

THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH—LORD'S DAY CONTROVERSY
A Pastoral Pamphlet Written to Surface the Problem and to Stimulate a Biblical
Solution to a Doctrinal Controversy among Reformed Baptists

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PREFACE

This pamphlet on the "Christian Sabbath-Lord's Day" issue has been written in a pastoral manner to stimulate a biblical solution to a doctrinal controversy that currently exists among Reformed Baptists. The author believes reconciliation is possible between those who differ within the Reformed Baptist movement, but only by their first agreeing upon a biblical method of interpretation developed from a study of the New Testament use of the Old while keeping in mind the God-centered covenantal settings of both the Old and New Covenants with their Christ-centered emphasis. He also believes that there needs to be an in-depth look at church history and study of historical theology with a special emphasis placed upon the theological lineage of the believers-church concept of the Swiss Brethren and the early English and New England Baptists. The accomplishment of this task will take some time, for the issue is much broader than the "Christian Sabbath," relating to one's method of interpreting the Scriptures and the nature of the Church of God for which He purchased with His own blood.

Having written the pamphlet the author realizes that many have called themselves "Reformed Baptists" in the past because of their belief in "the doctrines of grace," not because of the "Reformed Faith" doctrine of the church, namely, belief in infant baptism and a non-confessing church membership by those who are "outwardly" in "the covenant of grace." But when the doctrine of salvation and the church is combined, the two terms, "Reformed" and "Baptist" are neither biblically nor historically compatible. Therefore, it may be better to make the distinction of "Reformed Baptists" and "Sovereign Grace Baptists." In the interim it is the prayerful desire of the writer that a biblical solution will eventually be attained. May the spirit of Colossians 3:12-17 and II Timothy 2:24-25 apply in bringing about this reconciliation. And may the following words of John Newton's hymn be an exhortation to all:

Zeal is that pure and heavenly flame
the fire of love supplies;
While that which often bares the name
Is self in a disguise.
True zeal is merciful and mild,
Can pity and forbear:
The false is headstrong, fierce and wild,
And breathes revenge and war.
While zeal for truth the Christian warms,
He knows the worth of peace;
But self contends for names and forms,
Its party to increase.

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**QUESTION: CAN THE LORD'S DAY BE BIBLICALLY OBSERVED WITHOUT
AFFIRMING THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK AS THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH**
(Affirmative)

Gary D. Long

The following is an affirmative answer to the above question written as a letter-enclosure in response to certain Reformed Baptist brethren who are aggressively and polemically defending the essence of the Westminster-Puritan view of the Christian Sabbath against the falsely charged "antinomian" and "sophistical" error¹ of other Reformed or Sovereign Grace Baptists² (of whom the writer is one) who believe that the Lord's Day can and ought to be biblically observed³ without equating the theology of the Lord's Day with that of the "Christian Sabbath"—the latter theology (in the writer's judgment) being based upon the argument of silence and an inconsistent hermeneutical system of covenant theology that logically and historically lead to infant baptism and a church-state union (especially when fanned by the fires of the Theonomy movement⁴ among Reformed Paedobaptists) which deny that the local church is to be comprised only of confessing believers in our Lord Jesus Christ, those professing to be members of the body of Christ, His Church, which God purchased with His own blood.

¹"Antinomian" literally describes one who is "against law," and in this context, is attributed to those who are charged with the error of being "against God's law"; "sophistical," as used here, describes those who are charged with using clever but unsound reasoning tactics designed to deceive others from the truth and to lead them into the error of antinomianism.

²The false charge from certain Reformed Baptists of "antinomianism" and "sophistry" was ignited in part from a message delivered at the Sixth Annual Grace Reformed Fellowship Weekend Doctrinal Conference in Salado, Texas on October 6, 1979 by John Reisinger entitled "The Grace of God and the Role of the Cross in the Fulfillment of the Law of God." This Conference was organized under the doctrinal oversight of this writer and a total of 10 messages were delivered by eight Sovereign Grace Baptist pastors on the theme: "The Grace of God and the Glory of the Cross of Christ."

³A second message delivered at the above conference which has caused no small stir among the same certain Reformed Baptists was the one delivered on Lord's Day morning, October 7, 1979 by Steven P. Carpenter entitled "The Grace of God and the Role of the Cross in the Lord's Day." This message set forth a strong biblical basis why the Westminster-Puritan concept of the "Christian Sabbath" was wrong and, therefore, should be distinguished from the Christian's observance of the "Lord's Day."

⁴Theonomy is a word derived from the two Greek words for "God" and "law." The Theonomy movement (in many ways a theological stepchild of Rousas J. Rushdoony and the Chalcedon movement) especially through the writings of Greg L. Bahnsen, asserts that the whole law of God including the "Older Testament commandments" are binding upon the Christian as a pattern of sanctification. See Bahnsen's book entitled, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics* (Nutley, NJ, The Craig Press, 1979). Theonomy seems to this writer to be a historical and logical return to the teachings on the law of God by many of the continental Reformers and the Westminster Presbyterian divines in England. Theonomy's concept of the role of God's law in sanctification and the life of the church is far removed from the Baptist theology set forth in this pamphlet.

I. THE COMPLEXITY OF THE DOCTRINAL CONTROVERSY AMONG REFORMED BAPTISTS The Underlying Issue: Hermeneutics

The underlying issue behind the theological differences that historically and currently exists among those who hold to the doctrines of grace—whether they be Reformed or Baptist, whether they be covenant or biblical theologians,⁵ whether they be paedobaptist or baptist⁶—reduces to the hermeneutical or interpretive method used to interpret the Bible.

With special reference to the New Testament (NT) Christian, the hermeneutical method that I believe to be most biblical denies the validity of arguing from silence as a means of setting forth biblical truth. By arguing from silence I especially mean that method of affirming truth based upon a system of theological deduction which does not *wholly* derive its *covenantal* authority from the NT; that is, from the promises, precepts and principles taught in the Christ-centered New Covenant Scriptures. The typical response to what I am saying about arguing from silence is to say, for example, that the word "Trinity" is nowhere found in the Scripture, not even in the New Testament; yet it is a biblical concept. So, it is said that just because infant baptism, for example, is not taught in the NT does not mean that it ought not to be binding upon the NT Church, for (as its advocates say) it is the NT counterpart to Old Testament (OT) circumcision carried over by the "one covenant of grace concept." And so the opposing response continues.

I answer that covenantally binding authority upon the Christian can be properly deduced if there is biblical warrant from the NT to do so. But **deduction with biblical warrant is one thing; deduction from the "one covenant of grace" when the NT is silent another.** Continuing the example of the term "Trinity," it is not difficult to prove that it has NT warrant by observing the different characteristics or perfections attributed to each of the three Godhead members—each one having absolute attributes true only of God. So the teaching that God is One yet consisting of three persons is easily established from the NT. But to say that infant baptism (to continue that example) is covenantally binding upon the NT Church is to argue from NT silence: there just is no NT basis for doing so. Therefore, **to build an OT theological**

⁵By the terms "covenant theologian" and "biblical theologian" I do not mean that covenant theologians are theological but not biblical or that biblical theologians are biblical but not theological. This is a gross oversimplification, for there is much that is biblical among both and, no doubt, there is much that needs to be reexamined under the searchlight of Scripture among both. But what I mean by using these two terms is the **emphasis of the approach or method used** by each. Covenant theologians rely more heavily upon a systematic approach to understanding the theological teachings of the Bible, whereas biblical theologians rely more heavily upon drawing a theological understanding from a study of the progress of God's program through the ages and thus from the differing standpoints of the writers of the individual books of the Bible. Hence, the covenant theologian tends to be more deductive in his approach while the biblical theologian tends to be more inductive. I am not here necessarily saying one approach is better than that of the other. A better approach probably is a combination of both, and this is what most would no doubt claim to be their own method. Nonetheless, a covenant approach or a biblical approach will be in the foreground of the teachings and writings of most theologians. The crux of which approach is better, regardless of which or what approach is used, reduces to which one is most true to the whole of the sacred text. And this will and does differ with and among different theologians and within and without both theological systems.

⁶The term "paedobaptist," as used herein, refers to one who not only baptizes believers but who believes in and practices infant baptism in the Reformed tradition; the term "Baptist" refers to one who believes in and practices believer's or confessor's baptism only.

scaffolding for infant baptism by deductive theological reasoning without NT warrant is to bind the New Covenant believer by an OT interpretation of the NT, and, in turn, is a reversal of the very hermeneutic which the NT itself establishes.

Now, what I am saying about the hermeneutical method which I and a number of sovereign grace baptists hold does not for a moment deny that the OT Scriptures are the Word of God and that they are most profitable for the New Covenant believer (II Tim. 3:16-17). Rather it affirms that the OT as a legal covenant died when Christ died, for He fulfilled its covenantal requirements and instituted a New Covenant having new commandments and better promises. Therefore, the requirements of the Old Covenant do not and can no longer have any binding **covenantal** authority upon the New Covenant Christian. Only if the promises, precepts and principles are restated or taught as principles in the New Covenant are they binding on the New Covenant community. Why? Because the Old [or first] Covenant has been fulfilled and done away by Christ "the mediator of a better [New or second] covenant which was established upon better promises" (Heb. 8:6). Now that which has been fulfilled and done away does not and cannot continue as binding authority for it has no continuing covenantal existence. This does not mean that within the Old Covenant there is no continuing moral principle or historical example which continues today to be applicable, even with covenantal authority, where warranted by NT exegesis; for example, where NT reference to OT teaching occurs either directly or indirectly— and the NT is filled with such. But **the authority which binds the NT believer in all things**, including such NT use of the OT, **comes** not from the law of God under the Old Covenant as mediated through Moses, but **from the law of God under the New Covenant as mediated through "the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus"** (Heb. 3:1). This is expressly taught in I Corinthians 9; II Corinthians 3; Galatians 3-4 and numerous places in the Book of Hebrews. In short, *the Christian is under the New Covenant administration of the law of Christ, not under the Old Covenant administration of the law of Moses.*

The Focusing Issue: "The Christian Sabbath"

The "Christian Sabbath" teaching in the Westminster-Puritan tradition is what most clearly illustrates this difference within the Reformed or Sovereign Grace Baptist movement. In my opinion the exegetical and hermeneutical basis for affirming the "Christian Sabbath" is the same in principle as that used to establish infant baptism and tithing in the NT; that is, employing the argument of silence from a system of covenantal theology that stresses the unifying principle of "a one covenant of grace concept" to the detriment of the progress of God's special revelation in the redemptive history recorded in the Old and New Testaments. The Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF) and the London Baptist and Philadelphia Confessions of Faith succinctly set forth the confessional concept of the fourth commandment of the decalogue and the theology of the "Christian Sabbath" view, namely:

As it is of the law of nature that, in general, a due proportion of time be set apart for the worship of God; so, in His word, by a positive, *moral*, and *perpetual* commandment, *binding all men in all ages*, He hath particularly *appointed one day in seven for a sabbath*, to be kept holy unto him: which, from the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, was the last day of the week; and, from the resurrection of Christ, was changed into the first day of the week, which in

Scripture is called the Lord's Day, and is to be continued to the end of the world as *the Christian Sabbath*. (Para. VII, Chap. XXI, WCF; italics mine)

The Semantical Issue—Practically Equating the Ten Commandments with the "Law" of God in General and the "Moral Law" in Particular

I have no personal doubts that the majority of the pulpit declaring, letter writing, tape sending, and telephone calling that is transpiring within that portion of the Reformed Baptist movement which holds to the essence of the Westminster-Puritan concept of the "Christian Sabbath" is occurring on a different wavelength of understanding of terms from a practical standpoint (for all admit that the word "law" has a much broader use in the Scriptures than the "Ten Commandments").

The denial by some sovereign grace baptists (like this writer) that the fourth commandment is "a positive, moral, and perpetual commandment, binding all men in all ages" requiring them to worship God one day in seven is understandably disturbing to those Reformed Baptists who hold to the "Christian Sabbath" and, in practice, equate it with the "Lord's Day" and the "Moral Law of God." If I (or anyone else—especially a sovereign grace baptist) say the fourth commandment is not morally binding upon the New Covenant Christian, it is automatically but incorrectly understood that I am rejecting the perpetually binding nature of "God's moral law." And, in their thinking, this means that I am without law, thus "antinomian." Consequently, the defense of my understanding of the Scriptures and those who agree with me on this matter, reveals—our theological opponents say—either our ignorance or error or both and, if not, our sophistry, especially, in the expounding of the "law and the gospel." What a pity: neither side *knowingly* affirms, teaches or practices "antinomianism" (or for that matter, its opposite, "legalism"). Both sides affirm and teach "that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully" (I Tim. 1:8), even though those who do not hold to the theology of the "Christian Sabbath" are often accused of denying that the law is good even if used lawfully.

So the difference then, among Reformed Baptists reduces, first and in part, to the **description** of "the moral law." I view it as best described not in the ten commandments (for the fourth commandment itself is not **wholly** moral—the concept that man should worship God is moral), but in Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18, the two great commandments (see Matt. 22:37-40) have been viewed as inherently moral and binding by nature upon man since the creation of Adam and Eve and continue binding upon all mankind in all ages. But the WCF states that the moral law is summarily comprehended in the ten commandments.⁷ This I deny, in

⁷No Reformed Baptist that I know has any difficulty in agreeing that the term "moral law" is a theological term used to express God's standard of righteousness for mankind—an inherent and unchangeable law in man by nature (Rom. 2:14-15). But then comes the difference. Some of those who hold to the "Christian Sabbath" view, which is in essence that of the Westminster-Puritan tradition, even go so far as to say that **the ten commandments are "the only biblical summary of moral obligation"—"the pure moral law"** (see Walter J. Chantry's forthcoming book published by Banner of Truth which, according to the manuscript version, is entitled *God's Righteous Kingdom*). Chantry does not deny the morality of the law of nature (Rom. 2:14-15) or of the first and second great commandments (Matt. 22:36-40), but he boldly asserts that the ten commandments are the **only summary** (meaning only written summary; he may only mean the best written summary) of God's moral law. That he can biblically prove that the fourth commandment given in its covenantal setting is wholly moral and binding upon all men in all ages is denied by this writer and other Reformed Baptists of like conviction. In a recent taped

part, not because there is no moral law in the ten commandments, for indeed they are predominantly moral, but because at least the seventh-day observance of the fourth commandment and penalty attached to it for profaning that day ceased to be **covenantally** binding with the cross and resurrection of Christ (and this is admitted by most "Christian Sabbatarians").

There is not one word in the New Covenant Scriptures requiring the Church to keep the fourth commandment of the decalogue. Now this could not be if the ten commandments were totally moral, for what is truly moral is perpetually binding upon all men in all ages. But if a portion of the fourth of the ten commandments can be said to be non-moral; that is, ceremonial, then why not a portion of another commandment, or another commandment itself, or, indeed, all the commandments? I say that I deny, in part, that the moral law is summarily comprehended in the ten commandments because for the nation of Israel the ten commandments were morally, as well as ceremonially⁸ binding by covenantal agreement, but only for so long as the Sinai

message on Exodus 20:3-20, Chantry attempts to support the essence of the Puritan position on the "Christian Sabbath" while at the same time admitting that the Puritans sometime overstressed it by failing to distinguish between the moral law of God as expressed in the law of Moses and in the law of Christ. The ambivalent effect of this Puritan over-emphasis is seen in a modern author who writes in the Puritan tradition: Ernest Kevan on the first page of his introductory chapter to his book, **The Moral Law, says that "the Law of Moses is none other than the Law of Christ."** In my understanding of the Scriptures, this statement by Kevan and Chantry's position that the ten commandments are **the only summary of moral obligation—"the pure moral law"**—are overstatements, to say the least.

⁸In the same taped message mentioned above on Exodus 20, Chantry uniquely attempts to deny that the fourth commandment as expressed in Exodus 20:8 is ceremonially tied to the seventh day, for that verse literally says, "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy" not "remember the seventh day to keep it holy." His reasoning goes like this: "The Lord blessed not the seventh day, but the sabbath day and hallowed it" [vs. 11]. He then adds, "Having read the commandment [meaning vs. 8], I ask you, what is there in this ten commandment version of the sabbath commandment that is ceremonial?" A moment later in the same tape, Chantry states: "the idea of the seventh day is *not all that prominent* in the fourth commandment itself" [meaning vs. 8), implying that somehow the seventh day may be, after all, tied to the sabbath day. Then he adds, "It is quite *possible* to read the fourth commandment with *very little notice* of which day God had in mind, with uncertainty as to which day He meant, but with a clear understanding of the duty that one day in seven be devoted to Him. Certainly this seventh-day idea is by no means the *central* feature of the fourth commandment" [italics mine]. He then proceeds to theologially reprove other Reformed Baptists for their "antinomian" view of the ten commandments which are "the only summary of moral obligation—the pure moral law." Now, to Chantry's credit he sees, at least in part, the inconsistency in the traditional Westminster-Puritan view of the "Christian Sabbath," namely, that of saying, on the one hand, that it contains both moral and ceremonial elements and, on the other hand, that the whole ten commandments are the summary of the moral law of God. He rightly sees that if a part of the ten commandments is ceremonial, then the Decalogue as a whole cannot be totally moral. He understands that if the ten commandments are purely moral and binding upon all men in all ages, they can have no ceremonial aspect. The arbitrary or "ceremonial" appendages to the fourth commandment, including, the seventh-day aspect and the penalty affixed thereto for violating God's commandment on that day, must be stripped out somehow, for they are clearly no longer binding under the New Covenant. So Chantry, in departing from the Westminster-Puritan tradition (while at the same time trying to hold on to the essence of it), makes an attempt to explain away the seventh-day relationship of the sabbath commandment based upon an abstract, literal interpretation of the wording of one verse, Exodus 20:8.

Now, I submit to the reader that this is an amazing bit of exposition! The divine commentary on verse 8 follows in verses 9-11, where the sacred text expressly states to the delivered Israelites that **"the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God"** (vs. 10; see Deut. 5:12-15, especially vs. 14). Again, in Exodus 31, the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: "Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest. . . . Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath . . . [as] a sign between me and [thee] forever" (vss. 15-17). Is or is not the seventh day the sabbath of rest commanded by God in the ten commandments? Is it possible to read the fourth commandment with very little notice of which day God had in mind? I assert to the reader that if the seventh day being the

covenant existed: it ceased by being fulfilled with the bringing in of the New Covenant at Calvary. So a right understanding of the relationship of the ten commandments to the NT believer comes from a biblical understanding of progressive revelation as it relates to the biblical covenants, especially in the doing away with the Old Covenant and the instituting of the New Covenant. More on this later. The difference among Reformed Baptists reduces, second, to the following issue that now must be mentioned in the debate over the "Christian Sabbath."

The Comprehension Issue: You Do Not Understand the Westminster Confession and the Puritans; therefore, You Cannot Understand the Scriptures

I and those who are in agreement with me are often told by our paedobaptist friends that we do not understand infant baptism because we do not understand "the organic nature of the covenant" as taught by many covenant theologians. Likewise, we are often told either directly or indirectly by our Reformed Baptist "Christian Sabbatarian"⁹ friends that we do not understand

sabbath of rest is not the central feature of the fourth commandment, it is certainly one of the central features. Verses 9-11 of Exodus 20 are also a part of the fourth commandment, are they not? Perhaps a better solution to understanding the nature of the fourth commandment is to see the covenantal setting in which the ten commandments were given, and not make them covenantally binding upon anyone except those who were bound by that covenant.

Is it not better to view the fourth commandment, the sign of the Old Covenant made through Moses with national Israel at Sinai, as fulfilled by the New Covenant made through Christ as spiritual Israel at Calvary and, hence, done away by the bringing in of a better covenant? Certainly, and if understood in this light the Sabbath will not be viewed eisegetically as pure moral law (Chantry) or moral law with ceremonial appendages (WCF-Puritan), but it will be viewed contextually and exegetically, first most, as **covenant law**. As covenant law it **may and does incorporate both moral principle and ceremonial shadow, but the manner of observing the moral principle is tied to the covenant in force and its requirements**. The law of the New Covenant, the law of Christ, restates nine of the ten commandments—only the fourth being excepted. So the "moral law" included in the ten commandments is not abrogated by the New Covenant, but is made binding upon the NT believer by a better covenant than the first covenant. And **the worship principle which is included in the fourth commandment is moral**, having been innate in man from the beginning, and is forever binding regardless of which covenant is in force. Therefore, **the worship principle binds all men in all ages, but its manner and frequency of observance or "ceremonial practice" is administered differently in the progress of redemptive history by covenant law**. The law of nature, then, apart from the covenant made at Sinai teaches every man that he ought to worship God, but not **necessarily** on the seventh day as a sabbath of rest or even on a one-day-in seven cycle. **Old Covenant law made seventh-day Sabbath observance binding upon national Israel by ceremonial practice; New Covenant law makes first day of the week worship binding upon spiritual Israel by Apostolic practice**.

In summary, the Sabbath commandment viewed as covenant law—and indeed it is, being the sign of the Old Covenant—does not detract from it containing the moral principle that man is to worship God, which is inherent by nature. But viewed as covenant law it does rule out making the commandment—taken as a whole and as the sign of the Old Covenant—binding upon the conscience of the New Covenant believer. Is this not true? Chantry's noble but vain attempt to solve the "Christian Sabbath-Lord's Day" controversy is so new and novel that I cannot personally see how it could be seriously viewed as a historical defense of the Westminster-Puritan view, much less an exegetical apologetic for the teaching of holy Scripture on the fourth commandment. Therefore, the remainder of this pamphlet will deal with the essence of the traditional Westminster-Puritan view as presently held by some other reformed or Sovereign Grace Baptists who are wavering on this issue, probably due, in part, to the good influence in other areas that Chantry's ministry (and those closely aligned with him) has had upon them. So, back to the issues and toward a biblical reconciliation.

⁹By "Christian Sabbatarian" or "Sabbatarianism" I do not mean seventh-day Sabbath worshipers, rather I especially mean those Westminster-Puritan men who say that the OT Sabbath day was changed to Sunday while still claiming that the ten commandments are, for all practical purposes, "the moral law" of God. And they say this in spite of the fact that they claim the "seventh-day" and the "penalty" God affixed to its profaning are *not* based upon

the "Sabbath" or "the law and the gospel" because we do not understand the WCF and the Puritans. The fallacy of this type of reasoning has often been exposed in the history of the Christian Church. It was partially exposed in the 16th century by the Reformers when dealing with the papacy. It was more fully exposed by the Baptist brethren (Anabaptists¹⁰) in Switzerland in the 16th century when dealing with the Reformers. And it was exposed in America by the New England Baptists when dealing with the Theonomic Puritan Congregationalists.

Now, saying this does not mean that I, or those who are of like mind, throw out the Reformers and the Puritans. By no means! We are in full agreement with the vast majority of their exegetical teaching and personal piety and admire them in the Lord and no doubt, in many ways, fall short of them. We have read them, continue to read them, and love them, but are we blindly bound to them and their exegesis? No! We agree with them where they exegete and interpret the Holy Scriptures without arguing from silence and **illogically** from a system of covenantal theology. (The arguments for infant baptism and the "Christian Sabbath" are flawed logically even if the "covenant of grace" is a *partially* valid conception.) But where they employ faulty hermeneutical methods, we reject. We are never absolutely *dependent* upon them for our understanding the Scriptures. We are indebted to them as fellow-members of the body of Christ, but by the same Holy Spirit that reveals biblical truth to every child of God, we can and are divinely obligated to search the Scriptures. And we can do this with the Spirit's enablement without going through the WCF or the Puritans or Reformed Baptists who are Sabbatarian.

This whole difference between those Reformed Baptists brought to focus by the "Christian Sabbath" issue reminds me of what we have all faced with Arminian friends when we came to the "doctrines of grace." They would say: "If what you are saying is true about unconditional election and limited atonement, then what is the use: God is a god of fatalism and man is a robot. Don't you know that John 3:16 says that God loves everybody, etc.?" Now here is the analogy: Certain present-day Reformed Baptist "Christian Sabbatarians" who, for all practical purposes, equate the moral law with the ten commandments, say to me and others that "rejection of the ten commandments, especially the fourth commandment, as perpetually binding, moral law makes one an antinomian. Don't you know what Exodus 20:8-11 says?" **POINT:** In John 16 the disciples could not understand, from the human standpoint, what our Lord meant by the term "a little while," because of personal grief and sorrow and a false view of prophecy due to tradition. From a divine standpoint, they could not understand because the Holy Spirit had not been poured out upon them as promised in order, among other things, to bring to remembrance the things that our Lord had taught them. That which happened to the disciples in the upper room, by application, can and does happen—I am convinced—to every Christian to varying degree. **The only solution is to go to the Scriptures without unbiblical traditional**

moral law but upon ceremonial law given by special revelation within history. All the ten commandments are moral on the one hand, but all are not moral on the other hand. What an amazing contradiction by men who are in almost all other areas so biblically orthodox! This contradiction is illustrated further by their claiming that the Sabbath is "moral law" and then saying that it can be violated in cases of "necessity." By definition, no "necessity" for the violation of "moral law" can exist!

¹⁰The nickname "Anabaptist" means "rebaptism" and was scornfully charged upon the Swiss Brethren by their opponents. But they were not rebaptizers. They believed in one Christian water baptism; that is, believers baptism alone. They were Anti-paedobaptist, not Anabaptist, for infant baptism to them was not a biblical baptism at all. Unjustly, this term has caricatured them since the days of the Reformation by both friend and foe.

preconceptions and personal prejudices. And this is what I will try to do as I set forth two major reasons why the "Christian Sabbath" view of the WCF, most Puritans, and certain Reformed Baptists today is not biblical.

II. THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH THEOLOGY BIBLICALLY REFUTED

It seems to this writer that there are two major flaws in the Westminster-Puritan concept of the "Christian Sabbath that require answering." One answer is to biblically prove that the Sabbath—the fourth command of the ten commandments—was not given to Adam by God at creation by a positive moral command. Hence, it was not and is not a "creation ordinance" as it is directly asserted or inconsistently taught by those who hold to the "Christian Sabbath" view. A second answer is to prove that the NT has fulfilled and, therefore, done away with the OT Sabbath commandment and, hence, the covenantal basis for the "Christian Sabbath" view. If either of these two can be established, the "Christian Sabbath" concept must give way to a **Lord's Day** view that is based upon biblical exegesis having its **covenantal authority in the NT not the OT.**

The Sabbath—not a Creation Ordinance

Most all who hold to the "Christian Sabbath" assert that the ten commandments are a summary of the moral law of God. Now, God's moral law—that law inherent by nature viewed as an aspect of the image of God in man (namely, that stated in Matt. 22:36-40)—is admitted by most all to be universally binding upon all men in all ages. So, if it can be established that God did not give the Sabbath commandment to Adam in Eden before the fall (not to mention whether "a one-day-in-seven worship cycle principle" is inherent in mankind by nature), then the affirmation that God has appointed one day in seven for a holy sabbath as "a positive, moral, and perpetual commandment, binding all men in all ages" is biblically refuted. The following reasons are listed in proof that the "Sabbath," which is divinely identified with "the seventh day of the week" (not just any day of the week based upon a one-day-in-seven principle), is not a creation ordinance. Let it be emphasized that if the seventh-day Sabbath codified in the ten commandments is changed to the first day of the week as a "Christian Sabbath" there is, strictly speaking, no longer a fourth commandment, regardless of whether the specific day of the week set aside for worship is viewed as moral or ceremonial.

1. The Bible Does Not Teach That Adam Received a Positive Commandment from God to Observe the Seventh-day Sabbath, Much Less That He Knew by Nature to Observe One Day in Seven as a Sabbath.

a. If Adam had been given a positive command by God at creation to observe the Sabbath (or even if he had known by nature that he was to rest and worship God in a special way one day out of every seven), he would have been morally bound to keep it before the seventh day was even created, much less sanctified by God as a day of rest. Since Adam was created on the sixth day he would have by positive command or nature observed a Sabbath day of rest on Friday, seven days after his creation, not on Saturday, the seventh day.

b. If Adam received a positive command from God to observe the Sabbath, even a day of rest once every seven days, regardless of which day it fell on, then where do the Scriptures say that he received such a command? The Scriptures are absolutely silent to this effect. Adam is commanded to refrain from eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:17), and he is told to "be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (Gen. 1:28), but he is never told in Scripture to "remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." In this regard, it should be observed that Genesis 2:2 does not say Adam rested on the seventh day as a sabbath unto the Lord, but it says that God ended His work of creation and that "He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made." The word "Sabbath" just does not occur here; rather the root word from which it is derived—a word meaning to "cease" or "rest." The Greek translation of the Hebrew OT, the Septuagint (LXX), makes this distinction quite clear (see Gen. 2:2 and Exod. 16:23 in the LXX).

2. The Bible Does Not Teach That Anyone between Adam and Moses Received a Positive Command from God to Observe the Seventh-day Sabbath. If any of the patriarchs between Adam and Moses received a command from God to observe a sabbath rest; that is, a seventh-day rest, the Scriptures are absolutely silent on the matter. Genesis 26:5 says that Abraham obeyed God's voice, and kept His charge, His commandments, His statutes, and His laws, but the Scripture nowhere says that Abraham or any other patriarch in this era ever observed a seventh-day sabbath or that they were guilty of the sin of breaking such a sabbath. On the other hand, no sooner was the sabbath commandment given to the children of Israel in the wilderness than they were guilty of violating it (Exod. 16:22-30). That Abraham and the other patriarchs rested and worshiped God is denied by none, but it is denied by this writer and others of like faith in the history of the Church that they rested and worshiped God on the seventh day of the week as a holy Sabbath unto the Lord. Why? Because the Scriptures are silent to this effect. The question raised by some concerning Exodus 20:8, 11 and the reference to Genesis 2:2 is not a problem when rightly understood in the context of redemptive history (see below). If the Sabbath were a creation ordinance given by a positive command of God, why is not there at least one account of the patriarchs observing it? Could it have been forgotten because of sin as those who hold to the Sabbath being a "creation ordinance" say? Could the death penalty for its violation have been forgotten (assuming that the Sabbath commandment indeed was a creation ordinance) and other religious customs and ordinances not forgotten, for example, altar worship, sacrifices, and circumcision? Could it be that Moses, before the Exodus event, could have been so unfaithful to such "a creation ordinance" when the Scriptures speaking of his faith say that he "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" (Heb. 11:24-25)?

I find it absolutely amazing that some would say that such a central Old Covenant commandment as the Sabbath was a creation ordinance known to man from the beginning, yet forgotten because of sin by Adam and all the patriarchs up to and including Moses until Exodus 16. When Moses neglected to circumcise his son in Exodus 4:24-26, the Lord "sought to kill him." Why did not the Lord remind Moses to keep the Sabbath like He did when he forgot to circumcise his son if he, indeed, had forgotten to observe the Sabbath as claimed by some Christian Sabbatharians? How was it that Moses suddenly remembered to keep the Sabbath commandment after having lived over half of his life? Was it natural for him to remember it? Or

did he find a positive commandment written down in the patriarchal archives miraculously preserved through the Genesis flood? Or did he commence to observe the seventh day as a holy sabbath unto the Lord for the first time only after God had revealed it to Him by special revelation later in redemptive history, long after the creation account recorded in Genesis? The Scriptures affirm the latter, namely, during the time of the Exodus-Sinai event as historically recounted in Nehemiah 9:13-14 and Ezekiel 20:10-12. These passages expressly state that it was in the wilderness and at Sinai that God made known to the house of Israel His holy Sabbath. These texts do not say that God restored the Sabbath, but that God then gave and made known the Sabbath to the nation of Israel.

3. The First Mention of a Sabbath Occurs in Exodus 16 Following the Giving of the Manna not in Genesis 2 Following the Creation of Adam. The first occurrence of the word "Sabbath," almost an exact transliteration of the Hebrew word "shabbath," is in Exodus 16:23, the seventh day after the descent of the manna in the wilderness of Sinai. The Lord told Moses that He would "rain bread from heaven" for him and the people, and that the people should gather it every day for six days, gathering a double portion on the sixth (16:4-5). But when the manna first appeared on the ground, the children of Israel did not know what it was (16:15). Moses had to tell them what the Lord had just previously told him. Moses had to explain the meaning of gathering a double portion on the sixth day, because the next day was to be "the holy sabbath unto the Lord" (16:23). The extra day's portion was to be eaten on the seventh day, the day of rest of the holy sabbath. On that day they were commanded to eat the extra portion for that "day is a sabbath unto the Lord" (16:25). Now what happened to those people who went out to gather manna on the seventh day. Did they die? No. The Lord rebuked them through Moses (16:28). And as a result of the rebuke the people saw that the Lord had given them the sabbath as a day of rest so they rested on the seventh day (16:29-30). Not until the covenant with the nation of Israel was ratified at Sinai with blood (see Exod. 23:3-8) a month later (see Exod. 16:1; 19:1) with the Sabbath being made the sign of the covenant (Exod. 31:12-17; see paragraph 6 below) were the violators to be put to death for defiling the Sabbath (see Exod. 35:2; Num. 15:32-36). So, the Scriptures teach that the Sabbath was not known until the wilderness experience of Exodus 16 and given both as a part and a sign of the covenant until Sinai (Exodus 20 and following). And the Scriptures teach that the death penalty affixed to violation of the Sabbath commandment did not take effect until the covenant made at Sinai was formally ratified with blood. Then the covenant was binding and remained binding until it was done away through the ratification of the New Covenant by the blood of Christ of which the Lord's table is an ordinance of remembrance (I Cor. 11:23-26).

4. The Second Mention of a Sabbath Occurs in Exodus 20 at the Verbal Giving of the Ten Commandments (The Decalogue). In Exodus 20:8 the Lord through Moses commands the children of Israel to "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy." What sabbath day? The sabbath day first mentioned one month prior in Exodus 16:23-25 (see Deut. 5:12, 15), not a creation sabbath. **QUESTION:** Does not verse 11 of Exodus 20 refer to Genesis 2:2 as the reason for why God "blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it"? **ANSWER:** Yes it does, but the verse does not refer to Genesis 2:2 as the reason for God's instituting the observance of the seventh day as the sabbath of rest by the children of Israel. How could it be the reason for instituting its observance when Deuteronomy 5:15 states that the Exodus event was the reason. Moses there recounts to all Israel that which the Lord their God made with them in a covenant at

Sinai (Deut. 5:1-2). And in verse 15 the sacred text says to Israel: "Remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day." What is "therefore" there for? Is it not the reason why God instituted the Sabbath with Israel? Certainly it is. But then someone will say, "Why the reference to Genesis 2:2 in Exodus 20:11?" Is not the connecting particle¹¹ translated "wherefore" in Exodus 20:11 (KJV) and "therefore" in Deuteronomy 5:15 (KJV) the same particle? Yes it is. Then I ask: "Do Exodus 20:11 and Deuteronomy 5:15 contradict one another?" Certainly not! Genesis 2:2 serves as the reason for God's blessing and hallowing the sabbath day (Exod. 20:11); the Exodus deliverance serves as the reason why Israel was to remember and keep the seventh day as the sabbath, because in their deliverance the Lord had sanctified them (Exod. 31:13) by bringing them out of Egypt with "a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm" (Deut. 5:15). Because Israel is commanded to keep the seventh day as a sabbath of rest, it naturally serves as basis for how often the fourth commandment is to be observed, namely, on every seventh day of the week.

Before passing on, it should be remembered that Genesis 2 says nothing about man resting, much less about man observing the seventh-day as a holy sabbath. Now, God's creation rest and Israel's Exodus deliverance do not refer to the same time in history. That is self-evident. The only way to biblically explain the relationship of both Genesis 2:2 and Deuteronomy 5:15 to God's blessing of the Sabbath in Exodus 20 is to understand these texts as explained above. Any other way makes the Word of God contradict itself, which is an impossibility. The Sabbath rest of Exodus 20, therefore, pictorially signifies that the Israelites are in covenant with the same God who created the universe in six days and rested from His creative works on seventh day according to the Genesis creation account. Exodus 20:8 therefore becomes or is a positive, covenant commandment first given by God to Israel at Sinai, not to Adam in Eden; and Deuteronomy 5:15 gives the reason for God's instituting the observance of the Sabbath at Sinai, namely, in remembrance of the Exodus.

¹¹The particle "therefore" occurring in both Exodus 20:11 and Deuteronomy 5:15 is important to the interpretative issue at hand. It is made up from two words in the Hebrew text, an adverb meaning "so" and a preposition which governs its meaning, the preposition by itself meaning "upon the ground of" or "on account of." Literally, then, the combined meaning is "so, upon the ground of" or "so, on account of." This Hebrew term is commonly and properly translated "therefore" carrying with it the distinct idea that upon the ground of what has occurred, as stated in the context, that which follows is to be understood as a statement of fact. This form and use of "therefore" occurs regularly in the OT where the origin of a name, or custom, or proverb is assigned (see Gen. 2:24; Deut. 15:11, 15 19:7; 24:18, 22). So, the meaning of the ground or basis of the "therefore" and the meaning of the statement of fact in Exodus 20:11 may be paraphrased like this: On account of God's resting from His creative works on the seventh day of creation, therefore He blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it. And Deuteronomy 5:15 may be paraphrased like this: On account of the sovereign deliverance of the children of Israel from the land of Egypt, therefore, God now commands them to remember it by keeping the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath of the Lord their God. Hence, the particle "therefore" in Exodus 20:11 is tied to a historical fact (an indicative reality), namely, the creative rest of God stated in Genesis 2. In Deuteronomy 5:15 it is also tied to a historical fact (but in this case, an imperative or command), namely, that because of the Exodus deliverance God now commands the children of Israel to remember it by keeping the sabbath day. **POINT:** The ceremonial custom of observing the seventh day as the Sabbath of the Lord had its beginning at Sinai not at creation.

5. The Whole Decalogue Is a Covenant Given Only to Israel.

a. Strictly speaking the decalogue is the covenant given at Sinai itself. **PROOF:** "The Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire [at Sinai] . . . 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. 4:13; see Exod. 34:28; Deut. 9:9, 11, 15; I Kings 8:9, 21; II Chron. 6:11). Further proof can be seen in the name, "the ark of the covenant," given to that holy piece of furniture in which was placed "the two tables of stone, which Moses put there at Horeb, when the Lord made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt" (I Kings 8:9, see vs. 21; Exod. 25:21; Num. 10:33). To this covenant, the ten commandments, were later added other words of the law given to Moses, and the whole was called "the book of the covenant" (Exod. 24:3-7) and the "book of the law" (Deut. 31:24-26). To illustrate, it may be said that the ten commandments were the constitution of the Old Covenant made with Israel at Sinai, and the other laws added to it were the by-laws—all forming "the book of the covenant" (which later probably came to include or refer to the whole of the five books of Moses, see II Kings 14:6; II Chron. 35:12; Ezra 6:18; Josh. 8:31), and it was placed beside "the ark of the covenant of the Lord," Israel's God (Deut. 31:26).

b. The decalogue which is the covenant made at Sinai was made by God only with Israel. **PROOF:** The prologue to the decalogue in Exodus 20:1-2 makes this quite clear: "And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." Deuteronomy 5:1-21 makes it even more vivid, for after "Moses called all Israel" he "said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day." **POINT:** The commandments God made with Israel at Horeb were "His covenant," "even the ten commandments" (Deut. 4:13). Such a covenant had not been made before with their fathers, or with the Gentiles for the "nations" were excluded (Deut. 4:7-8). Therefore, the decalogue, the heart of the Mosaic or Old Covenant, did not exist as a covenant before Sinai, and there it was made exclusively with the nation of Israel. This is not to deny that that which came to be "moral" later codified in the ten commandments did exist as "moral law" from the creation, for this is what the Scriptures teach as their being the outworking of the two great commandments (see Rom. 2:14-15; Matt. 22:37-40). Whether the Sabbath commandment is moral law is the issue. But there was no need for the Sabbath commandment, the fourth commandment and sign of the covenant, before that which it signified came into existence, and this did not occur until the wilderness-Sinai event. **POINT:** The basis for the Sabbath commandment is covenantal law, not moral law. To say that the fourth commandment was a creation ordinance "binding all men in all ages" is to argue from silence (as previously demonstrated) and to make deductions without scriptural warrant. Hence, if our system of theological deductions does not accord with the Scriptures, our system must give way to sacred writ! A final point here: It may be legitimately questioned whether the Bible ever refers to the ten commandments by themselves as "the law of the Lord" or "the law of God."¹² Both seventh-day and many Christian Sabbatarians constantly use the two terms, apply-

¹²It is interesting to note that one of the foremost theologians of Reformed theology, John Murray, does not even mention the ten commandments by themselves as one of the meanings for "law" in the NT, yet he cites six meanings. See his article on the "Law" in *The New Bible Dictionary*.

ing them to the decalogue alone. In so doing lies an important part of their misinterpretation on this whole issue of the Christian Sabbath-Lord's Day controversy.

6. The Sign of the Covenant Made at Sinai (the Old Covenant or Mosaic Covenant) was the Seventh-day Sabbath. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a **sign** between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you. Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days may work be done; but in **the seventh is the sabbath of rest**, holy to the Lord: whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. Wherefore **the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath**, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, **for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever:** for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed" (Exod. 31:12-17; see Deut. 5:15; Ezek. 20:12, 20).

Now the sign of the covenant is only as permanent as the covenant which it signifies; that is, it continues only as long as the covenant continues. How long is forever with respect to the covenant made at Sinai? Is it eternally abiding, or was its terms met and fulfilled by Christ and hence done away by His bringing in of a new and better covenant (Heb. 8:6-7, see II Cor. 3; Gal. 3:17-21)? Did not the New Covenant make the first covenant old? Was not the fourth commandment a part of the first covenant? Certainly! Did not the New Covenant cause the Old Covenant to vanish away (Heb. 8:13)? Certainly! Then why hang on to the sign (even with the day of ceremony, the seventh-day of the week, and the judicial death penalty stripped out¹³) when that which the sign signified has been done away in Christ (II Cor. 3:14)? Why hang on to the Christian Sabbath when it is not the Sabbath at all, for the seventh day is the Sabbath? Strip out the seventh-day of the week and the death penalty for its violation and anything else that "doesn't fit" and what do you have? A "Christian" Sabbath? Hardly. Do away with the Sabbath by nailing it to the cross of the New Covenant, and what do you have? The Lord's Day. Now, dear reader, perhaps with some the issue over the "Christian Sabbath" is merely a matter of semantics, but with most it is much more. And it clearly involves one's understanding of the relationship of the ten commandments given at Sinai with the Old Covenant in its entirety, and its complete fulfillment and replacement by a better covenant, the New Covenant. Until this is accomplished one can never consistently understand the relationship of the Mosaic law and its Sabbath sign to the law of Christ and its binding authority over the New Covenant believer. The **authority** of the New Covenant (which, see below, restates nine of the ten commandments—the Sabbath excluded being typologically fulfilled, Heb. 4:9-10) comes from its mediator and King,

¹³That the law of God under the Old Covenant contains some precepts that refer to moral duties, other to judicial or civil, and others to ceremonial, is not the point. The point is: do the Scriptures make a separate distinction between these aspects of the law? No, they do not. The Scriptures nowhere speak of one law of God as moral and another law as ceremonial and another as civil. In Leviticus 19, for example, the moral, civil and ceremonial aspects of the law of God are all discussed together, often within the same verse. In the NT neither the Lord nor His Apostles ever distinguish between the moral, the ceremonial, and the civil law, when they speak of the establishment or abolition of the law of God given under the Old Covenant (see Matt. 5:17-18; Gal. 4:21-31). "The law" when used in this sense includes the "whole law" (Gal. 5:3). It is not separated or divided into two or three laws: one moral, one ceremonial, and one civil: all are contained in "the law" of God as one whole law.

Christ Jesus our Lord, as covenantally expressed in the NT Scriptures, not from the decalogue mediated through Moses to Israel at Sinai as covenantally expressed in the OT Scriptures.

7. **Summary.** Let the reader ponder the above six reasons in light of the holy Scriptures and see if the Sabbath was a creation ordinance given as "a positive, moral, and perpetual commandment, binding all men in all ages," or if, indeed, it was first given at Sinai as the sign of the Old Covenant made with Israel and not binding all men in all ages. And let the reader ponder whether the ten commandments are the best summary of the "moral law" of God (certain Reformed Baptists today even say, "only summary"), or if, indeed, it is best summarized in the first and second commandments of Matthew 22:36-40—two commandments that were not explicitly contained in the decalogue. Then, let the reader conclude from the Scriptures whether the NT believer can by the enablement of the indwelling Spirit obey the law of God under the New Covenant through being in-lawed to Christ (I Cor. 9:20-21) without keeping the "Christian Sabbath."

The Sabbath Fulfilled by the New Covenant

That the fourth commandment of the decalogue, the seventh day sabbath, was fulfilled through the cross-work of Christ should be clear to all but those who divide the law of the OT by separating the moral from the ceremonial law and carry over "a one-day-in-seven worship and rest cycle" and many other "do's and don'ts" as **obligations binding** upon the conscience of the NT believer. One line of reasoning why many "Christian Sabbatarians" say that the moral aspects of the Sabbath are binding upon "all men in all ages" is because they rightly see the other nine commandments **outside their covenantal setting** as essentially, if not wholly, moral. But then comes their interpretive error: They know that as early as Genesis 4 the commandment that "thou shall not murder" is clearly implied by the context in Cain's murder of Abel. Therefore, they reason that all the ten commandments including the Sabbath commandment were given at creation (either inherently through nature or by positive command), because at least one of the ten--the sixth--is involved as early as Genesis 4. And so by "obvious inference" the fourth commandment must have also been given at creation. **POINT:** Their case for the Sabbath being a "creation ordinance" is based upon "an obvious inference" which, in effect, ignores the covenantal setting of its giving at Sinai and that, many say (including this writer), is anything but obvious from the sacred text. In fact, the Bible is totally silent in the case of a positive moral commandment respecting the Sabbath being given at creation.

This type of reasoning is as baseless, in the writer's judgment, as saying that John 3:16 obviously teaches that Christ died for the sins of everybody without exception because God loves everybody with the same saving love. Dear reader, if we as Christians do not truly search the Scriptures as the Bereans to see whether that which is reported to be "obvious and true" is, indeed, obviously and truly based upon contextual exegesis, then we will be led off onto a "primrose path" of theological interpretation that does not feed "the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood." Now, coming back to the Sabbath command: the Bible nowhere teaches that it was given as a creation ordinance "binding all men in all ages." To say that it was or is, is based upon wrong theological deductions having no OT warrant. And neither does it have any NT warrant. Why? Because the NT, by direct statement, teaches that the Sabbath commandment was blotted out; that is, fulfilled. And so the NT is totally silent

regarding making the Sabbath commandment binding upon the conscience of the New Covenant Christian. But how could the NT be wholly silent upon making the fourth commandment binding if, indeed, it is a moral commandment of God? That the fourth commandment can and does serve as an Old Covenant type for corporately worshipping the Lord one day in seven under the New Covenant is true. But the binding covenantal authority does not come from that which has covenantally vanished away; rather it comes from the covenant now in force—the New Covenant. So what do the NT Scriptures teach concerning the fourth commandment?

1. **The NT Teaches That the Sabbath Commandment Was Fulfilled.** The Apostle Paul says that God has blotted out¹⁴ "the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, **nauling it to his cross**. . . . Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ" (Col. 2:14-17). **POINT: Paul here says that the "sabbath days" were among the ordinances and shadows that were nailed to the cross of Christ.** It is to no avail that Sabbatarians attempt to explain away this direct statement by saying that the plural "sabbath days" refers only to the monthly and yearly ceremonial sabbaths, not the seventh-day sabbath. Why? Because the Scriptures nowhere make this distinction, for the singular and plural are used interchangeably both in the OT and NT for the seventh-day sabbath (e.g., see Exod. 31:13; Ezek. 20:12; Matt. 12:5). In fact the proof for this is so strong that anyone not biased will have to readily admit it if he adheres to the biblical text. The same plural form of the word is used in Colossians 2:16 that is used in the Greek OT translation (LXX) of Exodus 20:8, "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy." **POINT:** Paul uses the exact same word that was used in the decalogue. In fact the only Greek word ever used in the Bible for the sabbath (either in its singular or plural form) is the word used here. At times in the OT, the word for sabbath is used (e.g., of the annual day of atonement, Lev. 16:31; 23:32) referring to ceremonial sabbaths, but these became a part of "the book of the law" (see above on the whole decalogue being given only to Israel) and were added to the ten commandments. And "the book of the law" was covenantally binding upon the nation of Israel as the law of God, not two different laws of God—one moral and one ceremonial.

In the NT the Greek word for sabbath (sabbaton) in both its singular and plural forms occurs some 68 times (66 times in the gospels and Acts and twice by Paul) and always referring to the seventh-day sabbath, **unless Colossians 2:16 be the one exception**. **POINT:** The Colossians 2 passage teaches that the yearly holydays, monthly new moon or feast days, and the weekly sabbath day (including any and all other ceremonial sabbaths) were shadows of things to come, finding their **New Covenant fulfillment in Christ and His body, the Church**. They were all "**blotted out**" **being nailed to the cross**, because such Jewish ordinances had served their sabbath-signified, covenantal purpose. Therefore, to be made subject to them now would be "against" and "contrary" to the New Covenant administration and liberty that the Christian has as

¹⁴This Greek word translated "blotted out" in the KJV is an interesting word that literally means to "wipe out." It is used in Acts 3:19 where Peter referring to Isa. 43:25 exhorts the men of Israel to repent "and be converted, that your sins may be **blotted** out." And it is used by the Apostle John in Revelation 7:17 and 21:4 to refer to the eternal state where God shall **wipe away** all tears from the eyes of the bride of Christ. **POINT:** As certain as the believer's sins have been blotted out by God through the blood of Christ and as certain as the eternal bliss of the believer excludes sorrow, so **the seventh-day Sabbath and other OT ordinances and shadows have been blotted out, being nailed to the cross of Christ.**

a spiritual member of the body of Christ. The apostolic principle of Romans 14:5 now applies in regard to the NT believer with regard to a worshipful esteeming of one day above another or of every day alike. (A summary of some significant NT principles governing the observance of the "Lord's Day" is listed in Part III below.)

2. The NT Is Totally Silent in Restating the Fourth Commandment and Requiring It as a Christian Duty. It may be legitimately questioned whether there is any Christian duty binding upon the New Covenant believer that is clearly laid down only in the OT. Yet this is what our "Christian Sabbatarian" Reformed Baptist friends want us to grant, unless, as one says, we "**prefer to demolish the *only* biblical summary of moral obligation, the Ten Commandments.**" The duty for the Christian to keep the Sabbath is not once mentioned in the NT. But the duty for the Christian to keep the other nine commandments is stated several times in the NT. Why nine and not ten of the commandments? Why all but the fourth commandment? Why, if the Sabbath commandment is moral like the other nine? For example, the first commandment is covered in Acts 14:15; the second, in I John 5:21; the third, in James 5:12; the fourth; nowhere; the fifth in Eph. 6:1; the sixth, in Rom. 13:9; the seventh, in I Cor. 6:9, 10; the eighth, in Eph. 4:28; the ninth, in Col. 3:9; and the tenth, in Eph. 5:3. Now, I know of no one who asserts that the fourth commandment is restated either directly or indirectly in the NT as binding upon the NT believer; yet all admit that the others are restated and binding. Why nine and not ten? Why? In answer and relevant to the "Christian Sabbath—Lord's Day Issue, one Baptist writer said the following years ago in an excellent book against Seventh Day Adventism (whether his tabulation be exact in every case is irrelevant, because all admit that the fourth commandment is not restated).

The duty of men to worship the Lord God only as taught in the first commandment is found no less than fifty times in the New Testament. Idolatry, which is the second commandment, is condemned twelve times. Profanity, the third commandment, is plainly condemned four times. Honor thy father and mother, which is the fifth commandment, is taught six times at least. Murder, which is the sixth prohibition, is found condemned six times. Adultery, the seventh, is condemned twelve times. Theft the eighth, six times. False witness, the ninth, four times. Covetousness, the tenth, nine times. Now, with these facts before us, how can there be any danger that the law of God will be made void? Another remarkable fact is that the fourth commandment is not repeated in the New Testament, that no Christian was ever commanded to observe it, that no Christian was ever condemned for Sabbath breaking [much less "Christian Sabbath" breaking]. Time and again, all through the New Testament long lists of sins embracing every possible shade of wickedness are given, but a disregard of the seventh day is never once included. Thus: Mark 7:21, 22, thirteen sins; Rom. 1:29-31, nineteen sins; Gal. 5:19-21, seventeen sins; II Tim. 3:1-4, eighteen sins, etc. How is this? . . . Strange to say, the duty to keep the seventh day is not once mentioned in the whole New Testament. There is not one single command from either Christ or any of His apostles to keep that day. It is not once said that it is wrong to work on the seventh day, or that God will bless any one for observing it. There is no promise for keeping it, no threatening for not keeping it. No one is ever reprov'd for working on the seventh day, nor approved for observing it. Is all this silence merely accidental? So Sabbatarians have to believe; but the supposition is absurd. Evidently it was left out on purpose, the same as the pentecost, passover, new moon, sacrifices and the like.¹⁵

¹⁵D. M. Canright, *Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced*, 14th ed., Nashville, Gospel Advocate Company, 1914 (reprinted in 1978), pp. 266-67.

3. **Summary.** The NT states that the Sabbath was blotted out. The NT is totally silent with regard to restating the fourth commandment and making it binding upon the believer as a Christian duty. These are the two NT reasons why I (and others of like conviction) believe that the fourth commandment is not morally binding upon the New Covenant Christian. And the fact that the fourth commandment having been typologically fulfilled through faith in Christ (Heb. 4:9-10) is a major reason why I reject the ten commandments of the Old Covenant as the summary of "moral law" binding all men in all ages. That nine commandments are **restated** in the New Covenant Scriptures make them morally binding upon the NT believer, because he is under the "law of Christ." **But the law of Christ is covenantally set forth in the New Covenant, not the Old (I Cor. 9:20-21).**

ILLUSTRATION: This writer has lived long periods of his life in two states of the union, first in Missouri, second in Texas. For sake of illustration only, let the state of Missouri in which I was born and raised and under its laws as a citizen represent the Old Covenant. And let the state of Texas to where I later moved and became a citizen represent the New Covenant. Now, when I was living in Missouri, I was under the state law of Missouri (the law of Moses which includes the ten commandments). But when I moved to Texas, I was no longer under Missouri state law. Now that I am in Texas, I am under the law of the state of Texas (the law of Christ which includes and restates nine of the ten commandments). Now, let's assume that there is a law in both states against a certain crime, say, murder, and that the wording of the law is the same in both states. I break that law in Texas: which state law am I guilty of breaking, that of Texas or Missouri? I answer, Texas, because the law of Missouri has no jurisdiction over me, since I now live in Texas and the crime was committed in Texas. Or suppose that there is a law in Missouri's statutes that is not in Texas'. Further suppose that it is a crime in Missouri to break this law, say a "blue law" (the fourth commandment of the, decalogue given as part of the law of Moses), but that this law does not exist in the Texas State statutes, having been blotted out upon the drafting and adoption of its constitution when Texas became a state (by analogy, when the New Covenant was instituted by the cross of Christ). So, I do not keep the "blue law" of Missouri while living in Texas, because Texas saw no need for that law when it adopted its constitution and, therefore, has no such law in its statutes. Am I guilty of breaking the law of Missouri? No, Missouri law no longer has any jurisdiction over me: I am no longer a citizen of that state and I no longer live there. Am I guilty of breaking the law of Texas? No, there is no such law; it was blotted out at the beginning as serving a purpose for the state of Missouri, but having no purpose for Texas. Bringing this analogy to its close, then, am I guilty of breaking the fourth commandment while living under the New Covenant law of Christ? Certainly not. May I personally observe Missouri's "blue law" while living in Texas? Certainly, but do I have the right to impose my observance of it upon the other citizens of the state of Texas? Certainly not. May I personally observe the fourth commandment of the Old Covenant today under the New Covenant? Certainly; that is, I can attempt to do so, for no two Christian Sabbatarian churches today have the same set of specific rules for what may and may not be done on the Lord's Day. If I hold to the "Christian Sabbath," do I have the right to impose my concept of how it is to be observed upon other Christians who are citizens of the kingdom of heaven? Certainly not.

Now, dear reader, *imperfect as this illustration may be*, does it not illustrate by way of application, at least to some extent, what the Apostle Paul was teaching in Colossians 2:14-17 and Romans 14:5? Now if that "blue law" had been a federal law (a moral law of God, like the

other nine commandments, at least the essence of them being a covenantal outgrowth of the two great commandments), then I would have been obligated to obey it regardless of what state I was living in (regardless of whether I was living under the Old or New Covenant). So, the issue reduces to whether the fourth commandment is a moral or ceremonial commandment as a commandment. (The fact that it may contain a moral principle, namely, that one should worship God by setting aside a portion of his time for corporate religious activities is not denied or the issue: the morality implied or typified in the Sabbath commandment stripped of its positive ceremonial or covenantal additions is inherent in the New Covenant Scriptures without making that commandment perpetually binding as a moral commandment, see Matt. 22:36-40; Heb. 10:24-25.) If it were moral like the other nine commandments, why must it be trimmed from all its ceremonial appendages and still called the fourth commandment and part of the ten commandments which are said to be the "moral law" of God "summarily comprehended"? The only answer that I can give for saying such is that in a zeal for holy living (which is admirable) the "law" of God is, practically speaking, equated with the "ten commandments." And, this to me is a fundamental error with certain of our Reformed Baptist friends. My type of reasoning is assailed by some as "antinomian," and it is accused sarcastically of being, "a noble effort to 'liberate' followers of Christ from the 'bondage' of having to spend a day per week in worshipping their Lord." Or again, of wielding "a meat-cleaver hermeneutic" to the Bible. At others times it may be accused only of going to "great pains to demonstrate that sabbath observance is merely ceremonial," which does not do "as great violence to the Word of God as the first." Would to our sovereign God that these type of accusations would cease through a Berean spirit and of that spirit exhorted by the Apostle Paul in II Timothy 2:24-25. Both elements in the Reformed Baptist movement meditate upon Psalm 119 from the Scriptures and rejoice in God's law. Both read the Puritan classic on Psalm 119 by Charles Bridges and are spiritually edified. May our different interpretations be reconciled by the head of the Church through His holy Word.

III. THE LORD'S DAY BIBLICALLY OBSERVED

Having set forth above what I believe concerning the biblical reasons why the "Christian Sabbath" should be distinguished from "the Lord's Day," it is now time to state that this Lord's Day theology gives no biblical warrant or license to ignore assembling together on the first day of the week to worship God and to render special reverence to Him by our activities and conduct.

The New Covenant Basis for Observing the Lord's Day

If there were no other reason than God declaring that He has "raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee" (Acts 13:33) and the Apostolic practice of meeting on the first day of the week, these two would provide impeccable grounds for assembling together on the first day of the week,¹⁶ the Lord's Day, to

¹⁶The expression translated "the first day of the week" in Acts 20:7 and I Corinthians 16:2 literally reads "one of the Sabbath(s), and idiomatically means the day which is number one in the sequence of days after the seventh day Sabbath. It always refers idiomatically to the first day after the Sabbath and, therefore, is translated in our versions as "the first day of the week." **POINT:** This is why the first day of the week, namely, the Lord's Day, should not be called "the Sabbath," even "the Christian Sabbath." It should be noted that not only is this expression

worship God and to stimulate one to love and good works. And I am in personal agreement with the following statement made by Dean Alford in his commentary on Acts 20:7 concerning the meeting of the church at Troas on the first day of the week. He writes:

We have here an intimation of the continuance of the practice, which seems to have begun immediately after the Resurrection (see John xx. 26), of assembling on the first day of the week for religious purposes. . . . Perhaps the greatest proof of all, that this day was thus observed, may be found in the early (see I Cor. xvi. 2) and at length general prevalence, *in the Gentile world*, of the *Jewish seven-day period as a division of time*,—which was entirely foreign to Gentile habits. It can only have been introduced as following on the practice of especial honour paid to this day. But we find in the Christian Scriptures no trace of any *sabbatical* observance of this or any day: nay, in Rom. xiv. 5. . . . Paul shews the untenableness of any such view under the Christian dispensation. The idea of the *transference of the Jewish sabbath from the seventh day to the first* was an invention of later times.¹⁷ [Italics his]

A Confessional Way of Commemorating the Lord's Day and Manner of Assembling for Religious Purposes

In the church constitution of Sovereign Grace Church of San Antonio, a sovereign grace baptist church which I serve and function as a pastor, we use an **annotated** modern English version of the London Baptist Confession of 1689 as a secondary authority subordinate to the Bible to help guide us in the confirmation of what we believe. There are three annotations that pertain to the "Christian Sabbath-Lord's Day" issue and the closely related issue of the law and the gospel. The annotations read:

1. Annotation to Chapter 19: The Law of God. "The continuing significance of the law of God as expressed in this chapter and elsewhere in the Confession is to be understood as expressed in the following statements: The law of God under the Old Covenant no longer has an unrestricted and undifferentiated validity for the Church of Christ under the New Covenant. In a certain sense the Church can be qualified as 'without the law' (I Cor. 9:20- 21), but the law of God is not thereby abrogated (Rom. 3:31), for the continuing significance of the law of God under the Old Covenant (including the ten commandments) can be qualified as 'being bound to the law of Christ' (see the Sermon on the Mount; I Cor. 9:20-21; II Cor. 3; Gal. 6:2)."

2. Annotations to Chapter 22: Religious Worship, and the Lord's Day.

a. Delete paragraph 7. Add the following: "The Old Testament seventh-day sabbath has been fulfilled in Christ, the Lord of the sabbath. The first day of the week—the Lord's Day—by apostolic practice is now the day of gathering and worship for God's saints under the New Covenant. Add the following Scripture: Mark 2:27-28."

b. Delete paragraph 8. Add the following: "Believers, as joint-heirs with Christ, under the New or Everlasting Covenant, are—by Spirit-wrought conviction—to keep the first

never used in the NT to refer to the Sabbath Day, but neither is it used in the history of the Christian Church to refer to the Sabbath or Christian Sabbath until over one thousand years after the close of the NT canon.

¹⁷Henry Alford, *The Greek New Testament*, 4 vols., rev. ed., Moody Press, 1958, II, 223.

day of the week holy unto the Lord by observing the following four principles. They are to remember that: (1) the first day of the week especially belongs to the Lord; (2) it is to be observed with a Christ-centered faith; (3) they are to regularly assemble with God's people on that day; and, (4) they are to observe that day with joy. Add the following Scripture: Acts 20:7; I Cor. 16:1-2; Rev. 1:10; Heb. 10:25; 12:6; John 15:11."

IV. TOWARD A RECONCILIATION AND FELLOWSHIP BIBLICALLY ENHANCED

More than two centuries ago in America, a notable sovereign grace baptist preacher-evangelist and historian, Isaac Backus (1724-1806), wrote the following in response to a certain Seventh-Day Baptist preacher that had come over from England and was causing a theological controversy among the Baptist churches of New England. What he said has application to the present day controversy among Reformed Baptists, not over seventh-day worship, but the "Christian Sabbath" issue. Backus wrote: "Stephen Mumford came over from London in 1664 [65], and brought the opinion with him, that the whole of the ten commandments, as they were delivered from Mount Sinai, were moral and immutable."¹⁸ In the discussion that followed, Backus adds, in a classic footnote, the following words, which I believe to be especially applicable to stimulating a biblical solution to the controversy among Reformed Baptists dealt with in this pamphlet:

If the following things are considered, it may prevent divisions among Christians upon this article [i.e., changing the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week]. *That God is Lord of all our time is a moral and immutable truth, but the sanctification of a particular day was never known to man without a positive precept. It does not appear that Israel knew anything about the Sabbath of the seventh day, until after they came into the wilderness, when it was said to them, Tomorrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord. . . .* But when Christ came, he said to the Jews, The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath day. Matt. xii. 8. And [so] *the glory of the ministration which was written and engraven in stones, is done away under the New Testament. II Cor. iii. 6-8. But the Lord's day is ever to be regarded. Rev. i. 10.* Though he who does not regard it to the Lord, does not regard it at all. Rom. xiv. 6.¹⁹ [Italics and brackets mine]

A Principle to Follow²⁰

¹⁸Isaac Backus, *A History of New England with Particular Reference to the Denomination of Christians called Baptists*, vol. 2 (Newton, MA: Backus Historical Society, 1871; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1969), p. 500.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 501-502.

²⁰Behind this principle is the teaching of Hebrews 4:9, which reads in the KJV: "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God." The word translated "rest" literally means "a sabbath rest," and is so translated in some versions. This word (sabbatismos) occurs here only in the NT. It is a little different in form from the word for sabbath (sabbaton). Its use in the context of Hebrews 4 refers to a faith-rest, involving both a present and future fulfillment for the New Covenant believer, and being a NT spiritual fulfillment of the seventh-day rest of God in Genesis 2:1-3. **POINT:** As the seventh day rest (Heb. 4:4) of God is made the basis of the command to keep the seventh day as a holy sabbath under the Old Covenant (Exod. 20:8-11), so both serve as a typological reason for the elect's ceasing from his works through a rest of faith in Christ who is our great high priest under the New Covenant (see Heb. 4:2-3, 7-9). It should be noted that the seventh day sabbath is not mentioned in this context, only the

A principle to follow among those of us who are Reformed Baptists is that which Backus commends us to remember, namely: "that God is Lord of all our time is a moral and immutable truth." If this be practiced such appellations as "antinomian," "sophistry," "meat-cleaver hermeneutics," and the like should cease and bow to the authority of Scripture in the spirit of that servant of the Lord which does not strive, but instructs with meekness, gentleness and patience (II Tim. 2:24). Pursuance of this practice will, our Lord willing, result in a mutual agreement upon the biblical hermeneutic involved in a biblical theology of the Lord's Day and its relationship to the NT concept of the Church and to the law and the gospel. If this desired end is not achieved soon, there are only two likely immediate alternatives:

The Alternatives

1. Continue the controversy without bringing all issues and arguments under the searchlight of Scripture. This is not an acceptable alternative and must, therefore, be avoided. Pursuing this alternative will only bring harm to the cause of Christ, for which all responsibly involved in the controversy will stand accountable before our sovereign God.

2. Continue the controversy in a spirit of love for the truth by bringing all issues and arguments under the searchlight of Scripture. Pursuing this alternative could provide a temporary solution until a unified, biblical one can, hopefully, be achieved. The problem presently at hand is this: one side believes that the "Christian Sabbath" hermeneutic will, if consistently carried out, lead to a paedobaptist concept of the Church (both are agreed that this concept of the Church is fundamentally unbiblical). The other side believes that a Lord's Day" hermeneutic without the fourth commandment will lead to "antinomianism" by unlawfully severing the biblical relationship between the law and the gospel (and, again, both are agreed that this is wholly unbiblical). Which is right? The Scriptures and time will tell. Should this alternative be pursued and, humanly speaking, it probably will be, due to the strong theological convictions involved on both sides, perhaps it would be helpful, while the controversy is being biblically resolved, to refer to those who hold to the "Christian Sabbath" theology as "Reformed Baptists" and to those who hold to the "Lord's Day" theology as "Sovereign Grace Baptists." Such a distinction might prove to be a wise interim approach until such time that the issues involved can be finally settled by a Spirit-enabled understanding of the Scripture determined through consistent, biblical exegesis. **Without an agreed upon biblical hermeneutic to start from, a final solution will never be reached.** I am personally of the opinion that a biblical hermeneutic needs to be developed from the study of the NT use of the OT, keeping in mind the God-centered covenantal settings of both the Old and New Covenants with their Christ-centered emphasis (Luke 24:25-27, 44-48; John 5:46; Acts 13:33; Gal. 6:14). In addition, **an in-depth look at church history and a study of historical theology needs to be made with special emphasis placed upon the theological lineage of the believers-church concept of the Swiss Brethren (Anabaptists) and the early English and New England Baptists.** The Swiss Baptists and their writings were, for the most part, squelched due to persecution from the Protestant Reformers, and the writings of many of the other early Baptists were consequently suppressed by

seventh day creative rest of God. We learn from such passages as Colossians 2:14-17 that the Old Covenant Sabbath is a shadow of things to come through Christ, who gives eternal rest as the Lord of the New Covenant.

the resulting dominance of Reformed and Puritan paedobaptist literature. These early Baptists, especially the Swiss Brethren, deserve a hearing from a contextual study of the primary sources which are rapidly becoming available through modern historical research. **The accomplishment of this much needed exegetical-hermeneutical and historical task will take some time** and, with regard to the issue at hand, ought to be the earnest desire and prayerful endeavor of each one involved in what is commonly agreed upon to concern matters of great importance in the furtherance of the gospel of Christ. In the achieving of this, there will be, no doubt, a degree of humbling on every one's part. But the end result, I am convinced, will be to the glory of Christ and His Church. It was with this conviction in mind that I was prompted to write this pastoral pamphlet. May it serve as a contribution to that end.

V. A SELECTED ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY.

The following selected annotated bibliography is designed to help the reader to research the "Christian Sabbath-Lord's Day" issue and, through Spirit-wrought enablement, to discern; the biblical answer. Pastorally, it is designed especially to help the reformed or sovereign grace Baptist reader to answer the question: "What sources can I study to help me discern the biblical answer?"

Biblical References

The first source is always the Bible. The reader is encouraged through the use of a complete analytical concordance (e.g., Strong's, Young's, or Cruden's) to make a study of the context of every passage where "sabbath" occurs, paying special attention to the Hebrew and Greek words and phrases involved behind the English translation. A number of verses or passages are especially relevant to such a study and many have been referred to in this pamphlet. The reader is directed to them and the whole counsel of God contextually interpreted in the setting of God's unfolding plan of salvation under the Old and New Covenants.

Lord's Day Theology References

1. Carpenter, Steven P. "The Grace of God and the Role of the Cross in the Lord's Day." This was a message delivered at the Sixth Annual Grace Reformed Fellowship Weekend Doctrinal Conference in Salado, Texas on October 7, 1979. This message clearly sets forth the issues and succinctly answers them both exegetically and historically and is one of the best brief contemporary treatments of this controversy from a Lord's Day theology perspective.

2. Hessey, James Augustus. *Sunday: Its Origin, History, and Present Obligation*. 4th ed., New York: Pott, Young & Company, 1880. Although this book has been long out of print, it is a scholarly treatment of the subject delivered in a series of messages for the Bampton Lectures at Oxford University in 1860. Hessey clearly distinguishes between the theology of the "Christian Sabbath" and that of the "Lord's Day."

3. Jewett, Paul K. *The Lord's Day: A Theological Guide to the Christian Day of Worship*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971. This work, presently out of

print, is an excellent scholarly work on the subject by a Baptist writer. This book along with his book entitled, *Infant Baptism & the Covenant of Grace* (Eerdmans, 1978), deserve a biblical critique from Reformed Baptist "Christian Sabbatharians" and Reformed Paedobaptists.

4. Morey, Robert A. *Is Sunday the "Christian Sabbath"?* Nashville: Baptist Reformation Review, 1979. This is a pamphlet recently published by Baptist Reformation Review (BRR) that "plows" a lot of ground that needs plowing among those brethren who cannot see the ten commandments except as "pure moral law" binding all men in all ages. This writing by a contemporary author biblically and theologically brings to the foreground many of the major issues involved in the "Christian Sabbath" controversy—issues that have existed in the Church for the last four centuries. There are some areas that need developing or clarifying in this work, but as a whole, it is an excellent work by one who believes that the theology of the Lord's Day is to be biblically distinguished from that of the "Christian Sabbath."

5. Zens, Jon. *Is There a Covenant of Grace? and Crucial Thoughts on "Law" in the New Covenant.* Nashville: Baptist Reformation Review, 1978; "This is my Beloved Son . . . Hear Him: A Study of the Development of Law in the History of Redemption," BRR, Vol. 7, No. 4 (Winter 1978), pp. 15-52. The first two titles are printed in pamphlet form; the last title as an article in BRR. These three writings have done much to stimulate a restudy of the age-old controversy on the "Christian Sabbath" and its relationship to the law of God and the gospel. They are recommended as a timely and pithy approach to the present-day controversy, which have brought strong outcries of protests from certain Reformed Baptists who still hold to the essence of the Westminster-Puritan concept of the "Christian Sabbath." Zens' articles are pioneering issues from a biblical basis that must be faced biblically by those who disagree. It is no solution to counter them by imposing what amounts to a virtual ban upon BRR.

Christian Sabbath Theology References

1. Bolton, Samuel. *The True Bounds of Christian Freedom.* Reprint ed., London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1964. This book by Bolton (1606-54), a Puritan, written in a gracious Christian spirit, sets forth the place of the law in the Christian life. "By the law is meant the moral law comprehended in the Decalogue or ten commandments" (p. 59). He exhorts believers to "learn to walk in the law [meaning the ten commandments] as a rule of sanctification, and yet to live upon Christ and the promises in respect of justification" (pp. 219-20). This work is a classic reprint on the relationship of the Old Covenant ten commandments to the walk of the New Covenant believer viewed from the Puritan, "Christian Sabbath" position.

2. Chantry, Walter, J. *God's Righteous Kingdom: Focusing on the Law's Connections with the Gospel.* London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1980. The manuscript version of this publication was addressed in two footnotes under "The Semantical Issue" to Part I of this pamphlet. This work by Chantry (not published at the time of this writing) along with his eight taped messages on the sabbath commandment, the moral law, and law and gospel (available from "The Trinity Pulpit Library," Box 277, Essex Fells, NJ 07021) make a sincere but somewhat unique attempt to establish that the ten commandments "are the only summary of moral obligation" —"the pure moral law" of God that bind all men in all ages. The forthcoming book and taped messages are a fair representation of one element within the current-day Reformed Baptist movement (referred

to in this pamphlet as "certain Reformed Baptists") which espouses the "Christian Sabbath" so strongly that representatives of this element do not hesitate to refer in their messages to the first day of the week as the "Sabbath."

3. Dabney, Robert L. "The Christian Sabbath: Its Nature, Design and Proper Observance" in his *Discussions: Evangelical and Theological*. 1890 reprint ed., 2 vols., London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1967, I, 496-550. Dabney (1820-90), a southern Presbyterian, was in the opinion of Archibald Alexander "the best teacher of theology in the United States, if not in the world." His teaching on the "Christian Sabbath" is a standard exposition on this subject from the Westminster tradition and is a must reading for those who want to fairly disagree with a godly man mightily used of God in the history of the Church.

4. Kevan, Ernest F. *The Moral Law*. Jenkintown, Pennsylvania: Sovereign Grace Publishers, 1963. This book, currently out of print, is a twentieth century Baptist-Westminster-Puritan exposition on the moral law of God. For Kevan (past Principal of London Bible College, d. 1965) the moral law of God is so summarily identified with the ten commandments that he says: "The Law of Moses is none other than the Law of Christ" (p. 1). And again: "It must be carefully observed that Christ's full obedience to the Law for the justification of sinners does not exempt the believer from obedience to it for ends other than justification" (p. 7). This book is a good example of what the writer of this pamphlet has addressed under the Semantical Issue to Part I.

5. Murray, John. *The Sabbath Institution*. London: The Lord' Day Observance Society, 1973. This is a small pamphlet addressing the fourth commandment from a contemporary Westminster viewpoint by one of the truly great Reformed theologians of the 20th century. This pamphlet and a number of others are published by this society stressing the "Christian Sabbath" position. Included in The Lord's Day Observance Society's publications is Francis Nigel Lee's book entitled *The Covenantal Sabbath*. Lee's work is an epitomized outworking of the Sabbath commandment as a creation ordinance, taking the "Christian Sabbath" view to its logical end in a designed length of 343 pages (7 x 7 x 7 = 343).

Other References

1. Backus, Isaac. *A History of New England with Particular Reference to the Baptists*. Two vols. in one; 1871 reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1969. See the index of this work for his historical account of the commencement of the Seventh Day Baptists in New England and their views considered. Also the reader is directed to a recent reprint entitled, *Isaac Backus on Church, State, and Calvinism: Pamphlets, 1754-1789*, ed. by William G. McLoughlin, Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1968. The second pamphlet in the series that Backus wrote (1756) is named, *A Short Description of the Difference between the Bondwoman and the Free*. In it he identifies the bondwoman as representing all three aspects of God's Old Covenant law (moral, ceremonial and legal or judicial). And in discussing the ceremonial aspect he approvingly quotes Isaac Watts remarks about the old covenant dispensation where Watts says that the Sinai covenant is "a distinct covenant or a covenant and law of works, as a Jewish appendix to the Gospel" (p. 137). Sovereign Grace Baptist beliefs permeate this entire work on the Church, State, and Calvinism.

2. Bunyan, John. *The Whole Works of John Bunyan*. 3 vols., 1875 reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977. Bunyan (1628-88), the author of *Pilgrim's Progress*, writes in Volume II (pp. 362-85 and 387-88) of his works on "Questions About the Nature and Perpetuity of the Seventh-Day Sabbath" and "The law and a Christian." These two areas are especially relevant to the present-day "Christian Sabbath" controversy. Being a contemporary of the Westminster Assembly, his manner of observance of the first day of the week as the "Christian Sabbath" closely resembled that of the Westminster divines, yet he clearly distinguished the morality of the fourth commandment from its covenantal significance as given at Sinai, and asserts that the seventh-day sabbath "was not from paradise, nor from nature, nor from the fathers, but from the wilderness, and from Sinai." Concerning the law and the Christian, and the teaching of Galatians 4, Bunyan writes that the law of Sinai may be the Christian's informer, but he dares "not make it my saviour and judge, nor suffer it to set up its government in my conscience" (p. 388). He then sums up this section on the same page by saying: "The Christian hath now nothing to do with the law, as it thundereth and burneth on Sinai, or as it bindeth the conscience to wrath and the displeasure of God for sin; for from its thus appearing, it is freed by faith in Christ. Yet it is to have regard thereto, and is to count it holy, just and good" [meaning, as the Christian's informer, but not as laying hold on the conscience]. Now, Bunyan's writings are not inspired, but they do reflect that the traditional Westminster-Puritan position as set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF—e.g., that the Sabbath commandment is a creation ordinance) was not without historical and biblical challenge from sovereign grace men like this godly tinker from Bedford. The reader is directed to Bunyan and John Gill (see below) for two sovereign grace Baptists who do not fall wholly into the WCF-Puritan mold on the issue of the "Christian Sabbath" and on the law and the gospel.

3. Gill, John. *Body of Divinity*. 1839 reprint ed., Swengel, Pennsylvania: Reiner Publications, 1965. John Gill (1697-1771) was a particular baptist minister and biblical scholar. In this work on the part dealing with practical divinity he addresses "the Place and Time of Public Worship." The portion respecting the time or day of worship is excellent and every contemporary reformed Baptist ought to study it before judging that a departure from the sabbath commandment as "pure moral law" is "antinomian" and, therefore, heretical.

4. Canright, D. M. *Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced*. 14th ed., 1914 reprint ed., Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1978. Canright (d. 1919) had been a Seventh Day Adventist for twenty eight years before seeing the error of seventh-day Sabbatarianism. He later became a Baptist minister and wrote devastatingly against the errors of Adventism. There are twenty two chapters in the book; the first eight are concerned with controverting the peculiar twists of Seventh Day Advent error. The last fourteen chapters are especially applicable to the current-day "Christian Sabbath-Lord's Day" controversy. This book is still available in reprint form, and the reader is encouraged to obtain a copy for study.

5. Kline, Meredith G. *By Oath Consigned: A Reinterpretation of the Covenant Signs of Circumcision and Baptism* and *The Structure of Biblical Authority*. These two works are published by William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company and are currently in print. Kline is a contemporary Old Testament scholar having taught at Westminster Theological Seminary (Presbyterian) but presently teaching at Gordon Divinity School (Baptist). His exegetical and historical approach to the Scriptures and his biblical contribution to "covenant theology" is

refreshing and certainly uninhibited by tradition, whether it be Paedobaptist or Baptist. These two works make a valuable contribution to challenge the historical and contemporary WCF approach to covenant theology from a "one covenant of grace" concept. His writings are not only valuable to the controversy among Reformed Baptists over the "Christian Sabbath" issue, but also to the larger controversy brewing over "Theonomy," in that the later involves not only Reformed Baptists but all Reformed Paedobaptists. Another work highly recommended as uninhibited by church tradition, yet written by one in the Reformed Paedobaptist family, is Leonard Verduin's *The Reformers and Their Stepchildren*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964.