English Puritan or Scottish Presbyterian are all different to mere troublemakers who are contentious and divisive (Rom 16:17,18). The sign of a divisive person is when differences are exploited to advance his own name or party. This could never be said of men like Baxter⁷⁸ or Bunyan⁷⁹ who differed from most of their Puritan contemporaries on some aspects of Sabbath theory. But we note well that they were themselves exemplary in their practice of the Lord's Day. It is of foremost importance to note the ethical effects of any Christian doctrine. If carelessness and worldliness, neglect of God's house and people, is the logical conclusion of any teaching on the subject then we can justly question the presuppositions of that teaching. Biblical teaching has as its end the equipment of believers for every good work (2 Tim 3:16). It is possible to approach the Sabbath question with a negative attitude which fails to appreciate this factor of practice. One then ends with a theology of negation, of 'is nots', rather than a positive divinity of what is, that is, a discovery of God's mind as to what constitutes practical godliness.

With regard to the Reformers R.L. Dabney said that it was not to be expected that men emerging at a bound from the meridian darkness of Popery into Gospel light should see all things correctly at first.⁸⁰

As we have seen, the Puritans expounded at great length⁸¹ and depth⁸² on the Sabbath doctrine. For that reason we will from now on be taken up in our conclusions with the Puritan position. Our particular concern will be to examine whether that position can stand up to scrutiny in the light of Scripture.

It is necessary that priority first be given to the motivation or approach that lay behind the Puritan teaching. This is important because the way they came to their conclusions is in marked contrast to those who employ what may be termed the purely scientific approach, which begins with the difficulties surrounding the subject and then assembles them in such a way as to make the problems seem insuperable.⁸³ In marked contrast to the Puritan approach one never finds that the scientific approach advocates as a first principle the questions, 'What is the mind of God concerning our practice? What is he teaching us here about our practical responsibilities?'

Motivation is important. We have seen how the Reformers reacted against the prevalent malpractice of Roman system, and, in contrast, how the Puritans, when faced with din and profanity on the Lord's Day, responded accordingly.

In contrast to the early Reformers, who believed the fourth commandment to be only ceremonial, and the later continental Reformers, who believed the fourth commandment to be ceremonial and moral, the Puritans believed the fourth commandment to be moral only. The Puritans could be accused of using the fourth commandment merely as a useful and effective weapon to rid England of dissipation and noise on Sundays. Perceptively, however, Richard Greaves maintains that, 'the (Puritan) quest for a stricter Sabbath was not outgrowth of theology but of a particular kind of religious experience', - like the revivals of the 18th and 19th centuries.⁸⁴ Jim Packer endorses this approach as he persuasively maintains that the Puritan era was essentially one of revival.⁸⁵ The powerful motivation to live to the glory of God was uppermost. For the Puritans Sunday was the queen of days when spiritual life was most accurately and fully expressed. Their utmost concern was to be godly and practical. They earnestly sought the mind of God on the matter and believed

wholeheartedly that this mind consistently wills that one day in seven be set apart from work for the purpose of worship, a weekly occurrence to bring into focus all that God is and all that he has done for his people.

The expository method used by the Puritans for expounding on the Sabbath was the same as for all other doctrines. They used the textual method, branching out from there to illustrate and prove the points made from other parts of the Bible. Exodus 20:8-11 and Isaiah 58:13,14 were favourite passages. The latter, for instance, was used by John Wells and Thomas Case, and the former by Bownde, Cawdrey and Palmer. The modern science of Biblical Theology as defined by Geerhardus Vos⁸⁶ was accorded to in spirit by the Puritans. The Biblical theological method scrutinizes the progressive element of divine revelation from epoch to epoch. The spirit of the Puritans is in harmony with this hermeneutic. We now enjoy tremendous advantages through the works of those who have pioneered in this subject. Theologians like E.W. Hengstenberg and G.F. Oehler have shown us the extent to which the two Testaments are to be interpreted in relation to one another. Just how well the Puritans fared on the development and interrelationship of grace and law and how they are cleared from the charge of legalism on the one hand and antinomianism on the other is demonstrated by E.F. Kevan in his book, *The Grace of Law*.⁸⁷

Having referred to the Puritan motivation, approach and method, we will now deal with the Sabbath issue under headings. We will begin with what has been seen to be the most crucial point, namely, the moral nature of the fourth commandment.

The moral nature of the fourth commandment

Nicholas Bownde was the first well known Puritan exponent of the Christian Sabbath. Sunday was to be kept as a day wholly set apart. This is the fourth commandment confirmed and enforced. Bownde pointed out that, unlike the second table of the law, the first table has reasons appended, one each for commands 1 and 3, two for command 2, but three for command 4, and as for the enduring morality of it, Bownde quotes Peter Martyr, 'It is perpetual that one day in the week should be reserved for the service of God.'¹⁸⁸

That the moral nature of the 4th commandment was the hub of the whole matter was clearly comprehended in the formulative work by Cawdray and Palmer who gave themselves to the task of producing *The Christian Sabbath Vindicated*. This they did in the busy opening years of the Westminster Assembly. In their work they proceeded directly to expound what is meant by 'moral' law. In volume two they opened up the text of the fourth commandment and proceeded directly to the main point with this statement: 'The first and great contest is whether it be in the ceremonial sense or moral.'¹⁸⁹ Were the Puritans correct in holding to the view that the fourth commandment is moral only? There are those who argue that the basic distinctions of moral, ceremonial and civil law, made by Calvin in his Institutes (Bk.2 Ch. 11 Sects.7,8) and by the Puritans in the Westminster Confession (Ch.19 Sects. 3,4) cannot be upheld. It is claimed that the distinction between moral and ceremonial law was unknown in Judaism and therefore the distinction is illegitimate.⁹⁰ That the Puritans would accept a hermeneutic in which we must see through Jewish spectacles the fundamental distinctions about the law, as they appear in passages like Matthew 5:17-30; Romans 2:12-16; 13:8-10; and James 2:8-11, is extremely doubtful. What is of foremost importance is to

observe the principle that every Old Testament law must be placed under the condition of its fulfilment. Christ as the fulfilment of all, is precisely what the Jews were blind to see.

What Paul himself meant by the law and whether he was referring to the decalogue is a matter of contemporary debate. Karl Earth is quoted as saying that the distinction between moral and ceremonial law cannot be upheld because it would be foreign alike to his readers, as it is foreign to the spirit of the Pentateuch.⁹¹ The Puritan response to this contention would be to reject it as ludicrous. Did not God separate the moral law from all the rest by speaking it audibly, writing it on stones, placing them in the ark and distinguishing the uniqueness of the decalogue in other ways?

While the absolute apartness or separateness of the moral law is stressed in Exodus and Deuteronomy, it is true that the civil and ceremonial laws are not neatly packaged in the Old Testament. It is only when we view the Old Testament through Christ's fulfilment that the distinctions become perfectly clear. For instance, in Hebrews chapter ten we are told that the ceremonial sacrificial system has ended (10:8-14). The civil administration of the Jewish theocracy likewise no more applies, for we are now united, believing Jews and Gentiles alike, under one king (Eph. 2:15,16). But as for the law *moral*, it is established by the Gospel, as are all the lessons of the shadows and types seen in the civil and ceremonial laws (Rom. 3:31). The moral law as expressed in the decalogue must be distinguished from the outward form of its expression. The only outward expression is reference to redemption from Egypt and long life for obedient children in Canaan. Exactly the same promise applies now, except the outward form for our longevity may be in England, America or any other land on earth (Eph. 6:1-3). A powerful exposition showing the distinctness and uniqueness of the decalogue is by B.B. Warfield, *The*

Foundations of the Sabbath in the Word of God,⁹² and also by Prof. John Murray, *The Sanctity of the Moral Law*.⁹³ Of equal weight, if not more persuasive than Murray and Warfield, is James Bannerman in his exposition on the difference between the moral and ceremonial laws.⁹⁴

These upholders of the Puritan doctrines are able to reason more powerfully and convincingly than did their forbears because of the advantage of a wider historical perspective, and sometimes because they employ the canons of Biblical Theology; and, in harmony with the principle of comparing progressive revelation, some have clearly perceived the connection between the Creation Sabbath and the Sabbath of the fourth commandment. This issue is vital. As we turn to it we remember that the decalogue is natural law written in clarity. Natural law is the term used to describe law written in man's heart from the creation of the world.⁹⁵

The Fourth Commandment in its application to believers and unbelievers

The Puritans refer to the fourth commandment as being of exemplary, moral and perpetual obligation, binding upon all men in all ages (Westminster Confession ch.21 sect.7; 1689 Confession ch.22 sect.7). By exemplary I mean 'by example'. The Westminster Larger Catechism Question 120 reads, 'What are the reasons annexed to the fourth commandment, the more to enforce it?' In the answer given are these words: 'from the example of God, who *in six days made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day*'. More about this presently.

Then too we must recall that the decalogue came as a result of redemption from Egypt. Because God bound himself to his redeemed people by covenant, he required that they on their

part be sure that they did not break the covenant by transgression. Hence they were to have no other gods, commandment one; were not to serve idols, commandment two; were not to abuse the name of Jehovah, commandment three. Then precisely because they had been redeemed from slavery (Deut. 5:15) they were to observe the Sabbath. They were to observe the law, not in order to establish their relationship to Yahweh, but because *it had been* established.⁹⁶ Transposing this principle from the old covenant to the new we would suppose that the New Testament believer would love the day which the Lord has made with all his heart, that being the day of rest from labour and especially provided for the contemplation of redemption. The application of this to unbelievers is not so easy. The Puritans, as we have seen, influenced Parliament to pass legislation to ensure that Sunday could be kept. The New England Puritans ensured that civil law regarding Sunday observance was strict.⁹⁷

It is because of the moral nature of the decalogue that it applies to unbelievers. Their blatant disregard for it, or their contempt for it, reveals their disregard, and illustrates their contempt for their Creator, who created it in the first place for all mankind (Gen. 2:1-3). Wisdom, and understanding of the nature of the fall, are required in enacting any civil legislation which touches on religion. Albeit too briefly and inadequately, James Bannerman does grasp this nettle as it touches the Sabbath.⁹⁸ That unbelievers know the Sabbath to be a moral requirement is argued by John Owen. The Puritans were prone to observe that the Sabbath was established in Israel prior to Sinai (Ex. 16). Observes Owen, 'This command (about the manna), therefore, must have seemed somewhat strange unto them, if they had before no notion at all of a seventh day's sacred rest.'⁹⁹

The Creation Sabbath recalled, restated and confirmed by the Fourth Commandment

We have noted that Luther glimpsed and Calvin saw how far reaching were the implications of the Sabbath of creation. All men are subject to this Sabbath law. Christ did not say that the Sabbath was made for Israelites but for man, that is generic man, all men.¹⁰⁰ James Bannerman points out that the Sabbath as first enjoined on man was not part of a temporary or local economy. It was on man in the catholic and unalterable character as God's creature, and not on man as Jewish man or Gentile man. At the beginning God ordained marriage as foundational to all his relations with his fellow-men, and the Sabbath as foundational to all man's relations with God.¹⁰¹

Patrick Fairbairn shows that the creation Sabbath obligation was universally binding upon all for all time and that this law is indissolubly linked, joined to, and made one with the morality of the decalogue in the fourth commandment. 'The obligation to keep the Sabbath,' declares Fairbairn, 'is based in the command which is the most universal in its bearing that could possibly be conceived. 'Thou shalt remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested on the seventh day.' 'There is,' reasons Fairbairn, 'nothing Jewish here, nothing connected with individual interests or even national history. The grand fact out of which the precept is made to grow, is of equal significance to the whole world; and why should not the precept be the same of which it forms the basis?'¹⁰²

In the most compact piece of legislation in existence God has himself ascended to primeval time, and standing on the platform of the newly created world, he dates from thence the

commencement and the ordination of a perpetually recurring day of rest.

This majestic appeal to the Creation Sabbath, inscribed in stone by God himself, is not in order to circumscribe the institution by making it temporary for one tribe of mankind. It is not to narrow it, but rather, in keeping with all the other nine commandments, it is to confirm that it is for all times and for all peoples and all generations. Thus reasons Fairbairn.¹⁰³

The Sabbath as Covenant

The Puritans did not attempt a Covenantal approach to the Sabbath as does Nigel Lee in his book *The Covenantal Sabbath*.¹⁰⁴ Lee takes this covenant to begin with Adam (Hos. 6:7), argues that the Sabbath principle of one day in seven has been observed throughout human history, and cogently pleads the case for the everlasting and universally binding nature of the decalogue. He takes Adam to have had the law written in his heart and, in this state, standing for all his unborn descendants. By 'covenantal', Lee is concerned mainly with God's covenant with man (Adam) as such, rather than the development of the covenant of grace from Abraham, to Moses, to David, to Christ and the New Covenant. This means that the very important matter of how the covenant Sabbath made with man now finds New Testament fulfilment in regenerate man is not developed by Lee. What Lee does do, is to establish a massive documentation of the continuation of Sabbath through history.

The discontinuity of Jewish ceremonial Sabbaths

Fundamental is the question of continuity and discontinuity. Peter Misselbrook, who does not follow the Puritan approach,

helpfully concentrates upon the redemptive fulfilment of the Lord's Day. The Jewish Sabbath was, 'the ceremonial anticipation of the day of redemption's consummation.'¹⁰⁵ All the ritual of Jewish Sabbath practice discontinues, but what was intended in the types and symbols does continue. Theirs was an anticipatory worship; ours is a celebratory worship. They had their passover and we have ours. They had their Sabbath and we have ours.

Do the New Testament texts, Galatians 4:10,11, Romans 14:5 and Colossians 2:16,17 refer to the Jewish ceremonial Sabbaths only, or are all Sabbaths included? William Twisse in a treatise on the Sabbath (1641) shows that those references apply only to the Jewish special days. Modern scholars have confirmed this interpretation to be correct.¹⁰⁶

The change of the day from the seventh to the eighth, or first, day of the week

The transposition of the day from the seventh to the first day is argued by Thomas Shepherd of New England (d. 1649).¹⁰⁷ Jonathan Edwards in three sermons on the text 1 Corinthians 16:1,2 likewise expounds on the change of day.¹⁰⁸ These Puritan expositions are not likely to satisfy non-Sabbatarians, and again it is to modern expositors that we have to turn for enterprise in the realm of Scripture exposition.

Robert Haldane (1764-1842) wrote a 32-page treatise with the title, *The Sanctification of the Sabbath*,¹⁰⁹ which he appended to his famous commentary on the Romans epistle, being provoked to do so by some who misconstrued the text of Romans 14:5,6, something which Haldane regarded as a pernicious error, 'highly calculated to retard the progress of the Christian in the Divine life.'

Commenting first on Psalm 118:19-24 as the prophetic announcement of the creation of the Lord's Day, Haldane goes on to show that God's intention to change the weekly rest from the last to the first day of the week is indicated in various places throughout the Old Testament. He develops his thesis by saying that, 'The work of creation was finished in six days, and on the seventh day God rested from his which completed a week, or the first series of time. The eighth day, then, was the first of a new series, and on this, the day of his resurrection, the Lord Jesus rested from the work of the new creation. The eighth day is accordingly signalized in the Old Testament, pointing in a manner the most express to the day when Jesus entered into his rest, and when, in commemoration thereof, his people are to rest.'¹¹⁰

Haldane, in showing the prominence of this Old Testament typology, which can only find fulfilment in the anti-type which is Christ and his finished work, points to circumcision, acceptance of sacrifices (Lev. 22:27), consecration of the high priest (Lev. 9:1), cleansing of lepers (Lev. 14:10) and cleansing from defilements (Lev. 15:14-29, Num. 6:10). He also makes reference to the feast of tabernacles (Lev. 23:34-39), the consecration of the first-fruits of the harvest (Lev. 23:15-21) and the Jubilee year (Lev. 25:8-10).

The crucial statement in reference to fulfilment of this typology, which points in each case to the eighth day, is that, 'the eighth day corresponds with the first day of the week, on which, according to all these typical appointments, Jesus was *received* as firstborn from the dead, his sacrifice was *accepted*, and on which, as the great High Priest, he was '*consecrated* for evermore', and when he made atonement for his people, by which they are *cleansed from sin*' (italics his).¹¹¹

What day now constitutes the Sabbath? To what day has it now been changed? Reference has already been made to Psalm 118:24, and also the typology which awaits New Testament fulfilment. What other day could there be but that of the Jewish eighth, that is, the first day of the new week? As Dabney declares, 'no other day has a shadow of a claim. It must be this or none; but it cannot be none; therefore it must be this.'¹¹²

James Bannerman endorses Haldane's treatise, and in reference to circumcision in particular asserts that circumcision was, 'the seed of the righteousness of faith' - the everlasting righteousness to be accomplished and brought in by Christ (Rom. 4:11; Dan. 9:24).¹¹³ And with tremendous cogency Prof. John Murray presses home the truth that we now in Christ's resurrection celebrate the completion of a work greater than creation. 'It is altogether appropriate', writes the professor, 'that the recurring seventh day of rest should now memorialize the rest from the labour involved in the working out of redemption upon which our Lord and Redeemer entered when he was raised from the dead.' He goes on to show that our Christian Sabbath is not only a memorial of creation completed, and redemption accomplished; it is also the promise of a glorious prospect for we look for 'new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness' (2 Pet. 3:13).¹¹⁴

To return to Haldane's treatise with its exposition of the eighth day, we should not imagine that this idea was an invention or innovation by Haldane. A contemporary Seventh Day Adventist author, writing with the imprimatur of the Roman Catholic Church, has an extended documentation of the place and importance of the eighth day principle according to the early fathers. The Patristic writers were much influenced by this typology.¹¹⁵

A humanized Sabbath

For Christ to attack and devour the law would be to attack and devour himself (Mt. 5:17,18). What he did was to attack, expose, and remove the intolerable and wretched additions to the law invented and imposed by the legalistic and corrupt minds of the Scribes and Pharisees. Among other things, the rabbis had made a fetish of Sabbath abstinence, even dictating what distance could be walked on the Sabbath. 'Christ discarded this rabbinised Sabbath and put in its place a humanized Sabbath, making man's good the law of observance, declaring that it was always lawful to do well.'¹¹⁶

The human aspect of the Sabbath receives balanced treatment from Matthew Henry, which can be seen in his famous commentary on the Bible. On Mark 2:18-27 Henry says, 'God never designed it to be an *imposition* upon us, and therefore we must not make it so to ourselves', and, typical of Henry, he points out that man was made on the day before the Sabbath, not the other way round. Richard Baxter in his *Christian Directory* is eminently practical. Though not in reference to the Lord's Day, Baxter insists that, 'the body must, as far as we can, be kept in that condition that is fittest for the service of the soul.' 'A heavy body,' he adds, 'is but a dull and heavy servant to the mind; yea a great impediment to the soul in duty.' Then in direct application to the Lord's Day Baxter advocated the use of common sense to cheer our souls in order to promote the best spiritual service on the Lord's Day. He advocates the wise use of music, moderate feasting, the use of our best apparel. So practical is Baxter that he is ready to reverse the above emphasis and say that if fulness does not evoke our spiritual best, but we find abstinence is more effective, then let abstinence be followed.¹¹⁷

The Sabbath keeping which remains and the sabbaths of heaven

Commenting on Hebrews 4:9, 'There remains therefore a rest (a Sabbath-keeping) to the people of God,' Owen declares that 'the whole church, all the duties, worship, and privileges of it, are founded in the person, authority, and actions of Jesus Christ.'¹¹⁸ He makes a study of the contrast between the old covenant and the new.¹¹⁹ He points out that the renovation of all things is prophesied and foretold (Is. 65:17, 66:22; 2 Cor. 5:17,18). He then goes on to prove that we, having entered into union with Christ, enter into his rest. The priesthood and law having been changed, it follows of necessity that there is a change of the day of rest.¹²⁰ Owen joins the new creation to a new covenant and a new law. Here is Biblical Theology in full flow and style which would place the Prince of the Puritans as a power to be reckoned with among twentieth century counterparts!

The whole force of Owen's reasoning and power of his exposition of Hebrews 4 is not that we now have no Sabbath, but rather we now have a better one which is invested with all the glories of Christ's accomplished redemption.

This brings us to the question of eternal Sabbaths about which the Puritans seem to say little. That there will be Sabbaths in the future world is stated in Isaiah 66:23. Owen declares that 'labour and rest are correlates; the one supposeth another.'¹²¹ We do not serve God by doing the same thing all the time. If we do, then it surely is a mark of insanity or perversity. Richard Baxter builds his famous volume titled *The Saint's Everlasting Rest* on Hebrews 4:9. He tends to expound the eternal rest as arriving in a blessed state rather than entering a new cycle of activities. But Baxter does stress the active as well as the passive,¹²² yet not as much as does Edwards who emphasises

growth in blessedness and continual employment, which certainly accords well with the very nature of God's creation and man's mandate to use it fully and properly.¹²³

The importance of actual Sabbath observance

As we draw to a conclusion a declaration by John Owen may be taken as representative of the urgency with which this subject was viewed, and is viewed, by those who follow the Puritan interpretation. The matter was not one of mere academic exercise. 'The glory of God and the honour of Jesus Christ cannot be maintained without a due observance of a stated day of sacred rest,' asserts Owen in his preface, in which he gives reasons why he was prepared to devote detail and time to the defence of the Sabbath doctrine. 'Take this away,' he says, and 'neglect and confusion will quickly cast out all regard unto solemn worship. Neither did it ever flourish in the world from the foundation of it, nor will do so unto its end, without a due religious attendance unto such a day. Any man may easily foresee the disorder and profaneness which will ensue upon the taking away of that whereby our solemn assemblies are guided and preserved. Wherefore, by God's own appointment, it had its beginning and will have its end with his public worship in this world.'¹²⁴ But did it have its beginning by God's appointment and does it continue now, and into eternity? Perhaps the biblical theological approach is the only one which fully and adequately establishes the Sabbath principle and which therefore puts Owen's treatise in the forefront of Puritan expositions on the subject.

Biblical Theology — putting the progressive Sabbath revelations together

Sheer love for God as it finds its focus in the worship of the sanctuary on the Lord's Day is expressed by George Swinnock in a lengthy eulogy from which we draw this extract:

Hail thou that art highly favoured of God, thou map of heaven, thou golden spot of the week, thou market-day of souls, thou daybreak of eternal brightness, thou queen of days, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among days (Luke 1:28). Of the Jewish Sabbaths and other festivals, in comparison of thee it may be spoken, they perish, but thou remainest, and they all wax old like a garment; and as a vesture hast thou folded them up, and they changed, but thou shalt remain. — All the graces triumph in thee, all the ordinances conspire to enrich thee; the Father ruleth thee, the Son rose upon thee, the Spirit hath overshadowed thee. — Let thousands mark for their new birthday! — On thee light was created, the Holy Ghost descended, life hath been restored, Satan subdued, sin mortified, souls sanctified, the grave, death and hell conquered! Oh how do men and women flutter up and down on the weekdays, as the dove on the waters, and can find no rest for their souls, till they come to thee their ark, till thou put forth thy hand and take them in! Oh how they sit under thy shadow with great delight, and find thy fruits sweet to their taste! Oh the mountings of mind, the ravishing happiness of heart, the solace of soul which on thee they enjoy in the blessed Saviour.¹²⁵

From the point of the light being created on the first day of creation, to the principle of a never-ending Sabbath - 'thou shall remain' - Swinnock instinctively, rather than by academic systematic thoroughness, takes up various aspects which invest the Lord's Day with worth or glory. Herman Hoeksema,

who does not follow the Puritan line but approaches the subject through the avenues planted by the later continental reformers, kindles and provokes the mind greatly with the way in which he develops what he titles, 'The Idea of the Sabbath'.¹²⁶ The stages of development seen by Hoeksema he expounds as *creation-Sabbath*, *shadow-Sabbath*, *resurrection-Sabbath* and the *final or perfected Sabbath*.

Using the same principle of observing the progressive nature of revelation about the Sabbath and employing the supreme concern of the Puritans which we have summed up in the simple question, 'What do we learn about the mind and will of God for us in this, especially as it pertains to our practice?' - we conclude with a re-assembled chart which is self-explanatory. The reference to Ezekiel 46:1-8 may require explanation by way of reminder that Ezekiel was painting a picture of the ideal state to come using those symbols which excited him most as a Hebrew prophet who saw clearly the implications of a new heart and new spirit. The Sabbath is bound up as part and parcel with the worship of God and all days are not the same.¹²⁷ No indeed! The Lord rose from the dead on the first day of the week and in the combination of the significance of that event and its time, we with George Swinnock mount up in mind to enjoy ravishing happiness of heart as we celebrate our well won rest every Lord's Day in particular, and especially then, in anticipation of our glorious eternal Sabbath.

From the different epochs of Sabbath revelation we learn how we are to keep the Lord's Day.

Rev 1:10 ***The Lord's Day***

The LORD of the Sabbath (Mk. 2:27, 28), who created it in the first instance has invested it; with all redemptive accomplishment, fittingly setting it in the place prepared for it,

and anticipated by the Old Testament, namely the eighth day, the first day of the week. On that day he appeared to his disciples (John 20: 1,19,26). Pentecost was on that day, a fitting reminder that we are endued with the Holy Spirit who enables us to worship God on that day (Acts 2:1, 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2). The Lord's Day is Christ's social day of creation (Ps. 118:24). He, the one the builders rejected, rose on that day, and now on that day we celebrate his resurrection victory on behalf of us all.

From the **Creation Sabbath** we learn that,

The Lord made the Sabbath not for Israelitish man only, but for generic man, that is all men, and for all time. It is a time of rest from work and a time of contemplation in which we see that all that God has created is very good. If he upheld the Sabbath by a forty year long miracle we should expect him to honour it by his providence and bounty to the end of the world (Ex. 16).

From the **Moral Sabbath** that is the fourth commandment, we learn that,

We should refrain from our usual work and recreations to express our love for God, especially in the light of his great love for us in our redemption (Deut. 5:15; 1 Jn. 4:7-21). Love is the fulfilling of the law (Rom. 13:10). Our Lord showed perfect love not only by his service of God in the synagogue on the Sabbath, but by his great miracles of compassion and mercy on that day. We should take his example as our pattern.

From the **Mosaic Sabbath** we learn that,

The ceremonies of the O.T. pointed to the provision of salvation which has now been accomplished by Christ. The ceremonies and special Jewish Sabbaths are now abrogated (Rom. 14:5; Col. 2:16,17; Gal. 4:10,11). On the Lord's Day we

celebrate atonement accomplished and all the benefits of our salvation (Lev. 16 and 23), cleansing from sin (Lev. 14:10), and liberty from all bondage (Lev. 25). It is especially a day of delight and joy (Is.56:2-8; 58:13,14). It is the day of the new covenant (Heb. 8:10; Ex. 31:13; Ez. 20:12-26). Not to serve him by employing his day according to his mind and will, is to show that we do not love him (Jer. 17:21-27; Amos 8:5).

From the ***Eternal Sabbath*** we learn that,

Christ has procured for us a rest and a land greater than that which Joshua entered (Heb. 4: 1-11). The very essence of the Sabbath is rest in God, and now, on the Christian Sabbath (Heb. 4:9), we celebrate the complete fulfilment of our redemption in Christ and the gift of eternal life. We contemplate that Sabbath keeping (that is special seasons of restful delight) will be a feature of the New Jerusalem, our eternal home (Ez. 46:1-6).

¹ Robert Cox, *The Literature of the Sabbath*, Vol. 1, p.116

² *Ibid.*, p.117

³ For the meaning and etymology of *Sabbath* (meaning rest or cessation) see *The Covenantal Sabbath*, F.N. Lee (1969 LDOS) pp.2,3 and *sabbaton*, meaning the seventh day of the week, see *Dict. Of N.T. Theol.* Vol. 3, p.405ff

⁴ *Answer to More* (1531), Book 1, ch. 25. Parker Soc. p.79ff. Peter Heylin, *The History of the Sabbath* (1635), J.A. Hessey, *Sunday* 1860 (Bampton Lectures) and Willy Rordorf, *Der Sonntag* (1962) (Eng..edn. 1968) follow the 'ceremonial only' position. The latter work has, according to Roger T. Beckwith and Wilfrid Stott, *This is the Day* (M.M.&S. 1978) p.viii ff, become a standard work in the English speaking world as well as the German.

⁵ Converted through the witness of Tyndale, John Frith was a brilliant scholar and linguist. In 1533, as a young man, he was burned at the

stake. For his views on the Sabbath see Cox Vol. 1 p.136 and Vol. 2, p.322

⁶ Lenski, *Revelation* p.57 cf. Hengstenberg. *Revelation* Vol. 1, p.90 'so named because of what the Lord did on it, as a figure and pledge of what he still is going to do on it.'

⁷ David Jackson. MS *The Lord's Day* p.9. Jackson quotes the Didache (14:1) for use of term

⁸ M.M. Knappen, *Tudor Puritanism*, p.444. Also cassette by J.I. Packer, *The Sabbath and Sabbatarianism* J.P. 103:11. Christian Reformed Tapes, 72, High Street, Inverurie, Aberdeenshire

⁹ James Gilfillan, *The Sabbath*, 1982, op. cit., p. 14

¹⁰ J.A. Hessey, *Sunday* 1860 p. 121, cf. Knappen, p.443ff

¹¹ *Luther's Works*, Fortress Press, Vol. 47, p.93

¹² *Works*, Vol. 40, p.98. MS by R.J. Bauckham. *Sabbath and Sunday in the Protestant Tradition*

¹³ *Op. cit.*, J.A. Hessey's *Sunday* (1860) p.222

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Works*, Vol. 40, p.98

¹⁶ Luther on Genesis 2:3, *Works*, Vol. 1, p.79

¹⁷ For Melanchthon's views see Cox, Vol. 1, pp. 129,389

¹⁸ P. Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, (London 1877), Vol. 3, p.69

¹⁹ *Answer to More*, p.97, Hessey, p.265

²⁰ *Institutes*, Book 2, ch.8

²¹ *Ibid.*, ch. 8, sect. 32,33,34

²² *Genesis*, p.106ff., Banner ed

²³ *Sermon on Deuteronomy* 5. For further citations see article by A.A. Hodge. *Banner of Truth*, issue 183, p.21

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- ²⁴ *The decades of Henry Bullinger*, Parker, Decade 2:4, p.259
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.262
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.262-266
- ²⁷ *Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism*, Eerdmans 1956, p.557ff
- ²⁸ R.J. Bauckham, p.508 H. Zanchius, *Opera Theologica*, Geneva, Girolamo 1613, IV Col. 650
- ²⁹ Hessey, p.232
- ³⁰ James Gilfillan, *The Sabbath*, 1862 pp.93-117
- ³¹ P. Schaff, Vol. 1, p.417
- ³² J.I. Packer cassette (see notes) cf. Neal, *History of the Puritans*, Vol. 1, p.560
- ³³ *Ibid.*
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*
- ³⁵ Neal, *History of the Puritans*, Vol. 1, p.256
- ³⁶ Knappen, p.442
- ³⁷ Richard L. Greaves, *The Origin of English Sabbatarian Thought*, Sixteenth Century Journal XII. No. 3(1981)
- ³⁸ Patrick Collinson, *The Beginnings of English Sabatarianism* (1964)
This was an article which appeared in the American periodical 'Studies in Church History,' Vol. 1, pp.207-221
- ³⁹ Bishop Lancelot Andrewes, *The Moral Law Expounded*, 1642
- ⁴⁰ Knappen, p.450
- ⁴¹ Bauckham, p.512
- ⁴² Neal, Vol. 1, p.367
- ⁴³ Bownde, p.132
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 113

⁴⁵ He must have had some success because copies are now very rare, there being one 1595 ed. in the British Museum and one in the Bodleian.

⁴⁶ Neal, Vol. 2, pp.200,282,571,666

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.571

⁴⁸ Dod and Cleaver, *The Ten Commandments*, p. 143

⁴⁹ Perkins, *Works*, p. 105

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 109

⁵¹ *Puritan Sermons*, 1659-1689, in six volumes. Vol. 2, p.41 (1981 edn. published by Richard Owen Roberts, Wheaton, Ill. 60187)

Formerly called *Morning Exercises* published by Nichols in 1844

⁵² *Commentary on Ezekiel*, 1650, p.497

⁵³ Cox, Vol. 1, pp.152,425 and 163,444

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, pp.173,458

⁵⁵ *Works*. Vol. 6, p.232ff

⁵⁶ *Banner of Truth*, (1976) p.99

⁵⁷ *A Faith to Confess*. The 1689 Confession. Rewritten in modern English, Carey Publications, Third edn. 1979, p.391

⁵⁸ Williston Walker, *Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism* 1969, p.391

⁵⁹ *The Confession of Faith*, Free Presbyterian Publications, 160, Pitt Street, Glasgow C2.

⁶⁰ Cawdrey and Palmer, *Sabbatum Redivivum*, Vol. 1, p.17ff

⁶¹ Thomas Brooks, *Works*, Vol. 6, p.288ff

⁶² *Ibid.*, p,106ff

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.287

⁶⁴ John Wells, *The Practical Sabbatarian*, 1668, pp.26-28

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.563

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.241

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.267

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.320

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.634

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.684ff

⁷¹ John Owen, *Hebrews*, Vol. 2, p.438ff. Owen's 195 page treatise on the name, original, nature, use and continuance of a day of sacred rest appears in his 7 volumes on Hebrews. A modern reprint of the 19th century edition was published in America in 1969. According to Cox Vol. 2, p.23, Owen stands in the front rank of those who have advocated the divine authority and moral nature of the Sabbath day

⁷² Cox, Vol. 2, p.33

⁷³ J.I. Packer. Cassette

⁷⁴ *op. cit.*, Bauckham p.541

⁷⁵ For typical example see George Swinnock, Vol. 1, p.222ff

⁷⁶ J.I. Packer. Cassette

⁷⁷ R. Demaus, *William Tyndale*, 1886, pp.80,92,103,171,174,323

⁷⁸ For Baxter's views see Cox, Vol. 2, p.28ff

⁷⁹ John Bunyan, *Works*, George Offor, 1856, Vol. 2, p.358ff. Bunyan stood his Lord's Day, which he calls 'the true Christian Sabbath', wholly on the legs of the New Testament.

⁸⁰ R.L. Dabney, *Systematic Theology*, 1878, Zondervan 1980, p.373

⁸¹ The most detailed exposition on record is by John Brown of Wamphray, 1769 pages, in 2 volumes, published in 1676. See Cox, Vol. 2, p.448

⁸² Cawdrey and Palmer. Their work shows sustained penetration and definition.

⁸³ An example of this is found in the magazine *Baptist Reformation Review*, Vol. 10 No. 3, p.30. In a review of *The Christian Sunday* by Roger Beckwith and Wilfred Stott, Baker, 1981, the reviewer lists nine points of difficulty, followed by the reviewer's anti-Sabbath position firmly stated, which is no review, but an opinion.

⁸⁴ Greaves, p. 19

⁸⁵ J.I. Packer, *Puritanism as a Movement of Revival*, The Evangelical Quarterly, Vol. 52, No. 1

⁸⁶ Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology*, Eerdmans, 1948, Banner of Truth, 1975, p. 11ff

⁸⁷ E.F. Kevan, *The Grace of Law, A study in Puritan Theology*, Baker, 1976

⁸⁸ Bownde, pp.312

⁸⁹ Cawdrey and Palmer, Vol. 1, p.17ff, Vol. 2, p.2ff

⁹⁰ Douglas J Moo, *Jesus' Ethical Use of the Old Testament*. Tyndale Study Group Paper, 1981, p. 11. Moo, of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois, quotes a monograph by Banks, *Jesus and the Law in the Synoptic Tradition*. Banks argues for this position which is accepted by John P. Meier in his work, *Law and History in Matthew's Gospel*, Biblical Institute Press, 1976, p.87-88

⁹¹ I have not been able to locate this in Barth's writings. His discussion of the Sabbath is found in his *Church Dogmatics, The Doctrine of Creation*, Vol. 3, pp.50-72. It is eloquent and positive, but does not contribute materially to our discussion.

⁹² B.B. Warfield, *Selected Shorter Writings*, Vol. 1. Edited by John E. Meeter, Presbyterian and Reformed, 1970, pp.308-324

⁹³ *Collected Writings*. Vol. 1. Banner of Truth, 1976, p.193ff

⁹⁴ James Bannerman, *The Church of Christ*, 1869, Banner of Truth, 1960, Vol. 1, p.397ff

⁹⁵ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, p.216

⁹⁶ G. Kittel, *Theol. Dict, of the N.T.*, Vol. 4, p. 1037. 'There is not what establishes the relation to Yahweh, but prohibited what destroys it.'

⁹⁷ Thomas Shepherd defended the New England Puritans from criticism against hyper-scrupulous strictness regarding the Sabbath. Cox, Vol. 1, p.250ff

⁹⁸ *The Church of Christ*, Vol. 1, p.145ff

⁹⁹ *Hebrews*, Vol. 2, p.342ff

¹⁰⁰ Greg. L. Bahnsen, *Theonomy*, Craig Press, 1977, p.229

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, op. cit., p.394ff

¹⁰² Patrick Fairbairn, *The Typology of Scripture*, Zondervan. Op. cit.. Vol. 2, p.108 ff

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ F.N. Lee, *The Covenantal Sabbath*, LDOS, 1969

¹⁰⁵ P.M. Misselbrook, MS, *The Sabbath*, p. 19

¹⁰⁶ William Twisse. *Of the morality of the fourth commandment, as still in force to bind Christians.* (1641) 246 pages. This was a reply to Doctor Prideaux and indirectly to Peter Heylin. On p. 114 he deals with the Gal. 4, Rom. 14, and Col. 2 passages. A contemporary short, but scholarly treatment, of these passages is by Nigel de Lacey MS. p.279. For Rom. 14:5 (which J.I. Packer thinks is the most crucial for the three above-mentioned references), see C.E.S. Cranfield in the *ICC Commentary on Romans* (Vol. 2, p.705). Cranfield outlines views and opts for the interpretation that Paul is referring to 'special days of the O.T. ceremonial law'. Prof. Murray (*Romans* Vol. 2, p. 179), expounds convincingly that the Rom. 14:5 reference is to the ceremonial holy days of the Levitical institution (see appendix to Vol. 2 above, pp.257-9). For the authority of the Church to reject ecclesiastical holidays see James Bannerman, *The Church of Christ*, Vol. 1, p.413ff where the Gal. and Col. passages are used.

¹⁰⁷ Thomas Shepherd, *The Doctrine of the Sabbath*, (London 1655) 320 pp

¹⁰⁸ *Works*, Vol. 2, p.93ff (Banner of Truth, 1974)

¹⁰⁹ Haldane's treatise was included in volume 3 of his *Romans* commentary published in five volumes by Jay Green, USA, in 1955.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.21

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p.391

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p.402

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.216

¹¹⁵ Samuele Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, The Pontifical Gregorian University Press, Rome, 1977, p.278ff. This book should be read with caution and calls for a capable answer.

¹¹⁶ Prof. A.B. Bruce, *Hebrews*, 1899

¹¹⁷ Richard Baxter, *Christian Directory*, Part 1, ch. 4, cited in Cox Vol. 2, p.33

¹¹⁸ *Hebrews*, Vol. 4, p.336 cf. Vol. 2, p.421

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p.403ff

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 4, p.330

¹²² Baxter, *The Saint's Everlasting Rest*, London 1866, p.23ff

¹²³ John Gerstner, *Jonathan Edwards on Heaven and Hell*, Baker, 1980, p.23ff

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p.263. The Puritans often used long titles because their books did not have elaborate coloured dust jackets with 'blurbs', so they tended to include their 'blurbs' in their titles. Owen's title reads, 'Exercitations concerning the name, original, nature, use, and continuance of a day of sacred rest, wherein the original of the Sabbath from the foundation of the world, the morality of fourth commandment, with a change of the seventh day are inquired into, together with an assertion of the divine institution of the Lord's Day, and practical directions for its due observance.'

¹²⁵ *Works*. Vol. 1, p.260

¹²⁶ Herman Hoeksema, *The Triple Knowledge, An exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism*, Kregel, 1972, Vol. 3, p.249ff

¹²⁷ Greenhill, Ezekiel, p.810