

# The Sabbath

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*Sabbath, Christian Sabbath, or Lord's Day?*

A Confessional Approach

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# The Sabbath:

Sabbath, Christian Sabbath, or Lord's Day?  
A Confessional Approach

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## Preface



Herein is presented an examination of the doctrine of the Sabbath as it is found in the confessional standards of The Second London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689. This confession has been the standard confession among Reformed Baptist brethren for over 300 years. It is the agreed upon confession for the Reformed Baptist Pastors' Fellowship, the assembly of which on the 29<sup>th</sup> of March, 2007 (as well as several succeeding meetings) is the occasion of this presentation. Before being presented officially to the pastors' fellowship, the contents of this study were presented to the congregation of the Faith Community Baptist Church, of which the author serves as one of the pastors.

This paper seeks to examine our confessional standards, in particular, its doctrine of the Christian Sabbath or Lord's Day in light of Scripture, history, theology and Christian practice. If we are to agree to walk together in Christian love, it must be around the truth of the word of God,

agreeing together upon its meaning and import for the benefit of the church, and uppermost, to the glory of our great God.

We would surprisingly find agreement with our New Covenant Theology brother, Fred Zaspel, when he writes that

It may be an oversimplification to say that disagreements regarding the subject of divine law are all settled on the question of the Sabbath. Then again, (he adds) perhaps in some sense this is not oversimplification at all. It is common knowledge that disputes concerning the subject of divine law eventually and almost inevitably make their way to this subject and often with considerable energy (Zaspel, 211).

We hope and pray that this energy will be well spent for the cause of Christ and for the good of his beloved church. Our prayer is two-fold, first that we might once again, as our brethren in past ages have done, grow to a point for the glory of Christ where we will again taste and see the goodness of God in the precious gift of the Sabbath. Second, we pray that we might come to a point primarily in our hearts, but also in our practice, where the words of Isaiah will ring true within:

"If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath,  
from doing your pleasure on my holy day,  
and call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day  
of the Lord honorable;  
if you honor it, not going your own ways,  
or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly;  
[14] then you shall take delight in the Lord,  
and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth;  
I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father,  
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

Isaiah 58:13-14 (ESV)

I would like to thank my brothers of the Reformed Baptist Pastors' Fellowship for the confidence they have bestowed upon me to lead our study of this precious subject. The past months have moved me much closer to seeing Isaiah's vision fulfilled personally and I believe for my beloved congregation as well. Thanks are also due to them for being patient as we worked out these truths together in our Wednesday evening Bible Study. May the Lord be glorified in what is presented here.

*Soli Deo Gloria,*  
Jason Montgomery  
August 2007

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*A Study on the Sabbath: Sabbath, Christian Sabbath, or Lord's Day?*

# Section I

Introduction



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# Section I

## Introduction



Once there was a great king who built a splendid city. In the middle of the city, the king designed a delightful park which was laid out with ponds, fountains and springs, magnificent trees from all over the world, gorgeous aromatic plants, inviting stretches of lawn, pathways and benches where people and families might walk and sit together, and a spacious amphitheater for public meetings. Weekly the king met with his subjects in the park. His people delighted in the time with him and one another.

One day the king had to go away. In his absence the rulers he left in charge began to let the park run down. Although they still held civic

events at the amphitheater, these rulers had little interest in the park. They did not truly have in mind the king's interests. Soon the park was overrun with weeds, the trees were not pruned, the exotic plants died, and the pools of water stagnated. The park was in ruins.

After a time a new group of rulers came into authority in the city. They were genuinely concerned about the park and began to restore it to its former beauty. They pulled out all the weeds, replanted all the gardens, pruned the trees, repaired the pathways and the benches, and opened the streams so that fresh water again flowed through the park. These rulers, however, were fearful that the park once again would fall into disrepair. In order to protect the park, they made it a memorial to the king, rather like a museum. They continued to hold meetings at the amphitheater, but they put a fence around the park's border and along the pathways so people could look at the beautiful sites in the park, but could not actually use it.

Then one day, quite unexpectedly, the king's son came to the city. One of the first things that he did was to tear down the fence. He exclaimed to the rulers, "Enough of this! This park was built for the people of the city to remember my father and to enjoy, but you have kept them out of the park." So after removing all of the fences, he invited the people to come and meet with him and with one another in the park.

*They continued to hold meetings at the amphitheater, but they put a fence around the park's border and along the pathways so people could look at the beautiful sites in the park, but could not actually use it.*

Because the king and his son are still occupied throughout their great kingdom, they have appointed leaders in the city. Regrettably, of late, these leaders once again have allowed to the park to become unkept and trampled down. Again, weeds overrun it, the trees are not pruned, and the

ponds have become stagnant. Because it has lost much of its charming beauty, people no longer come to it. Admittedly they have kept the amphitheater in good repair and continue public meetings, but increasingly the people are losing interest. The park is so unattractive that they see no need to go there at all.

Recently, developers, seeing the land unused, have begun seeking to put up an amusement park. The Historical Society is opposing them, wanting instead to restore the park and preserve it for the sake of tradition. But there is a third group who wants to restore it to its original purposes. To make matters more confusing, all parties are claiming to act on behalf of the interests of the king and his son. Meanwhile, as you might imagine, the king's subjects are thoroughly confused.

If you have read Joseph Pipa's The Lord's Day, then you probably recognized the story above. When I first read this "allegorization" of the Sabbath it was a breath of fresh air. What insight and delight God can move men to set forth with a pen. It is my hope and prayer that as we study together, as well as prayerfully on our own, that our experience and that of our brethren, will be one of passion for the true interests of the King and His Son. May the worship of Watts become ours as we press on in our delight in the Sabbath of God...

*It is my hope and prayer that as we study together, as well as prayerfully on our own, your own experience and that of your congregation, will be one of passion for the true interests of the King and His Son.*

*Sweet is the work, my God, my King, to praise Thy Name, give thanks and sing,  
To show Thy love by morning light and talk of all Thy truth at night.*

*Sweet is the day of sacred rest, no mortal cares shall seize my breast.  
O may my heart in tune be found, like David's harp of solemn sound!*

*My heart shall triumph in my Lord and bless His works and bless His Word.*

*Thy works of grace, how bright they shine! How deep Thy counsels, how divine!*

*Fools never raise their thoughts so high; like brutes they live, like brutes they die;  
Like grass they flourish, till Thy breath blast them in everlasting death.*

*But I shall share a glorious part, when grace has well refined my heart;  
And fresh supplies of joy are shed, like holy oil, to cheer my head.*

*Sin (my worst enemy before) shall vex my eyes and ears no more;  
My inward foes shall all be slain, nor Satan break my peace again.*

*Then shall I see, and hear, and know all I desired and wished below;  
And every power find sweet employ in that eternal world of joy.*

*And then what triumphs shall I raise to Thy dear Name through endless days,  
For in the realms of joy I'll see Thy face in full felicity.*

Isaac Watts, Hymn from Psalm 92  
"A Psalm for the Lord's Day"

*A Study on the Sabbath: Sabbath, Christian Sabbath, or Lord's Day?*

# Section II

Outline of Confessional Exposition



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# Section II

## Outline of Confessional Exposition



Here we wish to set forth, in detailed form, an expositional outline of the confessional standards of the 1689 from chapter 22: Of Religious Worship of God and the Sabbath Day. Our outline focuses on articles 7 and 8 of the chapter that relate specifically to the Sabbath issue. In particular our main headings will consist of the prescription of the Christian Sabbath lining out the truths contained in article 7 and the practice of the Christian Sabbath as it is delineated in the eighth article. Along the course of outlining the confession, various excursuses (detailed discussions) will be noted. These excursuses will form the bulk of our study as we examine various points of doctrine (exegetically, historically, theologically, and practically) as they fall out naturally from the

confession itself. The outline that will frame our study is as follows:

## I. The Prescription of the Christian Sabbath - 22.7

As it is the law of nature, that in general a proportion of time, by God's appointment, be set apart for the worship of God, so by his Word, in 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 is called the Lord's day: and is to be continued to the end of the world as the Christian Sabbath, the observation of the last day of the week being abolished.

### A. The Origin of Its Prescription

#### 1. General Revelation

- a) Its Character: It stems from the law of nature
- b) Its Content: To set apart a proportion of time for the worship of God
- c) Its Command: It is set forth as God's appointment

#### **Excursus 1:** The Law of Nature

#### 2. Special Revelation

- a) Its Source: The Word of God

b) Its Substance: Positive - Moral - Perpetual Law

c) Its Subjects: All Men

d) Its Sequence: All Ages

e) Its Structure: One Day in Seven

f) Its Submission: Keep Holy

**Excursus 2:** Positive - Moral - Perpetual Law

B. The Timing of Its Prescription

1. From the Beginning

**Excursus 3:** The Ante-Mosaic Sabbath

2. From the Resurrection

**Excursus 4:** The Post-Mosaic Sabbath

**Excursus 5:** Exegetical Evidence

C. The Perpetuation of Its Prescription

II. The Practice of the Christian Sabbath - 22.8

The Sabbath is then kept holy unto the Lord, when men, after a due preparing of their hearts, and ordering their common affairs beforehand, do not only observe an holy rest all day, from their own works, words and thoughts, about their worldly employment and

recreations, but are also taken up the whole time in the public and private exercises of his worship, and in the duties of necessity and mercy.

A. Practice - Manner

B. Practice - Means

1. Preparation and Planning

2. Putting Off and Putting On

a) Worship

1) Public

2) Private

b) Work

c) Witness

With this understanding or framework for our study, we turn our attention now to the first excursus - that focusing on the confessional use of and reference to the law of nature.

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# Section III

The Prescription of the Christian Sabbath



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## Excursus 1

### The Law of Nature



Our examination of the contents of the confession begins regarding what will become known to us as the Sabbath principle, expositing its “prescription” with an examination of its origin. The confession states in 22.7 the following in the opening line:

As it is the law of nature, that in general a proportion of time, by God's appointment, be set apart for the worship of God

This comment in the confession places the origin of the doctrine of

the Sabbath as having its source in what theologians refer to as general revelation. If we were to outline in more detail what the standards state at this point we would find that, regarding the Sabbath's prescription from general revelation, there are three elements we need to note.

First we take note of its character. The confession states that the Sabbath principle originates from or "stems from the law of nature." Thus at its foundation the divine obligation to keep the Sabbath is not rooted in the specific or special revelation of God that he has graciously made known to his people. Rather, it is tied to a more general principle that he has made known to all men.

Second, in regard to its content, the principle of the Sabbath obligates men, in the way of natural law "to set apart a proportion of time for the worship of God." Hence, embedded in the natural constitution of men in every place is the understanding that they must worship God and take time to do so. To neglect the worship of God is to go against truth that God has made clear to every man, in every age, in every place.

Third, the confession takes note of the commanding nature of this law that men find within themselves by the work of God in their creation. "It is," the confession states, "set forth as God's appointment" that men must worship - declare the supreme worth and value of God alone. This worship is by God's appointment, as Sam Waldron notes:

because the only alternative (that men should appoint it) would violate the prerogatives of God in his worship (Waldron, 273).

That may be enough for some, but we are pressed to say more. It becomes clear in this opening portion of the confessional statement on the Sabbath, that the hinge point for our understanding swings on our understanding of what is referred to therein as "the law of nature." The following table provides a list of questions that we will unpack in our quest

for understanding this topic and its relation to the issue of the Sabbath in the Christian life.

- ⌘ What does the confession mean by nature?
- ⌘ Where is the law of nature to be found?
- ⌘ How did the law of nature come to reside where it does?
- ⌘ Does Scripture support the concept of such a law of nature?
- ⌘ What is the content of the law of nature?
- ⌘ Why is there such a law as the law of nature?
- ⌘ How does the law of nature relate to the Sabbath?

We will consider each of these in turn, beginning with the first...

**⌘ What does the confession mean by nature?**

To discover the answer to this we turn to the confession itself in chapter 19 on “The Law of God” sections 1 and 2. Our ears hear this phrasing and we immediately think of “mother nature” or nature as in creation: trees, lakes, mountains, the universe, etc... This is not the confession’s meaning. In article 1 of chapter 19 on The Law of God we read the following:

God gave to Adam a law of universal obedience written in his heart.

And further in article 2 we find:

The same law that was first written in the heart of man continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness after the fall.

Other references to the “law of nature” in the confession can be found in the following sections: 1.6, 10.4, 19.1, 19.2, 19.3, 22.1, 22.3, 22.7, etc. . . . Thus nature, in the confessional sense of the term, refers to human nature. Understanding this nuance of the phrase “the law of nature” provides us much help in answering the second and third questions as well.

**✘ Where is the law of nature to be found?**

The law of nature is to be found written into the moral fabric of man’s constitution as one created in the image of God Himself (See 19.1, 19.2 and 19.3). This law serves, as the confession states, even after the fall, as “a perfect rule of righteousness” for man, indicating that the natural law written on the heart of man (that we will later find is to be equated with the moral content of the Decalogue) is part and parcel of the moral nature of God himself. Wayne Grudem writes

*The law of nature is to be found written into the moral fabric of man’s constitution as one created in the image of God Himself.*

The various moral laws of God are simply different aspects of his perfect moral character, to which He expects us to conform...With a little reflection (which we will do as we move throughout our study) we can see how almost any sin violates some of the principles embodied in each of the Ten Commandments. This is simply a reflection of the fact that God’s laws are a unified whole and reflect the moral purity and perfection of God himself in the integrated oneness of His person (Grudem, 501-502).

*God’s laws are a unified whole and reflect the moral purity and perfection of God himself in the integrated oneness of His person.*

Thus we turn to a third question.

⊗ **How did the law of nature come to reside where it does?**

Being part and parcel of the created constitution of man's being, the law of nature by way of necessity was woven into man by God Himself.

⊗ **Does Scripture support the concept of such a law of nature?**

Simply put, yes. Scripture pictures man created in a state of moral innocency with a constitution and make up that is able to discern right from wrong against standards built into him by God himself. Consider the following texts:

Genesis 1:27-31 (ESV) So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. [28] And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." [29] And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. [30] And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. [31] And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Eccles. 7:29 (ESV) See, this alone I found, that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes.

Romans 2:14-16 (ESV) For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves,

even though they do not have the law. [15] They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them [16] on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

**✘ What is the content of the law of nature?**

To answer this question we come to a fuller exegesis of Romans 2:14-16 where we find a comparison made between what is found written on the hearts of the Gentiles and that which is written in the law for the Jews. The confession itself clearly identifies the law written on the heart of every man with the law of the Decalogue or the ten commandments given by God to the Jews. To see if this is a sound conclusion by the framers of the confession, we turn to the text of Scripture itself. Paul states in Romans 2:14-16 the following:

For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. [15] They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them [16] on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

In consideration of this text, H. M. Riggle, in his work, The Sabbath and the Lord's Day, states that:

The Gentiles did not have the law...Paul directly says so (Rom. 2:14): "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, ... these having not the law, are a law unto themselves." This is too plain to need arguing. The Gentiles did not have the law. The law in letter

as worded in detail on Sinai was never given to them (Riggle, Proposition 8).

Now this is interesting and common to hear from those who see no apparent culpability on the part of the Gentiles for sinning against the law of nature written on the heart. The reader is encouraged to look above and read again the whole of Romans 2:14-16. It is poor exegesis at best, to conclude from the text that the Gentiles do not have the law! True, the text of v.14 states that the Gentiles “have not the law.” However, Paul quickly states that they in fact have the law “written on their hearts” in v.15! It should be noted by the careful reader, that the contents of v.15 have conveniently been left out by Riggle!

*It is poor exegesis at best, to conclude from the text that the Gentiles do not have the law!*

This same error is put forth by Fred Zaspel in New Covenant Theology, a book he co-authored with Tom Wells, in which rather than make the Gentiles accountable to the law written in the heart, he finds them condemned solely on the basis of what they have rejected in creation from Romans 1:18-19. We would agree that

Romans 1:18-19 (ESV) the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. [19] For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.

But further, we state with Paul that men are condemned for neglecting what God has made clear to them, not only without, but also within their very being. Rather than seeing Gentiles without law period, Paul is saying that they do not have the external, codified law of which the Jews were in possession. The argument being made by the confession and which we will seek to support by an examination of the Scripture, is that the Gentiles have the very law of the Jews “in content” - written on their hearts!

This law of nature, possessed by the Gentiles, is essentially the same law possessed in codified form by the Jewish people in the Ten Commandments, written in stone by the very finger of God. The confession states as much in 19.2:

The same law that was first written in the heart of man continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness after the fall, and was delivered by God upon Mount Sinai, in ten commandments, and written in two tables, the four first containing our duty towards God, and the other six, our duty to man.

*This law of nature, possessed by the Gentiles, is essentially the same law possessed in codified form by the Jewish people in the Ten Commandments, written in stone by the very finger of God.*

These Ten Commandments are the very “positive, moral, and perpetual commandment(s), binding all men, in all ages,” referred to in chapter 22.7. In order to further the work of establishing the parallel between the law written on the heart/conscience and that written on tablets of stone we will consider the following observations:

- † Observation 1: The Context of Romans 2
- † Observation 2: The Comparison of Delivery
- † Observation 3: The Character of Effect
- † Observation 4: The Content of the Laws

#### † Observation 1: The Context of Romans 2

In the context of Romans 2, note should be taken of the various examples provided regarding the dishonoring of the law among the Jewish people. This dishonoring of the law is done in the sight of the Gentile nations who have the very same law written on their hearts. Paul states that

the Jews are guilty of:

1. Stealing - v.21
2. Adultery - v.22
3. Idolatry - v.22

Where do we find commands against these violations of law standing together? What is Paul's source of thinking here when referring to the "law?" The sins of stealing, adultery and idolatry are all three violations commandments listed in the Decalogue: commandments 1 (perhaps 2 as well), 7 and 8, found in the following texts:

1. Stealing: Commandment #8 - Exo 20:15
2. Adultery: Commandment #7 - Exo 20:14
3. Idolatry: Commandment #1 and/or #2 - Exo 20:4-5

The Jewish people, who have the law in written form, are failing to keep it, and the Gentiles know the Jews are falling short, for these very commands are known to them as well, being written on their very hearts.

Not only does the context of Romans 2 draw a close parallel between the law written on the heart with that written on tablets of stone, a second observation brings the parallel of the "law" ever closer into view.

#### † Observation 2: The Comparison of Delivery

Both sets of law are written by the work of God: one on the heart and one in clearer form written on tablets of stone. The law possessed by the Gentiles is the one that is written on the heart. We learned this from Romans 2:14-16. But what about the law possessed by the Jews. They too, like the Gentiles, being made in the image of God, possess the law written on the heart. But furthermore, they possess the law in clearer form, it being

written for them by God on tablets of stone! Though it is true, that the law the Jews possess is not said to be written “on tablets of stone” (pointing to the Decalogue), the context would lead one to believe it must in fact be the case. Consider the following observations regarding this law of the Jews drawn from Romans 2:

- This law of the Jews is an external standard by which they will be judged - 2:12
- This law is something from which they hear and receive commands - 2:13
- From this very law they are instructed - 2:1
- This law seems clearly to be a law which holds official content - 2:20
- The Jews make use of this law in their teaching and in their preaching - 2:21-22
- This law in the context of Romans 2 is in fact referred to as a “written code” - 2:27

We believe this is moving us toward the irresistible conclusion that the law possessed by the Jewish people, made mention of by Paul in Romans 2, must be the law that was given to them on the mountain, written on tablets of stone by the very finger of God! That this law (as with the law written on the hearts of the Gentiles) was the very work of God is attested to by the following Old Testament texts:

Exodus 31:18 (ESV) And he gave to Moses, when he had finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.

Deut. 5:22 (ESV) "These words the Lord spoke to all your assembly at the mountain out of the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness, with a loud voice; and he added no more. And he wrote them on two tablets of stone and gave them to me.

Deut. 9:10-11 (ESV) And the Lord gave me the two tablets of stone written with the finger of God, and on them were all the words that the Lord had spoken with you on the mountain out of the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly. [11] And at the end of forty days and forty nights the Lord gave me the two tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant.

Consider briefly a third observation.

#### † Observation 3: The Character of Effect

Guidance, conviction and judgement seem to be the standard fare of each “law.” Both are almost audible. In fact one was literally discernable to the ear when first delivered. Consider the following texts:

Exodus 20:18-21 (ESV) Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off [19] and said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die." [20] Moses said to the people, "Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin." [21] The people stood far off, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was.

Deut. 5:23-27 (ESV) And as soon as you heard the voice out of the midst of the darkness, while the mountain was burning with fire, you came near to me, all the heads of your tribes, and your elders. [24] And you said, 'Behold, the Lord our God has shown us his glory and greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire. This day we have seen God speak with man and man still live. [25] Now therefore why should we die? For this great fire will

consume us. If we hear the voice of the Lord our God any more, we shall die. [26] For who is there of all flesh, that has heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of fire as we have, and has still lived? [27] Go near and hear all that the Lord our God will say and speak to us all that the Lord our God will speak to you, and we will hear and do it.'

The other, though not literally heard by the hearing of the ear, is clearly discernible to the heart when under either condemnation or confirmation. Recall Paul's words in Romans 2:

Romans 2:15 (ESV) They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them

F. B. Meyer adds a helpful note here when he states that: "Their moral nature, with the voice of conscience commanding and forbidding, supplies to their own ego the place of the revealed law possessed by the Jews" (Murray, Romans, 73). John Murray further notes that: With respect to those without specially revealed law three things are true:

1. The law of God confronts them and registers itself in their consciences by reason of what they natively and constitutionally are.
2. They do things which this law prescribes.
3. This doing is not by extraneous constraint but by natural impulse (Murray, Romans, 74).

*Their moral nature, with the voice of conscience commanding and forbidding, supplies to their own ego the place of the revealed law possessed by the Jews.*

Finally, we must consider a fourth observation that we believe establishes that the law was possessed by the Gentiles was essentially the same as the law written in stone by the finger of

God for the Jews at Sinai.

† Observation 4: The Content of the Laws

The content of the laws is essentially one and the same. This is proven by the following three elements:

1. Proven by the argument of the text and context itself:

If this is not so, the point Paul is trying to make completely falls apart. If the content of the laws is not the same, then God will be seen as unjust and partial in judging both (Jew and Gentile) by the standard of righteousness that is his alone. But in fact, this is Paul's point: God is not unjust, nor is he impartial in judgement! This is seen in the fact that all men (Jew and Gentile alike) have access to the same basic content of truth, which essentially defines what is "good" and what God has always required of all men. Paul states in Romans 2:6-11 that God

*If the content of the laws is not the same then God will be seen as unjust and partial in judging both by the standard of righteousness that is his alone.*

will render to each one according to his works: [7] to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; [8] but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. [9] There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, [10] but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. [11] For God shows no partiality.

God judges all men by one and the same standard of righteousness.

To make God a judge who wavers and varies in what he requires from one verses what he requires from another, is to make God an unjust judge and partial - the very idea Paul is seeking to dispel!

2. Proven by the fact that sin must have “law” for accountability to be just:

Consider what the Apostle Paul writes at two points in his letter to the Roman brethren.

Romans 4:15 (ESV) For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression.

Romans 5:13 (ESV) For sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law.

These two texts have been taken and isolated from their larger contexts. In those larger contexts, Paul is making several profound theological points: 1) regarding the place of the law in relation to faith in our justification and 2) the place of the law in relation to the condemnation that all men find themselves under being related to Adam in his disobedience. In brief: 1) the law has nothing to do with our justification, other than the fact that because of sin, the law demonstrates our just condemnation and deservedness of God’s wrath, and 2) that by way of our identification with Adam as our covenant head, outside of Christ, we all stand justly condemned in Adam who transgressed the clearly revealed law of God in the garden.

Being that, as it is, a wholly inadequate summation of the thrust of those two contexts, we need to turn toward demonstrating how these two texts help is in seeing the essential unity of the law written on the heart and the law written on tablets of stone. Putting these two texts together provides helpful support for our case that the content of the law possessed by the Gentiles written in their hearts from the foundation of the world and that

law possessed by the Jews in an externally written form established at Sinai, are essentially one and the same. Here Paul points to the just judgement of God that falls on men who transgress the law of God. The law brings wrath, for the very fact that men are prone to break the law and incur a just judgement for doing so. This just judgement of God would in fact not be just, if God were to pour out his wrath on men, who had in fact not been given "law."

Those who argue that the Gentiles did not possess the law prior to having it revealed to them via special revelation, are hard pressed to explain why it is that God still in fact judges them for "sin" prior to and apart from revealing to them, via his word, the requirements of law. This is why, as we have mentioned earlier, Riggle and Zaspel, and others of their persuasion, have man, prior to the manifestation of the requirements of God being made through special revelation, only being accountable to what God has revealed of himself through creation (See pp. 28-30).

One must note here Paul's point. Paul is not using the phrase in 4:15 "where there is no law there is no transgression" to say that this is in fact reality. He is arguing hypothetically. If we could find a place where there was in fact no law, there would in fact be no transgression, for transgression, by its very nature, is a "stepping over the mark" (Rogers, 323). The mark would in fact be that boundary that God had made clear was in fact not be crossed - or to use our language here - transgressed. This is the very thing he is pointing to as well in 5:13 when he writes axiomatically that "sin is not counted when there is no law."

Furthermore, one must understand that in referencing the time before "the law was given" the Apostle Paul is pointing to the time prior to the law's being codified and delivered to the Jewish people at the establishment of the Mosaic covenant and the giving of the law at Mt. Sinai. One should not read these texts and think that Paul is saying that before the giving of that law at Sinai that there was in fact no law prior to the Sinai

event, and hence no sin to punish. He is in fact stating that very opposite reality. Before Sinai there was in fact the clear and unmistakable punishing of sin. This sin was so punished because it was in truth a violation of clearly established law. This clearly established law, had been decidedly written into the constitution of man's nature, he having been made in the very image of God! That those laws, written into man's nature, were essentially the same as those given to the people at the mountain, is further and finally proven in our third point which follows.

3. Proven by an examination of those laws to which men were accountable before the Sinai event:

For now, the following comments will help enrich our understanding of this point. At a later time we will actually examine the very "sins" against the law of nature in man that are found in Scripture before the codifying of Jewish law at Sinai. Richard Barcellos helpfully notes: "What the Jews get via special revelation the Gentiles get via general revelation. They get the same law but through different means of revelation and in a different form" (Barcellos, 82). Furthermore, the great Reformation theologian Francis Turretin adds:

If it is asked how this natural law agrees with or differs from the moral law (ie. The laws laid out in the Ten Commandments) - the answer is easy. It agrees as to substance and with regard to principles, but differs as to accidents and with regard to conclusions. The same duties (both toward God and toward our neighbor) prescribed by the moral law are also contained in the natural law. The difference is with regard to the mode of delivery (Turretin, 6).

*The same duties (both toward God and toward our neighbor) prescribed by the moral law are also contained in the natural law. The difference is with regard to the mode of delivery*

Walter Kaiser, in Toward Old Testament Ethics, gives this helpful word:

In spite of its marvelous succinctness, economy of words, and comprehensive vision, it must not be thought that the Decalogue was inaugurated and promulgated at Sinai for the first time. All Ten commandments had been part of the law of God previously written on hearts instead of stone, for all ten appear, in one way or another, in Genesis. [See Appendix 1 for our expanded look at this issue.]

Though in reading the events of the Old Testament narratives, as Kaiser notes, “the text does not pause to moralize,” it is clear from what the narratives condone and condemn that the moral principles embedded in the Decalogue were in existence long before the Sinai event, including the command to set aside time for the worship of God at the heart of the fourth commandment.

Ernest Reisinger adds strength to our conclusion in his work The Law and the Gospel, when he notes that

the violations of each of the Ten Commandments were either severely punished or openly rebuked before Sinai. Before the law was given to Moses, there was indeed sin in the world...if people were punished or rebuked for sin before Sinai, that implies that laws must have been in place, because “where there is no law - there is no sin.” The sins punished and rebuked were sins against the perfect law written on Adam’s heart at creation (Reisinger, 18).

⊗ **Why is there such a law as the law of nature?**

The law of nature establishes for man that which is the standard of

righteousness for all time. What it is that God requires of man - the law of nature, the law written on the heart, the Decalogue, the ten words - establish this for all time as God's moral law. Recall from chapter 19, section 2 of the 1689:

The same law that was first written in the heart of man continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness after the fall.

Time will not allow at this point for a full exegetical study of Mark 10:17-27. But the reader is encouraged to think through the issue of the moral law, embodied in the Decalogue, being the perfect rule of righteousness before God as it is held out by Christ in this gospel story. The story of the rich young ruler found in Mark 10 makes vividly clear that the Decalogue forever remains God's full moral standard for life!

*The story of the rich young ruler found in Mark 10 makes vividly clear that the Decalogue forever remains God's full moral standard for life!*

✧ **How does the law of nature relate to the Sabbath?**

*The "Sabbath"...is binding on all men, for all time, being rooted in God's moral character, from which all his commandments stem.*

If the law of nature includes in it the moral obligation to "proportion" time for the worship of God, this works toward establishing the argument that the principle of the Sabbath supercedes and predates the giving of the law at Sinai. Furthermore, this faithfully demonstrates (plausibly, if not conclusively) that the requirement for "Sabbath" is not uniquely Jewish (for Adam was not Jewish). Rather, it is binding on all men, for all time, being rooted in God's moral character, from which all his commandments stem.

## Excursus 2

### Positive-Moral-Perpetual Law



At this point our intention is to unpack the aim of the writers of the confession as they move in their thinking from the realm of general to special revelation. The writers are moving in this vein when they state that the law that was initially set forth in “nature” has further, “by his Word, in 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” (1689.22.7).

In our outline of this point we made contrast between this command and the previous one (the one based in natural law) particularly

in regard to delivery. Here special, rather than general revelation, is the source or origin of the commandment. We find here a commandment that binds all men in all ages to the worship of God expressed particularly as one day in seven wherein they are to keep the day holy or in a sanctified manner unto God alone.

The point of this portion of the confession that is of most interest to us, is the statement that this law, partially, but not fully, in contrast to the law of nature, is positive, moral, and finally perpetual. What does the confession intend to communicate by this and how is it significant for our study? Let's examine this in brief by taking each of the terms in turn: positive, moral, and perpetual.

✠ Positive

By stating the command to keep “one day in seven for a Sabbath... holy unto him” is positive, he sets it against or in contrast to that which is known to man by nature alone. In article 1 of chapter 22 on the worship of God the confession states that

The light of nature shews that there is a God, who hath lordship and sovereignty over all; is just, good and doth good unto all; and is therefore to be feared, loved, praised, called upon, trusted in, and served, with all the heart and all the soul, and with all the might. But the acceptable way of worshiping the true God, is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshiped according to the imagination and devices of men, nor the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representations, or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scriptures.

devices of men, nor the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representations, or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scriptures.

Thus, knowledge of the necessity of the worship of the God of all creation is known to all men via the light or law of nature, as we have previously observed. However, the particulars of that worship, namely here - one day in seven - must be set forth by positively stated precepts by God himself. That God must clearly state the particulars of his worship is so, lest man be left up the dictates of his own fallen and perverse imagination.

In particular, we will find as we look through the rest of the confessional statement on the Sabbath, this one day is positively prescribed to fall on different days of the week, at different periods in man's history, both by way of positive command. This causes grief among some and has moved them to see the change of days for worship - specifically under the New Covenant (moving the day of Christian worship to the first day of the week) - as a foolish move in the history of Christ's church. They lay this charge so passionately, that they see those who believe the day for Christian worship to have changed - from the seventh to the first day of the week - are liable to the charge of apostasy!

*We will find as we look through the rest of the confessional statement on the Sabbath, this one day is positively prescribed to fall on different days of the week, at different periods in man's history, both by way of positive command.*

Others have seen the Sabbath tied to the seventh day of the week also, but have opted not to continue to affirm the practice of the Sabbath. They have seen the Sabbath so strictly tied to the positive command of the seventh day - that they have been led to abandon the keeping of a Sabbath unto God completely under the New Covenant, seeing it fully identified only

with the Old Covenant. This leads us to look at a further qualification of the confession.

#### ✘ Moral

We believe, as the confession states, that not only is the commandment to keep one day in seven “positive,” it is further, and more foundationally, “moral.” Here we find the rational basis for why the day can change from one covenant to the next. Under the Old Covenant and prior to its establishment at Sinai, the command to keep the Sabbath, being rooted in creation, was to fall specifically on the seventh day. But the seventh day is not strictly connected with the Sabbath as a moral principle. The moral nature of the command is to set aside time for the worship of God which is rooted in the moral nature of man, being created in the image of God. The particular time for its expression is relegated to positive law. As Joseph Pipa rightly states: “certain moral laws have positive (temporary) elements attached to them that they may be altered” when God sees fit. Thus, Pipa continues:

*The seventh day is not strictly connected with the Sabbath as a moral principle. The moral nature of the command is to set aside time for the worship of God. The particular time for its expression is relegated to positive law.*

A moral-positive law is different from a simple positive law in that it joins certain elements to a moral law in order to give further instruction for carrying out that law (Pipa, 35).

To explain this concept more fully, regarding the Sabbath command by the word of God being positive and moral, let us hear from Robert Shaw in his commentary on the Westminster Confession of Faith:

From these remarks it will be obvious that the Sabbath is partly a moral and partly a positive institution. So far as it requires that a

certain portion of our time should be devoted to the worship of God, it is moral, being founded in the relation subsisting between God and man. So far as it appropriates the seventh part of our time, and determines the particular day to be set apart for the service of God, it is of positive institution, being founded in the will and appointment of God. But it ought to be observed that a positive institution, when once enacted and revealed by God, may be of perpetual obligation, and, in this sense, may be called moral. Hence it is usual to speak of "the morality of the Sabbath," and to distinguish betwixt what is *moral natural* and what is *moral positive* in the fourth precept of the decalogue. As it requires that some stated portion of our time should be consecrated to the worship of God, it is moral natural; and as it enacts that a seventh portion of our time, rather than any other proportion, shall be set apart for this purpose, it is moral positive. We call it a positive institution, because the observing of one day in seven as a Sabbath flows from the sovereign appointment of God; and we call it moral positive, because the divine appointment is of universal and perpetual obligation; and the Sabbath is thus distinguished from ceremonial institutions, which were peculiar to the Jews, and were abrogated at the death of Christ. The morality of the Sabbath, therefore, consists in its binding obligation upon all men, in all ages (Shaw, 279).

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This brings us naturally to a third point we must make, being presented with it by the confession itself.

## ✠ Perpetual

Finally, the specific command to keep one day in seven holy is not only positive and moral, it is furthermore perpetual. In other words, its binding nature stands firm. Many reasons are often set forth by scholars for the perpetuity of the Sabbath command, several of which we list here in brief:

Reason 1: The Sabbath is an ordinance of creation, like labor, and marriage, and is therefore to endure for all time.

Reason 2: The placement of the Sabbath commandment in the Decalogue along with other moral, perpetually binding commands of God argues for its own perpetuity.

Reason 3: All men in the community were to observe the Sabbath - including the foreigner in their midst, who was in no way a member of the covenant community.

Reason 4: The Sabbath is anticipated prophetically as being part and parcel of the New Covenant community in Isaiah 56:6-8 and 58.

We admit that each of these deserves a fuller treatment. Further comments are made on some of them throughout our work. Listing them here will have to suffice for now. Our attention is now directed toward another issue - that of the principle of the Sabbath being a transcovenantal obligation. We turn first to observe the evidence in Scripture for the existence of the Sabbath principle prior to its establishment with the Hebrew people at Sinai. We refer to this as the evidence for the "Ante-Mosaic" Sabbath.

## Excursus 3

### The Ante-Mosaic Sabbath



Those who deny the perpetuity of the Sabbath in principle, or the “Sabbath principle” by which it is sometimes referred, see the Sabbath as belonging exclusively to the Mosaic covenant established with the Hebrew people upon their leaving Egypt and upon the establishment of God’s glorious covenant with His chosen people at Mt. Sinai.

The following will, we believe, effectively demonstrate that the conclusion that the Sabbath is unique to the Hebrew people stands on faulty ground and is conclusively shown to be false. The evidence is summarized

in the following table:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>☒ Evidence from Natural Law in the Reformed Tradition</li><li>☒ Evidence from Historical Pagan/Jewish/Archaeological References</li><li>☒ Evidence from the Calendar</li><li>☒ Evidence from Creation - Gen 2:2-3</li><li>☒ Evidence from the Ordinance of Labor</li><li>☒ Evidence from Patriarchs</li><li>☒ Evidence from the Pre-Sinai Israelite Community - Exo 16:22-30</li><li>☒ Evidence from the framing of the Fourth Commandment in Terms of "Remembrance"</li><li>☒ Evidence from Those Commanded to Observe the Sabbath in the Fourth Commandment</li><li>☒ Evidence from the Words of Jesus</li></ul> |
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#### ☒ Evidence from Natural Law in the Reformed Tradition

In setting forth the evidence for the ante-Mosaic Sabbath principle, we begin by revisiting the issue of natural law. Having established that the law of nature includes in it the moral obligation to "proportion" time for the worship of God, this works to set forth the truth that the principle of the Sabbath supercedes and predates the giving of the law at Sinai. This further effectively demonstrates that the requirement for "Sabbath" is not uniquely Jewish, but is rather binding on all men, for all time, being rooted in God's moral character, from which all his commandments stem.

The law of nature establishes for man that which is the standard of righteousness for all time. What is it that God requires of man? The law of nature - the law written on the heart, the Decalogue, the ten words - is established for all time as God's moral law. Recall from chapter 19, section 2 of the 1689:

The same law that was first written in the heart of man continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness after the fall.

At several additional points the confession sets forth this concept of natural law as well:

As it is the law of nature, that in general a proportion of time, by God's appointment, be set apart for the worship of God [22.7].

God gave to Adam a law of universal obedience written in his heart [19.1].

The same law that was first written in the heart of man continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness after the fall, and was delivered by God upon Mount Sinai, in ten commandments [19.2].

Besides this law, commonly called moral...[19.3]

The objection is often made, as has previously been asserted, that the framers of the 1689 and Westminster Confession of Faith have not been faithful to the “reformed tradition” in seeing an essential similarity between the requirements of “natural law” and the commandments of the Decalogue. To see if the charge is just, we must go to the Reformers (and those who write of them) themselves. What did the Reformers actually teach? The following is a sampling of their teaching on natural law. We begin our brief (yet hopefully sufficient) look at the Reformers on natural law by hearing from the great reformer of the church, John Calvin, who wrote the following in his Institutes of the Christian Religion:

It is a fact that the law of God which we call the moral law is nothing less than a testimony of the natural law and of that conscience which God has engraved upon the minds of men.

Earlier in his Institutes Calvin makes clear that the “moral law” is the law of God that we find in the Decalogue or the ten words:

4.20.15 - The moral law, then, (to begin with it,) being contained under two heads, the one of which simply enjoins us to worship God with pure faith and piety, the other to embrace men with sincere affection, is the true and eternal rule of righteousness prescribed to the men of all nations and of all times, who would frame their life agreeably to the will of God. For his eternal and immutable will is, that we are all to worship him, and mutually love one another.

And in another place he stated:

2.8.1 - The Law was committed to writing, in order that it might teach more fully and perfectly that knowledge, both of God and of ourselves, which the law of nature teaches meagerly and obscurely. Proof of this, from an enumeration of the principal parts of the Moral Law; and also from the dictate of natural law, written on the hearts of all, and, in a manner, effaced by sin.

Further he writes:

2.8.1 - I believe it will not be out of place here to introduce the Ten Commandments of the Law, and give a brief exposition of them. In this way it will be made more clear, that the worship which God originally prescribed is still in force.

2.8.1 - Moreover, the very things contained in the two tables are, in a manner, dictated to us by that internal law, which, as has been already said, is in a manner written and stamped on every heart. For conscience, instead of allowing us to stifle our perceptions, and sleep on without interruption, acts as an inward witness and

monitor, reminds us of what we owe to God, points out the distinction between good and evil, and thereby convicts us of departure from duty. But man, being immured in the darkness of error, is scarcely able, by means of that natural law, to form any tolerable idea of the worship which is acceptable to God. At all events, he is very far from forming any correct knowledge of it. In addition to this, he is so swollen with arrogance and ambition, and so blinded with self-love, that he is unable to survey, and, as it were, descend into himself, that he may so learn to humble and abase himself, and confess his misery.

But this should not be taken to mean that men are therefore incapable of discerning right from wrong. To ascertain more clearly what Calvin intends herein, we turn to his commentary on Romans 2:14-16. Regarding the “work of the law written” he writes:

That is, they prove that there is imprinted on their hearts a discrimination and judgment by which they distinguish between what is just and unjust, between what is honest and dishonest. He means not that it was so engraven on their will, that they sought and diligently pursued it, but that they were so mastered by the power of truth, that they could not disapprove of it. For why did they institute religious rites, except that they were convinced that God ought to be worshiped? Why were they ashamed of adultery and theft, except that they deemed them evils? Without reason then is the power of the will deduced from this passage, as though Paul had said, that the keeping of the law is within our power; for he speaks not of the power to fulfill the law, but of the knowledge of it (Calvin, Romans, 97).

Also he adds:

Nor can we conclude from this passage, that there is in men a full

knowledge of the law, but that there are only some seeds of what is right implanted in their nature, evidenced by such acts as these. All the Gentiles alike instituted religious rites, they made laws to punish adultery, and theft, and murder, they commended good faith in bargains and contracts. They have thus indeed proved, that God ought to be worshiped, that adultery, and theft, and murder are evils, that honesty is commendable. It is not to our purpose to inquire what sort of God they imagined him to be, or how many gods they devised; it is enough to know, that they thought that there is a God, and that honor and worship are due to him. It matters not whether they permitted the coveting of another man's wife, or of his possessions, or of any thing which was his, whether they connived at wrath and hatred; inasmuch as it was not right for them to covet what they knew to be evil when done (Calvin, Romans, 98).

Calvin was not the only Reformer to write affirming natural law. Luther himself noted:

There is no one that does not feel it...Everyone must acknowledge that what the natural law says is right and true...If men would only pay attention to it, they would have no need of books or of any other law. For they carry along with them in the depth of their hearts a living book which could give them quite adequate instruction about what they ought to do and not to do, how they ought to judge, and what ought to be accepted and rejected (Budziszewski, 207).

Also by Luther:

Experience itself shows that all nations share this common ordinary knowledge...I feel in my heart that I certainly ought to do these things for God, not because of what traditional written laws say, but because I brought these laws with me when I came into the

world...For although the decalogue was given in one way at a single time and place, all nations recognize that there are sins and iniquities (Budziszewski, 208).

Furthermore, Francis Turretin, from his own Institutes writes regarding the relationship between natural law on the hearts of men and that law contained in the Decalogue, the following powerful and very clear words:

If it is asked how this natural law agrees with or differs from the moral law (ie. The laws laid out in the Ten Commandments), the answer is easy. It agrees as to substance and with regard to principles, but differs as to accidents and with regard to conclusions. The same duties (both toward God and toward our neighbor) prescribed by the moral law are also contained in the natural law. The difference is with regard to the mode of delivery (Turretin, Institutes, 6).

Another Reformer, Zacharias Ursinius, stated the following regarding this same relationship:

The natural law does not differ from the moral in nature not corrupted, but in nature corrupted, a good part of the natural law is darkened by sins, and but a little part only concerning the obedience due to God was left remaining in man's mind after the fall; for which cause, also, God has in his church repeated again and declared the whole sentence and doctrine of his law in the Decalogue. Therefore the Decalogue is a restoring

*If it is asked how this natural law agrees with or differs from the moral law...the answer is easy. It agrees as to substance and with regard to principles, but differs as to accidents and with regard to conclusions.*

and reentering or reinforcing of the law of nature; and the law of nature is a part only of the Decalogue.

Robert Leighton adds from his exposition of the Ten Commandments:

At first the commandments were written in the heart of man by God's own hand, but as the first tables of stone fell and were broken, so was it with man's heart. By his fall his heart was broken and scattered amongst earthly perishing things that was before whole and entire to his Maker. And so the characters of that law written in it were so shivered and scattered that they could not be perfectly and distinctly read in it. Therefore it pleased God to renew that law after this manner by a most solemn delivery with audible voice, and then by writing it on tables of stone. And this is not all, but this same law he doth write anew in the hearts of his children. (Robert Leighton, Exposition of the Ten Commandments, quoted in W. G. T. Shedd, Dogmatic Theology, Vol. III, p. 346).

W. G. T. Sheed, from Dogmatic Theology, a solid work of Reformed dogma, should be heard as well:

The moral law violated by the free will of man is both written and unwritten: the law of nature and the Decalogue (Romans 2:14-16). The points of difference between them have been specified under the heard of revelation [See Shedd, Dogmatic Theology, pp.87-88 for three sound points of distinction.] The two laws are originally and essentially the same. The ethics of man's rational nature as he came from the Creator's hand and of the Decalogue are identical. The now existing difference between the two is due to apostasy...Such being the connection between the unwritten and written law, it follow that sin in the heathen is the same in kind with sin in Christendom. Free and responsible human will, in both

instances, transgresses a common law and ethics. The difference between the violation of the unwritten law and the written is one of degree only.

In drawing our thoughts on the Reformers, and reformed theologians to a point of summation, the words of Stephen J. Grabill, in his recent work Rediscovering the Natural Law in Reformed Theological Ethics should be considered:

The Reformers and their successors held “the idea that God promulgated a natural law that directs and binds human creatures; that this law of nature has been written on every human heart; that conscience and reason serve as natural lights leading people to act in accord with natural law; that the natural law and the Old law (Decalogue) differ only as means (or conveyors of moral information) but not in fundamental moral content; that while human cognition of the natural moral order was obscured by sin, the natural law still yields sufficient data to assist people in distinguishing between good and evil; that neither knowledge of, nor adherence to, natural law is sufficient for either justification or redemption; and that a natural-law jurisprudence is crucial to maintaining just and well-ordered temporal polities, regardless of whether they are governed by Christian princes or legislators (Grabill, 2).

*The natural law and the Old law (Decalogue) differ only as means (or conveyors of moral information) but not in fundamental moral content.*

✂ Evidence from Historical Pagan/Archaeological/Jewish References

This may seem like a strange category for many. But it stems naturally from an examination of natural law and can be quite informative to our study. Though the practice of pagans

certainly offers no inspired data, the light it can shed on our study will be immense for the careful reader. Consider the words of R. L. Dabney on the matter:

The early traditions of the pagans are, of course, of no divine authority to us, yet they give an interesting support to the lessons taught us in Genesis and Exodus, showing that even these idolaters once knew that the Sabbath was a primeval institution ordained for all nations (Dabney, 8).

#### †Evidence From the Greeks:

Homer and Hesiod - allude to Sabbath practices among the decedents of Noah - Japeth - Kittim (on the island of Kittim or Cyprus).

Here is an early allusion to a Sabbath, borrowed from the writings of Clement of Alexandria, a learned Christian of the second century. He writes:

That the seventh day is sacred, not the Hebrews only, but the Gentiles also acknowledge, according to which the whole universe of living and vegetable things revolve.

Hesiod [8<sup>th</sup> Century BC Greek Poet, contemporary of Homer]

The first and the fourth and the seventh also is a sacred day.

The seventh day once more, the splendid dawn of the sun.

Homer [8<sup>th</sup> Century BC Greek Poet]

The seventh then arrived, the sacred day.

The seventh was sacred.

The seventh dawn was at hand, and with this all this series is completed.

**†Evidence From the Africans:**

Callimachus, a 3<sup>rd</sup> Century B. C. poet from North Africa stated the following viewpoint of the north Africans on the Sabbath day:

It was now the Sabbath day, and with this all was accomplished.

The seventh day is among the fortunate; yea, the seventh is the parent day.

The seventh day is the first, and the seventh is the complement.

**†Evidence From the Assyrians:**

George Smith an Assyrian researcher wrote that:

In the year 1869, I discovered, among other things, a curious religious calendar of the Assyrians, in which every month is divided into four weeks, and the seventh days, or 'Sabbaths,' are marked out as days on which no work should be undertaken" (*Taken from Assyrian Discoveries*, 12).

Further, H. Fox Talbot, in his translation of Assyrian creation-tablets, renders two lines as follows:

Line 1: On the seventh day he appointed a holy day

Line 2: To cease from all business he commanded.

He adds regarding on of the fifth tablet:

This fifth tablet is very important, because it affirms clearly, in my opinion, that the origin of the Sabbath was coeval with the creation.

A. H. Sayee who translated the rules for each day of the month, writes that there were particular rules for the seventh day:

- forbid the prince on that day to eat cooked fruits and birds
- to change his garments
- to legislate or appoint officeholders
- to take medicine
- requires him to make his sacrifice to God on that day

Further, Sayee notes that they referred to this day as the “Sabbath” or as the “Day of completion” (*Translation Society for Biblical Archaeology*, Vol. 5, 427-428).

#### †Evidence From the Jews:

Josephus, the highly regarded Jewish historian of the first century in his work Against Apion writes: “There could be found no city, either of Grecians or barbarians, who owned not a seventh day's rest from labor.”

Philo, a noted Jewish philosopher and teacher refers to the seventh day Sabbath as a “festival of all nations.”

#### ⌘Evidence from the Calendar

Our calendar is broken up into days, weeks, months and years. The

study of the origin of each of these can be extremely helpful in seeing the existence of the Sabbath principle prior to the Sinai event. Consider first, the origin of the day. The Oxford English Dictionary examining the concept of a day as a period, a natural division or a unity of time defines a day as “the time occupied by the earth in one revolution on its axis.” It adds interestingly that “ancient nations variously reckoned their day to begin at sunrise, or at noon, or at sunset” (OED, D:49). This is the standard or universal understanding of “day” throughout history. Its origin is clearly based upon the way God has made the world to revolve.

A second element for our study here is the origin of the month. Where do we get our common reckoning of time that we commonly refer to as a month? The OED tells us that a month defines the “measure of time corresponding to the period of revolution of the moon” (OED, M:634). Again we observe the connection of time with the natural order of creation commonly accessible to all people. The origin of the month, as well as the day, is no hidden mystery.

Third, consider the origin of the year. The OED helps us again by stating that a year is “the period of the earth’s revolution around the sun forming a natural unit of time” (OED, Y:28). This “natural unit of time” lacks practicality when calculating the period of one year, which would be about 365 1/4 days. Therefore, a more “practical reckoning” of time - that of 365 days, adding a “leap year” every four years - helps us in keeping track of the calendar year. But in general, one year, or 365 days, is explained by again, simple observation of the universe God has made and revealed to all men.

Why all this fuss about days, months and years? We believe when we stop to consider the one unit of time that we make use of on a regular basis, it brings the profound question to mind, “From where does the week originate?” Science lacks adequate explanation of its origins, for it in no way derives from “observational” data of the created order.

*Science lacks adequate explanation of (the week's) origins for it in no way derives from "observational" data of the created order.*

Yet it is clear in many cultures outside the Bible, but especially in Scripture, that the week is the standard measure of time, most notably for the people of God. The bearing this reality has on the issue of the Sabbath will become obvious as the data is examined.

Recurrence of Dating by Weeks:

Exclusive Dating: Counting seven days without counting the present day

Genesis 7:4 (ESV) For in seven days I will send rain on the earth forty days and forty nights, and every living thing that I have made I will blot out from the face of the ground."

Genesis 7:10 (ESV) And after seven days the waters of the flood came upon the earth.

Explicit statements regarding Noah after the flood:

Genesis 8:10 (ESV) He waited another seven days, and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark.

Genesis 8:12 (ESV) Then he waited another seven days and sent forth the dove, and she did not return to him anymore.

Deeper examination of the event following the flood with Noah is informative.

Genesis 8:6-12 (ESV) At the end of forty days Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made [7] and sent forth a raven. It

went to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth. [8] Then he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters had subsided from the face of the ground. [9] But the dove found no place to set her foot, and she returned to him to the ark, for the waters were still on the face of the whole earth. So he put out his hand and took her and brought her into the ark with him. [10] He waited another seven days, and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark. [11] And the dove came back to him in the evening, and behold, in her mouth was a freshly plucked olive leaf. So Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth. [12] Then he waited another seven days and sent forth the dove, and she did not return to him anymore.

The Puritan theologian, John Owen, makes the following comments regarding this text from Genesis:

It is of some consideration in this cause, and is usually urged to this purpose, that Noah observed the septenary revolution of days in sending forth the dove out of the ark, Genesis 8:10, 12. That this was done casually is not to be imagined. Nor can any reason be given why, notwithstanding the disappointment he met with the first and second time, he should still abide seven days before he sent again, if you consider only the natural condition of the flood, or the waters in their abatement. A revolution of days, and that upon a sacred account, was doubtless attended unto by him. And I should suppose that he still sent out the dove the next day after the Sabbath, to see, as it were, whether God had returned again to rest in the works of his hands (Owen, 18:309).

*A revolution of days, and that upon a sacred account, was doubtless attended unto by him.*

Consider further:

Genesis 31:23 (ESV) he took his kinsmen with him and pursued him for seven days and followed close after him into the hill country of Gilead.

Genesis 50:10 (ESV) When they came to the threshing floor of Atad, which is beyond the Jordan, they lamented there with a very great and grievous lamentation, and he made a mourning for his father seven days.

Exodus 7:25 (ESV) Seven full days passed after the Lord had struck the Nile.

Exodus 12:15-16 (ESV) Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven out of your houses, for if anyone eats what is leavened, from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel. [16] On the first day you shall hold a holy assembly, and on the seventh day a holy assembly. No work shall be done on those days. But what everyone needs to eat, that alone may be prepared by you.

Exodus 12:19 (ESV) For seven days no leaven is to be found in your houses. If anyone eats what is leavened, that person will be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a sojourner or a native of the land.

Exodus 13:6-7 (ESV) Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a feast to the Lord. [7] Unleavened bread shall be eaten for seven days; no leavened bread shall be seen with you, and no leaven shall be seen with you in all your territory.

Inclusive Dating: Counting seven days in addition to the first (eight days)

Gen 17:12 He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. Every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring,

Gen 21:4 And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him.

Consider, in addition, the clear statement in the book of Genesis regarding not just seven days, but an actual week of time mentioned twice. This is the first explicit mention of a "week" of time recorded in Scripture.

Genesis 29:27-28 (ESV) Complete the week of this one, and we will give you the other also in return for serving me another seven years." [28] Jacob did so, and completed her week. Then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to be his wife.

The following statements by Reformed theologians Charles Hodge and John Owen respectively will shed some light on the data we have just been presented with:

As seven is not an equal part either of a solar year or of a lunar month, the only satisfactory account of this fact, is to be found in the institution of the Sabbath. This fact moreover proves not only the original institution, but also the continued observance of the seventh day. There must have been something to distinguish that day as the close of one period or the commencement of another. It is altogether unnatural to account for this hebdomadal division by a reference to the worship of the seven planets. There is no evidence that the planets were objects of worship at that early period of the

world, or for a long time afterwards, especially among the Shemitic races. Besides, this explanation is inconsistent with the account of the creation. The divine authority of the book of Genesis is here taken for granted. What it asserts, Christians are bound to believe. It is undeniably taught in this book that God created the heavens and the earth in six days and rested on the seventh (Hodge, 327).

The hebdomadal revolution of time, generally admitted in the world, is also a great testimony unto the original institution of the Sabbath. Of old it was catholic, and is at present received among those nations whose converse was not begun until of late with any of those parts of the world where there is a light gone forth in these things from the Scripture. All nations, I say, in all ages, have from time immemorial made the revolution of seven days to be the second stated period of time. And this observation is still continued throughout the world, unless amongst them who in other things are openly degenerated from the law of nature; as those barbarous Indians who have no computation of times, but by sleeps, moons, and winters. The measure of time by a day and night is directed unto sense by the diurnal course of the sun: lunar months and solar years are of an unavoidable observation unto all rational creatures. Whence, therefore, all men have reckoned time by days, months, and years, is obvious unto all but whence the hebdomadal revolution, or weekly period of time, should make its entrance and obtain a catholic admittance, no man can give an account, but with respect to some impressions on the minds of men from the constitution and law of our nature, with the tradition of a sabbatical rest instituted from the foundation of the world

*The hebdomadal revolution of time, generally admitted in the world, is also a great testimony unto the original institution of the Sabbath.*

(Owen, 18:308-309).

✠Evidence from Creation - Gen 2:2-3

Pivotal to our examination of the perpetuity, and hence, the transcovenantal nature of the Sabbath principle, is seeing it as an ordinance instituted at the completion of the creation event when God rests from his labor. Having finished all he had made and declared it very good, the Bible says that God rested from his work. Consider first the text of Scripture itself:

Genesis 2:2-3 (ESV) And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. [3] So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

Several points need to be observed from the text itself and the surrounding context of Scripture as a whole:

- **Point 1:** God's Day of Rest is Coincident with His Sanctifying a Day in Its Honor

Genesis 2:2-3 (ESV) And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. [3] So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

- **Point 2:** God's Day of Rest is Not a Rest of Inactivity

John 5:17 (ESV) But Jesus answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I am working."

- **Point 3:** God's Day of Rest is a Cessation of His Creative Work

Genesis 1:31-2:3 (ESV) And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. [2:1] Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. [2] And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. [3] So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

- **Point 4:** God's Day of Rest is a Rest of Refreshment, Delight and Satisfaction

Exodus 31:17 (ESV) It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.

- **Point 5:** God's Day of Rest is for the Benefit of Man and Not Himself

Mark 2:27 (ESV) And he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.

[For further study on this very point see: John Murray, Principles of Conduct, 30-35 and Joseph Pipa, The Lord's Day, Chapter 2.]

✠Evidence from the Ordinance of Labor

The creation ordinance of labor provides us with further evidence for the existence of the Sabbath prior to the establishment of the Mosaic covenant. We begin our examination of this piece of ante-Mosaic "Sabbath

evidence” in a bit of a strange place - a post Exodus 20 text - from Exodus 31. There we read:

Exodus 31:12-17 (ESV) And the Lord said to Moses, [13] "You are to speak to the people of Israel and say, 'Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you. [14] You shall keep the Sabbath, because it is holy for you. Everyone who profanes it shall be put to death. Whoever does any work on it, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. [15] Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the Lord. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day shall be put to death. [16] Therefore the people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations, as a covenant forever. [17] It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.'" And he gave to Moses, when he had finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God. [See Exodus 20:8-11 as well.]

Clearly, here is established for the Jewish people, that the motivation for them to work/labor six days and rest one day is rooted in the activity of God in creation itself.

Furthermore, along with this text of Scripture, we have Genesis 2:15, where Adam is commanded to both “work” and to “keep” the garden in which he has been placed. Does it not stand to sound reason (not that our reason here is without inspired foundation from the text of Genesis itself) that Adam would pattern his week after God’s, as God later, as we have seen, commands the Israelites to do as well? In other words, the rationale or basis for the work of the Hebrew people to last six days and be followed by one day of rest, is because this is the very pattern of God Himself. Would this

not stand true for Adam as well? What was Adam to do with his time? How was he to organize it? Was he to just “work” all the time without stopping? Obviously not.

Standing clearly for Adam to observe and follow is the pattern of the Creator God Himself! We believe this to be highly plausible, if not most convincing. Consider along this vein the words of John Murray from his highly regarded work, Principles of Conduct, on Biblical ethics:

*Does it not stand to sound reason (not that our reason here is without inspired foundation from the text of Genesis itself) that Adam would pattern his week after God's, as God later, as we have seen,*

It is perhaps not sufficiently appreciated that the mandate respecting labour is implicit in the Sabbath ordinance. The day of rest has no meaning apart from the background of labour. God's day of rest is the sequel to six days of creative activity and has no relevance in any other context. The Sabbath institution implies labour; and its most significant feature in reference to labour is that it prescribes and defines, in terms of an established cycle, the extent of labour - six days of labour followed by one of cessation from that specific kind of employment which labour denotes (Murray, 35).

It is, as Oswald Allis states:

The six days of labour which entitle a man to the rest of the seventh. It is because he has been so largely engrossed in the affairs of the world for six days that man needs the rest and worship of the Sabbath (Allis, 76).

Furthermore, as we will examine more fully at a later point, it is this

very pattern of work/rest that is already the practice of the people in Exodus 16 at a prior point chronologically to Exodus 20 and 31. In other words, the pattern of six days for labor, one day for Sabbath rest is already known to and practiced by the people long before the Sinai event occurs.

#### ✠Evidence from the Patriarchs: Preliminary Consideration

Many argue for complete ignorance among the Fathers when it comes to the issue of their awareness of the Sabbath principle. They claim that the Scripture has nothing to say when it comes to the Patriarch's knowledge and practice of the Sabbath. But (even if this is true) it is to argue from silence, or to say it another way - to argue from nothing - which is tenuous at best. But as we shall see herein, the evidence for the Fathers' or the patriarchs' knowledge of the Sabbath principle is in fact not that which points to ignorance. Rather it is rich indeed, pointing in the direction of a strong continuance of the principles laid down in the creation narrative.

*The evidence for the Fathers' or the patriarchs' knowledge of the Sabbath principle is in fact not that which points to ignorance. Rather it is rich indeed, pointing in the direction of a strong continuance of the principles laid down in the creation narrative.*

The following statements by the Puritan divine John Owen ought to be read and considered, before moving to rash conclusions regarding the Fathers:

That this divine original institution of the seventh-day Sabbath was piously observed by the patriarchs, who retained a due remembrance of divine revelations, is out of controversy amongst all that acknowledge the institution itself; by others it is denied, that they may not be forced to acknowledge such an institution. And indeed

it is so fallen out with the two great ordinances of divine worship before the giving of the law, the one instituted before the fall, the other immediately upon it, that they should have contrary lots in this matter, — namely, the *Sabbath*, and *sacrifices*. The Sabbath we find expressly instituted; and therefore do and may justly conclude that it was constantly observed, although that observation be not directly and in terms mentioned. Sacrifices we find constantly observed by holy men of old, although we read not of their express institution; but from their observation we do and may conclude that they were instituted, although that institution be not expressly recorded. But yet as there is such light into the institution of sacrifices as may enable us to justify them by whom they were used, that they acted therein according to the mind of God and in obedience unto his will, as we have elsewhere demonstrated; so there want not such instances of the observation of the Sabbath as may confirm the original divine institution of it pleaded for.

That all the ancient patriarchs before the giving of the law diligently observed the solemn worship of God in and with their families, and those under their rule or any way belonging to their care and disposal, both their own piety forbids us to question, and the testimony given them that they walked with God, and by faith therein obtained a good report, gives us the highest assurance. Now, of all obedience unto God faith is the principle and foundation, without which it is impossible to please him, Hebrews 11:6. This faith doth always (and must always so do) respect the command and promise of God, which gives it its formal nature; for no other principle, though it may produce the like actions with it, is divine faith but what respects the command and promise of God, so as to be steered, directed, guided, and bounded by them. Unto this solemn worship of God, which in faith they thus attended unto, some stated time is indispensably necessary; and therefore that *some portion* of time should be set apart to that purpose is acknowledged

almost by all to be a dictate of the law of nature, and we shall afterwards prove it so to be. What ground have we now to imagine that the “holy men of old” were left without divine direction in this matter? That a designation and limitation of this time was, or would have been, of great use and advantage unto them, none can deny. Considering, therefore, the dealings of God with them, and how frequently he renewed unto them the knowledge of his will by occasional revelations, it cannot be supposed that divine grace was wanting unto them herein (Owen, 18.302-304).

Irenaeus, one of the esteemed early fathers of the church has a note of interest for us at this point in his polemical work, Against Heresies, where he writes regarding the patriarchs:

The righteous Fathers had the meaning of the Decalogue written in their hearts and souls; that is, they loved God who made them and did no injury to their neighbors...they had the righteousness of the law in themselves. But when the righteousness and love to God has passed into oblivion and become extinct in Egypt, God did...by a voice reveal himself...(the law) enjoined love to God and taught just dealing towards our neighbor, that we should neither be unjust, nor unworthy of God, who prepares man for his friendship through the medium of the Decalogue (Irenaeus, 16.3).

Hence the command to keep the Sabbath (according to these two scholars of the historical church), though known to the Fathers, had perhaps fallen into disuse or neglect. This ought not to have a strange sound to the listening ear or the discerning mind. For this very reality, the falling into disuse or neglect of that which has clearly been made known to the people by the clear and unmistakable word of God, has happened before. Two historical illustrations will suffice:

**Illustration 1: Circumcision Neglected in the Wilderness**

The rite of circumcision which clearly predated the Exodus (See Gen 17:10 and John 7:22) had apparently fallen into disuse among the people during their wanderings in the wilderness. Though God had clearly made the commandment of circumcision known to his people in the covenant with Abraham, it had fallen into neglect during the period of the wilderness wanderings. Let's be reminded first of the establishment of the covenant of circumcision with Abraham from the Genesis record.

Genesis 17:9-14 (ESV) And God said to Abraham, "As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. [10] This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. [11] You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. [12] He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. Every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring, [13] both he who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money, shall surely be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. [14] Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant."

Moses reiterates and elaborates on the command to circumcise in Leviticus 12. Yet with all this clearly stated regarding the ceremonial/covenantal rite, Joshua's record makes clear to us that during the days of the wilderness wanderings it had fallen into disuse or neglect.

Joshua 5:1-7 (ESV) As soon as all the kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan to the west, and all the kings of the Canaanites who were by the sea, heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of the Jordan for the people of Israel until they had

crossed over, their hearts melted and there was no longer any spirit in them because of the people of Israel. [2] At that time the Lord said to Joshua, "Make flint knives and circumcise the sons of Israel a second time." [3] So Joshua made flint knives and circumcised the sons of Israel at Gibeath-haaraloth. [4] And this is the reason why Joshua circumcised them: all the males of the people who came out of Egypt, all the men of war, had died in the wilderness on the way after they had come out of Egypt. [5] Though all the people who came out had been circumcised, yet all the people who were born on the way in the wilderness after they had come out of Egypt had not been circumcised. [6] For the people of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, until all the nation, the men of war who came out of Egypt, perished, because they did not obey the voice of the Lord; the Lord swore to them that he would not let them see the land that the Lord had sworn to their fathers to give to us, a land flowing with milk and honey. [7] So it was their children, whom he raised up in their place, that Joshua circumcised. For they were uncircumcised, because they had not been circumcised on the way.

**Illustration 2:** Neglect of Strict/Legal Observance of the Feast of Booths During Days of Nehemiah

The neglect of the strict observance of the feast of tabernacles/booths that had gone unchecked for hundreds of years by the time of Nehemiah is commented on by Nehemiah in the following text:

Neh. 8:13-18 (ESV) On the second day the heads of fathers' houses of all the people, with the priests and the Levites, came together to Ezra the scribe in order to study the words of the Law. [14] And they found it written in the Law that the LORD had commanded by Moses that the people of Israel should dwell in booths during the feast of the seventh month, [15] and that they should proclaim it and publish it in all their towns and in Jerusalem, "Go out to the

hills and bring branches of olive, wild olive, myrtle, palm, and other leafy trees to make booths, as it is written." [16] So the people went out and brought them and made booths for themselves, each on his roof, and in their courts and in the courts of the house of God, and in the square at the Water Gate and in the square at the Gate of Ephraim. [17] And all the assembly of those who had returned from the captivity made booths and lived in the booths, for from the days of Jeshua the son of Nun to that day the people of Israel had not done so. And there was very great rejoicing. [18] And day by day, from the first day to the last day, he read from the Book of the Law of God. They kept the feast seven days, and on the eighth day there was a solemn assembly, according to the rule.

Apparently, the Feast had continued to be celebrated from the days of Joshua (spelled Jeshua in v.17) until the present day of Nehemiah (See the record under Solomon in 2Chron 35:18, the record under Hezekiah in 2Chron 31:3, the record under Josiah in 2Chron 35:18, and the efforts of Jeshua the son of Jozadak and Zerubbabel in Ezra 3:1-7). However, though the Feast had continued, it had not been kept with the strictness that the law demanded. In light of this failure in the strict keeping of the celebration, the leading men, having been instructed by Ezra (v.1), repented and made right the Feast and reinstated the use of booths (vs.16-17). Mervin Breneman offers the following helpful comment:

The feast had two principal meanings: 1) it was an agricultural festival to commemorate the "ingathering" of the harvest (Exo 34:22); 2) it was a memorial celebration of the wilderness wanderings. Apparently through the years the harvest application had been emphasized, but the living in booths to remember the wilderness wanderings had been neglected. As the people examined Scripture here, they returned to that emphasis which was appropriate after their new exodus in returning from the Babylonian captivity. One effect of the continued study of Scripture is that it

helps us adjust our traditions according to the divine standard (Breneman, 230).

#### ✠ Evidence from the Patriarchs: Scriptural Teaching

We turn our attention now to the evidence itself, beginning with Genesis 3-4 and the record of man's expulsion from the garden and the subsequent record of the story of Cain and Able.

Genesis 3:24-4:5a (ESV) He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life. [4:1] Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord." [2] And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground. [3] In the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, [4] and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, [5] but for Cain and his offering he had no regard.

From this text there are two primary points or emphases we wish to draw. One is primarily exegetical, and the other is more dramatic. Exegetically speaking, there are five observations we are going to examine from this text: 1) the focus of worship, 2) the timing of worship, 3) the place of worship, 4) the means of worship, and finally 5) the manner of worship. We are in agreement here with A. W. Pink who writes that "the record of Genesis 4 is exceedingly terse and much is gathered up which scarcely appears on the surface" (Pink, 56). But the careful reader will glean many riches from this deep mine of truth.

The record of Genesis 4 is exceedingly terse and much is gathered up which scarcely appears on the surface.

### **The Focus of Worship**

To begin our examination of the passage we address the foundational question of worship itself - the who of worship. Worship is the recognition of God as the rightful recipient of our declaration of ultimate worth. In our story here, both Cain and Able approach the true and living God for the purpose of worship. Our texts states that "Cain brought to the Lord an offering...and Abel also brought" his offering to the Lord (See Gen 4:3-4). The focus of worship is to be none other than God himself.

### **The Timing of Worship**

Consider secondly from our text, the issue of worship's timing. It would appear from simply a casual reading of the text that Cain and Abel come together or at least consequentially so. They do this at what we might refer to as some kind of time. The phrasing in the English Standard Version of the text, as given in full above, that points to timing, is stated in v.3 as "in the course of time." Other translations offer some insight for us as well:

KJV - in the process of time  
NASB/ESV - in the course of time  
NIV - in the course of time  
NEB - the day came  
GNB - after some time  
LB - at harvest time

These are listed in this order intentionally, by way of decreasing literalness. Interestingly, none is truly literal at all!

Each of these, [aside from the Living Bible which completely interprets - rather than faithfully translates the text - stating that their coming was "at harvest" time of which the Hebrew is without reference] gives the impression that "it just so happened one day" that the brothers decided to

bring their respective offerings. The literal rendering of the Hebrew adds the missing note of definitiveness to the action of the men. Literally the Hebrew is to be rendered [as in the NASB marginal rendering] "in the end of days." By the literal rendering of the text, we are naturally led to think of days occurring in a sequence, one after another. Whenever it is that those days end, that is the point at which they come to worship. They come for a specific purpose - to worship God; they come at a specific time - in the end of days.

We have at this point in our study, already established a pattern of time for the patriarchs that seems to fit well in the context of Genesis 1-4,

*By the literal rendering of the text, we are to think of days in a sequence, one after another. Whenever it is that those days end, that is the point at which they come to worship. They come for a specific purpose to worship God, they come at a specific time - the end of days.*

being that of a week as the standard measure of time. This time then we believe, points to a particular and most likely repetitive pattern of worship. This is their habit every week. Thus it seems sound to conclude, that we have very strong reasons to believe that at the end of every week - on the day set apart by God as the Sabbath day - men regularly approached God in the activity of worship.

But not only does our text indicate, I believe very strongly, that Abel and Cain have an established focus and timing for worship, furthermore, they are shown as engaging in the worship of God at a particular location.

## The Place of Worship

Our text from Genesis 4 clearly states that when Cain came to worship God he brought his offering "to the Lord." In order to grasp the

literalness of the narrative one must read it as if it were, in fact, a real, historical event. You do not get the idea that Cain comes with his offering and simply wanders around not knowing where to go. The text gives every impression that Cain is being very definitive in his movement. He moves from where he was (ie. home or the field) to where he perceived God to be. Just where that place is we have yet to determine or surmise. But be that as it may, he brought the offering to some kind of definite place. We would suggest, that this is seen even more clearly in the case of Abel.

Consider what it is that Abel brings. The offering itself consists of two items of note: 1) the firstborn of the flock and 2) the fat portions from the animal sacrifice. Place yourself for a moment in the Mosaic community, into the original hearing of the story written down by the hand of Moses. Upon hearing of the offering of Abel, what is the only logical deduction clearly implied in the offering of the animal and its fat portions? Fat portions were to be burned, burning requires an altar - conclusion: Abel has brought his offering to God at a representative altar for burning. We would contend that Abel is bringing his offerings to the Lord at a designated place and time to offer them as an offering to the Lord on an altar by fire.

### **The Means of Worship**

Consider further the means of worship. Our text again states in verses 3 and 4, " In the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions."

*He moves from where he was (ie. home or the field) to where he perceived God to be. Just where that place is we have yet to determine or surmise. But be that as it may, he brought the offering to some kind of definite place.*

It is clear from the text in Genesis 4:5 that the Lord has no regard

either for “Cain” or for his “offering.” The significance of this will become more apparent via an examination of Abel, for whom God had great regard, and Abel’s offering, which God also saw to be “more excellent” than that of Cain (See Heb 11:4).

Consider the words of noted Old Testament scholar Oswald Allis from his work, God Spake by Moses:

Sacrifice is first mentioned here, but with no hint as to its origin. The statement that Cain and Abel both brought of their possessions might seem to imply that Cain’s bloodless sacrifice would have been accepted had his spirit been right. But the prominence subsequently attached to the shedding of blood favours the view that Cain and Abel both knew (by revelation?) that a bloody sacrifice was necessary. If so, Cain’s offering was rejected both because of its nature and because of the spirit in which it was offered (Allis, 20-21).

These words are sound and are substantiated by a more careful examination of Scripture itself. Consider what is said of Abel by the writer of the letter of Hebrews in chapter 11, verse 4:

By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts.

Two things are said about Abel’s sacrifice of which we need to take note. First, Abel offers a sacrifice by faith, and second, the sacrifice itself is more acceptable. Consider the second of these first. Abel’s sacrifice is mentioned by the writer to the Hebrews as “a more acceptable sacrifice.” Other translations offer some color to the picture of the sacrifice of Abel. They mention it as a “better” or “more excellent” sacrifice than that of Cain. Abel has brought a blood sacrifice, the sacrifice of an animal, to gain

entrance into the presence of God. Within the context of Genesis where the Cain and Abel story are found we have the very clear and interpretively influential account of God killing an animal or animals in a highly symbolic act, that points to the fact that what Adam and Eve had done to cover their nakedness, was deeply inadequate.

This sacrifice is the first killing of anything! Imagine, having never seen death, killing, blood, and now seeing it all, and knowing at the same time the slaughter of this animal is all taking place because you have violated the only positive command that has ever been given! I myself am no

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seasoned hunter, but I will never forget the vividness of the first deer I ever killed, and dressing it in the field. The starkness of the reality, the horror of the moment, the smell, the feeling of guilt, all of these memorable elements and more must have rushed through every fibre of their

being as they watched in horror the impact of sin in the realm of men. Nothing would ever be the same. Keil and Delitzsch add this helpful note in their highly regarded commentary on Genesis:

By this clothing, God imparted, to the feeling of shame, the visible sign of an awakened conscience, and, to the consequent necessity for a covering of the bloody nakedness, the higher work of a suitable discipline for the sinner. By selecting the skins of beasts for the clothing of the first men, and therefore causing the death or slaughter of beasts for that purpose, He showed them how they might use the sovereignty they possessed over the animals for their own good, and even sacrifice animal life for the preservation of human; so that this act of God laid the foundation for the sacrifices

(Keil and Delitzsch, 66-67).

Thus by the means of blood sacrifice, man is shown that the way back into the presence and graces of God would be by means of substitution. Abel knows this story full well. To assume otherwise goes against logic and reason. Abel does not simply “think up” this means of worship on his own. Before closing our consideration of the means of worship, hear from Calvin on the matter:

Moreover, it will be here proper to recall to memory what we have before said, that the first men, though they had been deprived of the sacrament of divine love, when they were prohibited from the tree of life, had yet been only so deprived of it, that a hope of salvation was still left to them, of which they had the signs in sacrifices. For we must remember, that the custom of sacrificing was not rashly devised by them, but was divinely delivered to them. For since the Apostle refers the dignity of Abel's accepted sacrifice to faith, it follows, first, that he had not offered it without the command of God (See Heb 11:4 and Rom 10:17). Secondly, it has been true from the beginning of the world, that obedience is better than any sacrifices, (1 Sam 15:22) and is the parent of all virtues. Hence it also follows that man had been taught by God what was pleasing to Him. Thirdly, since God has been always like himself, we may not say that he was ever delighted with mere carnal and external worship. Yet he deemed those sacrifices of the first age acceptable.

It follows, therefore, further, that they had been spiritually offered to him: that is, that the holy fathers did not mock him with empty ceremonies, but comprehended something more sublime and secret; which they could not have done without divine instruction. For it is interior truth alone which, in the external signs, distinguishes the genuine and rational worship of God from that which is gross and superstitious. And, certainly, they could not sincerely devote their

mind to the worship of God, unless they had been assured of his benevolence; because voluntary reverence springs from a sense of, and confidence in, his goodness; but, on the other hand, whosoever regards God hostile to himself, is compelled to flee from him with very fear and horror. We see then that God, when he takes away the tree of life, in which he had first given the pledge of his grace, proves and declares himself to be propitious to man by other means. Should anyone object, that all nations have had their own sacrifices, and that in these there was no pure and solid religion, the solution is ready: namely, that mention is here made of such sacrifices as are lawful and approved by God; of which nothing but an adulterated imitation afterwards descended to the Gentiles (Calvin, Genesis, 193).

### **The Manner of Worship**

Consider finally from our text the issue of the manner of worship. The manner of worship is faith. This is what is brought out by the book of Hebrews as the apex, the culminating factor of worship's acceptability. Faith is the means or the instrument by which man is ushered into the presence of God. Consider at this point a familiar text from Romans 10.

Romans 10:17 (ESV) So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

The whole of the context of Genesis 4 and the rest of the sacred text forces upon us the consideration that this event of worship is in no way initiated by Cain and Abel, but rather by God himself. Throughout the Scriptures as a whole it is God who sets the parameters for worship. Worship is in no way the "idea" of man. How does Abel know that he

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must come to God with a broken humble heart of faith, in contrition for his sin, with the visible form of life being offered in the place of life. He brings not the work of his hands, but the picture of the provision of God. Where does he get this idea? Abel gets this clearly from the revelation of God - this and only this is what becomes the impetus to faith. Remember - "faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ." Whether he gets the "word" of revelation via his parents who directly got it from God in the example of death in the garden or whether he discerns this through a direct encounter with the Divine himself, we are in no way told. But everything in the text points to the conclusion - he did not come up with the idea on his own.

Thus we find here that worship has a proper focus, a prescribed time, a particular place, a propitiatory means, and finally a providential manner. This brings to a close the exegetical examination of our text from Genesis - there remains for us however, a second issue we must address.

Standing behind, over, and under the historical reality of the Gen 3-4 narrative from our text in Genesis 3:24-4:5a is a dramatic representation, what one might refer to as a "theological drama" of imagery regarding the tabernacle which we believe would have been unmistakable to the original readers of the Mosaic cultus and one that becomes rich with imagery for us in light of the Sabbath issue. [For a visible representation of this information see Appendix 2]. Hear again from the text itself:

Genesis 3:24-4:5 (ESV) He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life. [4:1] Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord." [2] And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground. [3] In the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, [4] and Abel also

brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, [5] but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell.

Much of this imagery hinges upon how we are to understand the text of 3:24 along with the exegesis of the text that we have provided above. There is an alternate way of rendering the Hebrew in Genesis 3:24 that becomes most informative. The alternative translation is provided by Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, in their commentary on Genesis. They translate the last verse of Genesis 3 as follows:

And He (God) dwelt at the east of the Garden of Eden between the Cherubim, as a Shekinah (a fire-tongue or fire-sword) to keep open the way to the tree of life.

A. W. Pink notes at this point:

If the grammatical construction of the Hebrew will warrant this translation, then Genesis 3:24 would seem to signify that, having expelled man from the garden, God established a mercy-seat protected by the Cherubim, the fire-tongue or sword being the symbol of the Divine presence, and whoever would worship God must approach this mercy-seat by way of sacrifice. We commend this suggestion to the prayerful consideration of our readers.

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The words of the great reformed brother John Gill are also instructive at this point. Though not finding agreement at every point, and further, having edited his words somewhat, we feel that they are helpful in

shedding light on the overall picture being painted for us by the Spirit of God in the Genesis narrative:

The words are not to be understood either of placing man, or placing the cherubim, but of Jehovah's placing himself, or taking up his habitation and residence before the garden of Eden, or at the east of it: while man abode in a state of innocence, the place of the divine Presence, or where God more gloriously manifested himself to him, was in the garden; but now he having sinned, and being driven out of it, he fixes his abode in a very awful manner at the entrance of the garden, to keep man out of it; for so the words may be rendered, "and he inhabited the cherubim, or dwelt over, or between the cherubim, before or at the east of the garden of Eden."

*Among these Jehovah is; with these he grants his presence, and by them signifies his mind and will to men; and these he makes use of to show them the vanity of all self-confidence, and to beat them off of seeking for life and righteousness by their own works, and to direct them alone to Christ, and point him out as the alone way of salvation; and of this use (these cherubim) might be to fallen Adam, now driven out of Eden.*

The Jerusalem Targum records: And he made the glory of his Shechinah, or glorious Majesty, to dwell of old at the east of the garden of Eden, over or above the two cherubim.

Very frequently is Jehovah described as sitting and dwelling between the cherubim (in Scripture)... for these were the seat of the divine Majesty, and between which he dwelt. Among these Jehovah is; with these he grants his presence, and by them signifies his mind and will

to men; and these he makes use of to show them the vanity of all self-confidence, and to beat them off of seeking for life and righteousness by their own works, and to direct them alone to Christ, and point him out as the alone way of salvation; and of this use (these cherubim) might be to fallen Adam, now driven out of Eden.

And a flaming sword, which turned every way; a drawn sword, brandished, and which being very quick in its motion, as it was turned to and fro, glittered and looked like a flame of fire: this is not to be understood as by itself, and as of itself, turning about every way without a hand to move it, nor as with the cherubim, or as in the hands of angels...as being they themselves, which are made as flames of fire; but as in the hand of the Lord God, that dwelt between the cherubim; for so it may be rendered, "he inhabited the cherubim and that with a flaming sword;" that is, with one in his hand - an emblem of the fiery law of God now broken, and of the fire of divine wrath on the account of that, and of the flaming justice of God, which required satisfaction; and this turning on all sides, to keep the way of the tree of life; showing, that life and salvation were not to be had, unless the law and justice of God were satisfied; and that they were not to be expected on the foot of men's works, but only through Christ, the way, the truth, and the life; that no happiness was to be looked for from the covenant of works, now broke, nothing but wrath and vengeance; and that there must be another way opened, or there could be no enjoyment of the heavenly paradise (Gill on Genesis).

Regarding the tabernacle imagery here in the text Kenneth A. Matthews adds this helpful word:

Our passage continues to share the imagery of Moses' tabernacle by allusion to the "cherubim" at the "east side" of the garden (v.24).

*This directional motif "east" occurs often in Genesis: the expulsion of Cain (4:14), the locale of the Tower of Babel (11:2), and the dismissal of Keturah's sons by Abraham (25:6).*

The "east side" of the garden parallels the easterly direction the tabernacle and temple faced, situated west of the altar. This east-west dichotomy indicates that the garden was located to the west of their first habitat outside Eden, and we are told that Cain went eastward "from the Lord's presence" (4:16). This directional motif "east" occurs

often in Genesis: the expulsion of Cain (4:14), the locale of the Tower of Babel (11:2), and the dismissal of Keturah's sons by Abraham (25:6) (Matthews, 257).

The imagery lends support to the early presence of the Sabbath. This is so because the imagery of Genesis 4 parallels that of the Mosaic cultus which revolved around the Sabbath event. All of this is to say that the imagery of the cultic community is not to be restricted to the community of the Mosaic covenant itself. Rather this very imagery pervades all of Scripture. This is not to make the Edenic event an allegory or spiritualize the text in any way. It simply sets forth the reality that the worship of God is essentially the same in every age. With the breaking of the covenant of works by Adam in the garden, the covenant of grace permeates the rest of the Scripture.

Consider the comments of several noteworthy commentators through the ages as we draw this opening section regarding the evidence from the patriarchs to a close. These profound words have come to us from the likes of - James Montgomery Boice, Henry Alford, and Donald Grey Barnhouse respectively:

The cherubim stationed at the entrance to the Garden of Eden may not merely have been barring Adam and Eve from the tree of life. They may also have been guarding the way to the appointed place of sacrifice, so that Adam and Eve would be able always to come with their sacrifices and thus find God ready to receive them on the basis of the shed blood (Boice, 198).

The placing of these cherubim at the east of Eden was indicative of ordinances of worship and a form of access to the divine presence still open to man, though he was debarred from entrance into paradise (Cited by Boice, 198).

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As soon as man sinned, God found him and provided him a Savior. He opened a way back to himself and guards that way jealously lest anyone should close it (Cited by Boice, 198).

As soon as man sinned, God found him and provided him a Savior. He opened a way back to himself and guards that way jealously lest anyone should close it

Worship of the Patriarchs:

Those who would see the "absence of the Sabbath" in the Patriarchs from the silence of the text

must also deal with the reality of worship practices that seem standard fare among them that mimic in many ways the worship of the Mosaic cultus.

### Prayer

Genesis 4:26 (ESV) To Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. At that time people began to call upon the name of the Lord.

Genesis 12:8 (ESV) From there he moved to the hill country on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. And there he built an altar to the Lord and called upon the name of the Lord.

Genesis 26:25 (ESV) So he built an altar there and called upon the name of the Lord and pitched his tent there. And there Isaac's servants dug a well.

### Sacrifice

Job 1:1-5 (ESV) There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, and that man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil. [2] There were born to him seven sons and three daughters. [3] He possessed 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, and 500 female donkeys, and very many servants, so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the east. [4] His sons used to go and hold a feast in the house of each one on his day, and they would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. [5] And when the days of the feast had run their course, Job would send and consecrate them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all. For Job said, "It may be that my children have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts." Thus Job did continually.

Here we list Job first because many scholars believe it to represent the record of one of the oldest events in the Old Testament narrative.

Genesis 8:20 (ESV) Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

Genesis 12:8 (ESV) From there he moved to the hill country on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. And there he built an altar to the Lord and called upon the name of the Lord.

Genesis 13:18 (ESV) So Abram moved his tent and came and settled by the oaks of Mamre, which are at Hebron, and there he built an altar to the Lord.

Genesis 26:25 (ESV) So he built an altar there and called upon the name of the Lord and pitched his tent there. And there Isaac's servants dug a well.

Genesis 33:20 (ESV) There he erected an altar and called it El-Elohe-Israel.

Teaching:

Genesis 18:19 (ESV) For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring to Abraham what he has promised him."

Exodus 15:26 (ESV) "If you will diligently listen to the voice of the

Lord your God, and do that which is right in his eyes, and give ear to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you that I put on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord, your healer."

Hebrews 11:4 (ESV) By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks.

Romans 10:17 (ESV) So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

Obedience:

Genesis 5:22 (ESV) Enoch walked with God after he fathered Methuselah 300 years and had other sons and daughters.

Genesis 22:18 (ESV) and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice."

Genesis 26:4-5 (ESV) I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands. And in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, [5] because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws."

❖ Evidence from the Pre-Sinai Israelite Community - Exo 16:22-30

A casual look at Exodus 16 will clearly reveal that the commandment to keep the Sabbath was without doubt known to the Israelites before

Exodus 20. R. L. Dabney in some of his writings on the Sabbath has wisely commented on the text of Exodus 16:22-30:

This feast was also appointed to last a week. In Exodus 16:22-30, where we read the first account of the manna, we find the Sabbath institution already in force; and no candid mind will say that this is the history of its first enactment. It is spoken of as a rest with which the people ought to have been familiar. But the people had not yet come to Sinai, and none of its institutions had been given. Here, then, we have the Sabbath's rest enforced on Israel, before the ceremonial law was set up, and two weekly variations wrought in the standing miracle of the manna, in order to facilitate it. And when at length we come to the formal command of the decalogue, it is expressed in terms which clearly indicate that the Sabbath was an institution already known, of which the obligation was now only re affirmed (Dabney, 7).

*When at length we come to the formal command of the Decalogue, it is expressed in terms which clearly indicate that the Sabbath was an institution already known, of which the obligation was now only re affirmed.*

❖ Evidence From the Framing of the Fourth Commandment in Terms of "Remembrance"

When God addresses the assembly in Exodus 20 and gives them the Fourth commandment, as it was with all the others, God was speaking to them of things that he had inscribed into the hearts of men from the dawn of time. No one would have stood there and said something to the effect: "I can't believe adultery is wrong! This is really wrecking my plans! Murder too! Please!" We do not intend to be flippant in any way. We only wish to highlight the absurdity of some of those who speak as if this is the first time the Hebrew people would have heard of these commands. Nor would they have stood there and said: "A day? A whole day!?! But I have things to do!

I can't believe the nerve of God! Doesn't he know we are busy people!?" No, the realization that men must set aside time for the most central of all events in the universe - the worship of God - is framed by divine design into the moral fabric of man by his creator.

We may understandably debate the issue of whether or not man has always understood that the proper time to set aside for the worship of God has always been understood to be on the seventh day or some of the other ceremonial aspects of the command, but the obligation to set aside a portion of time for the worship of God is clearly the moral obligation of all men, at all times. God specifically couches his words in terms of "remembrance." As Old Testament scholar Oswald Allis has noted:

The word "remember" indicates that this is no new command, but one which goes far back into the history of the race (Allis, 76).

Some object because there are (we must admit), very clear texts that state the Sabbath is given particularly to the Hebrew people for a sign between them and their covenant God. Specifically the following texts are often cited:

Exodus 31:13 (ESV) "You are to speak to the people of Israel and say, 'Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you.

Exodus 31:17 (ESV) It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.

Ezekiel 20:20 (ESV) and keep my Sabbaths holy that they may be a sign between me and you, that you may know that I am the Lord your God.

Furthermore, Nehemiah states that it was in fact Moses who gave Israel the Sabbath:

Neh. 9:9-15 (ESV) "And you saw the affliction of our fathers in Egypt and heard their cry at the Red Sea, [10] and performed signs and wonders against Pharaoh and all his servants and all the people of his land, for you knew that they acted arrogantly against our fathers. And you made a name for yourself, as it is to this day. [11] And you divided the sea before them, so that they went through the midst of the sea on dry land, and you cast their pursuers into the depths, as a stone into mighty waters. [12] By a pillar of cloud you led them in the day, and by a pillar of fire in the night to light for them the way in which they should go. [13] You came down on Mount Sinai and spoke with them from heaven and gave them right rules and true laws, good statutes and commandments, [14] and you made known to them your holy Sabbath and commanded them commandments and statutes and a law by Moses your servant. [15] You gave them bread from heaven for their hunger and brought water for them out of the rock for their thirst, and you told them to go in to possess the land that you had sworn to give them.

This seems pretty conclusive. Nehemiah even couches this reminder that the Sabbath came from God via Moses in historical terminology surrounded by other historical references. In other words, it was at a specific historical time, along with many other unique historical events, that God gave his people the Sabbath.

However, this is far from the final word. Moses in fact could be rightly

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identified as the “one” who delivered the Sabbath to the Hebrew people, even though it had previously been given by God to his people from long ago.

Consider light shed on this issue from a similar work attributed to Moses from the gospel of John. Moses is said in John 7:22 to have given the people circumcision. Hear from the Apostle John:

John 7:14-24 (ESV) About the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and began teaching. [15] The Jews therefore marveled, saying, "How is it that this man has learning, when he has never studied?" [16] So Jesus answered them, "My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me. [17] If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority. [18] The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory, but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood. [19] Has not Moses given you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law. Why do you seek to kill me?" [20] The crowd answered, "You have a demon! Who is seeking to kill you?" [21] Jesus answered them, "I did one deed, and you all marvel at it. [22] Moses gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. [23] If on the Sabbath a man receives circumcision, so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because on the Sabbath I made a man's whole body well? [24] Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment."

Jesus is once again in the midst of a controversy over the issue of healing on a Sabbath day, most likely referring to the healing of the man in John 5, and he makes reference to the law of Moses in defense of his action. Jesus has in fact broken no true Sabbath laws. To prove this he makes reference to the act of circumcision that was permitted on the Sabbath in

order to fulfill the commandment of Moses. Jesus argues here from the lesser to the greater, that if circumcision is permitted to uphold Mosaic law on the Sabbath, surely his work (the greater work) ought to be allowed on the Sabbath day.

Although the whole story is of great significance for the Sabbath issue, the import for our immediate point focuses our attention on the words of Jesus in v.22:

John 7:22 (ESV) Moses gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath.

Jesus states emphatically that Moses gave the people the law of circumcision, referred to as the “law of Moses” in v.23. In all reality however, Moses did not give them circumcision at all! It was from the Fathers, as John parenthetically adds. Are we now to conclude that Jesus was in error in attributing circumcision to Moses? To borrow from Paul, “ May it never be!”

Jesus is in fact correct in the technical sense - the one who “covenantally” gave the law of circumcision to the Hebrew people was in fact Moses. In Leviticus 12:3 Moses gives clear directions to the people regarding circumcision as it relates to the covenant God was establishing with the people at Sinai. Hear from the whole context of the event of Moses giving the people the covenant rite of circumcision:

Leviticus 12:1-8 (ESV) The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, [2] "Speak to the people of Israel, saying, 'If a woman conceives and bears a male child, then she shall be unclean seven days. As at the time of her menstruation, she shall be unclean. [3] And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. [4] Then she shall continue for thirty-three days in the blood of her purifying. She shall

not touch anything holy, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying are completed. [5] But if she bears a female child, then she shall be unclean two weeks, as in her menstruation. And she shall continue in the blood of her purifying for sixty-six days.

[6] " 'And when the days of her purifying are completed, whether for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring to the priest at the entrance of the tent of meeting a lamb a year old for a burnt offering, and a pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering, [7] and he shall offer it before the Lord and make atonement for her. Then she shall be clean from the flow of her blood. This is the law for her who bears a child, either male or female. [8] And if she cannot afford a lamb, then she shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering. And the priest shall make atonement for her, and she shall be clean.' "

*Moses did in fact give the people the Sabbath as part and parcel of the covenant God was establishing with them at Sinai. Moses gave much more than had ever been revealed about the keeping of the day as holy to God. But none of this negates the reality that the Sabbath was, in principle, known to*

By far, this is more than was ever given to the Fathers! I believe this is what is implied in the Nehemiah text as well regarding the Sabbath. Moses did in fact give the people the Sabbath as part and parcel of the covenant God was establishing with them at Sinai. Moses gave much more than had ever been revealed about the keeping of the day as holy to God. But none of this negates the reality that the Sabbath was, in principle, known to men from of old, long before the Sinai event.

❖ Evidence from Those Commanded to Observe the Sabbath in the Fourth Commandment

Moses clearly states that the foreigner within the community was to observe the Sabbath.

Exodus 20:8-11 (ESV) "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. [9] Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, [10] but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. [11] For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Hear the comment on this very point from Robert Jamieson, in the Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary:

The mention of a stranger having to observe a Sabbath is proof that the command of a Sabbath is not merely Jewish, as has frequently been asserted. No stranger could join in eating the passover without being circumcised, and thereby initiated into Judaism: but a stranger might, nay, was obligated, as the commandment runs, to keep the Sabbath, though he had not been circumcised. The reason of this remarkable distinction is, that circumcision was a national, and the Sabbath a universal institution: the former was given in command to Abraham, and obligatory only on his descendants; while the latter was given to Adam, the father of all mankind (Jamieson, 358).

*The mention of a stranger having to observe a Sabbath is proof that the command of a Sabbath is not merely Jewish, as has frequently been asserted.*

❖ The Evidence from the Words of Jesus

More will be said on the particular words and works of Jesus in the section following regarding the "Post-Mosaic" Sabbath. Here we note the words of Christ that specifically point to the origin of the Sabbath being before the days of Moses and finding root in the period of the creation of the world. Jesus states in Mark's gospel the following:

Mark 2:27 (ESV) And he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.

The words of Jesus here are very general. If Jesus had intended to limit the Sabbath to the Jews this was a perfect opportunity. "The Sabbath was made for the Jew," would have been easy to say and even fitting for the occasion. But this is clearly not what he said. Jesus' words are given universal import and application - the Sabbath is for man. It is for his benefit. It is for his good.

As J. C. Ryle has said:

*Jesus' words are given universal import and application - the Sabbath is for man. It is for his benefit. It is for his good.*

The Sabbath is God's merciful appointment for the common benefit of all mankind. It was "made for man" (Mark 2:27). It was given for the good of all classes, for the laity quite as much as for the clergy. It is not a yoke, but a blessing. It is not a burden, but a mercy. It is not a hard wearisome requirement, but a mighty public benefit. It is not an ordinance which man is bid to use in faith, without knowing why he uses it. It is one which carries with it its own reward. It is good for man's body and mind. It is good for nations. Above all, it is good for souls (Ryle, 5).

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## Excursus 4

### The Post-Mosaic Sabbath



Having sufficiently established the existence of the ante-Mosaic Sabbath principle, the charge that is often laid that the Sabbath principle does not continue in the age of the New Covenant must be directly addressed. The following, in brief, is evidence

that will, we believe, be sufficient to support the perpetuity of the Sabbath into the New Covenant era of the church of Jesus Christ. The evidence is

- ✘ Christ's Lordship Over the Sabbath
- ✘ Christ's Affirmation of God's Gifting Man with the Sabbath for His Good
- ✘ Christ's Consistent Affirmation of the Law and His Application of its Moral Demands on Men
- ✘ Christ's Purposeful Confrontations with the Jews Regarding the Burden of the Sabbath
- ✘ The Submission to and Continuance of a "Sabbatical Structure" of Time
- ✘ The Regular Observance of the First Day as "The" Day of Corporate Worship
- ✘ The Continuance Among Some Early Jewish Christians to Continue to Observe the Sabbath in Contrast to the Observation of the Lord's Day by All
- ✘ The Influence of the Synagogue Seen in the Worship of the Early Church
- ✘ The Ethic of the Gospel Being "One" with the Ethic of the Old Covenant Law
- ✘ The Relationship Between the Rest of God, the Rest of the Believer in Christ, and the Rest of Eternity

summarized in the following table:

✘ Christ's Lordship Over the Sabbath

Christ declares in the gospels his Lordship and hence his absolute sovereignty over the Sabbath which has been given to man for his benefit

Mark 2:28 (ESV) So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath."

Matthew 12:8 (ESV) For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath."

Luke 6:5 (ESV) And he said to them, "The Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath."

Though many would lay the charge that Christ, in establishing his

Lordship over the Sabbath, points to abrogation, no textual support, treated with exegetical honesty, can be found.

✠ Christ's Affirmation of God's Gifting Man with the Sabbath for His Good

This has been sufficiently commented on above, and we refer the reader to the previous section for its support.

✠ Christ's Consistent Affirmation of the Law and His Application of Its Moral Demands on Men

Consider the following clear affirmations of the moral demands of God recorded by Matthew and Mark:

Matthew 22:35-40 (ESV) And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. [36] "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" [37] And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. [38] This is the great and first commandment. [39] And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. [40] On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

Mark 10:17-22 (ESV) And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" [18] And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. [19] You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.' " [20] And he said to him, "Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth." [21] And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing: go,

sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." [22] Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

These are not the words of a man who is seeking to do away with the moral demands of the law of God. In fact Jesus himself clearly stated just the opposite:

Matthew 5:17-20 (ESV) "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. [18] For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. [19] Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. [20] For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

The relationship of Christ to Old Covenant law has been the topic of much debate in reformed circles in recent years. Through the writing of men the likes of D. A. Carson and Fred Zaspel and others, a significant challenge has been laid to the traditional reformed understanding of the relation between the law of Christ and the law of Moses. We believe this challenge, though appearing weighty, is lacking in substance and sound exegesis. A full treatment of this subject unfortunately goes beyond the scope of this work, although it is intricately related to all that is being said herein regarding the perpetuity of the Sabbath principle as a transcovenantal duty and privilege of all men. We point the reader toward two very helpful articles by Professor Greg Welty, of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. These articles are listed in the bibliography section of this work and would be well worth the readers time and effort.

The texts listed above from the gospels are not the words of one doing away with, replacing, or adding to the essential content of the moral law revealed to and demanded of men by God. We must affirm with James and the Scripture, that there is “only One lawgiver and judge” (See James 4:12).

Interestingly, Irenaeus, the church father, continuing a quotation we began earlier once remarked:

Preparing man for this life, the Lord himself did speak in his own person to all alike the words of the Decalogue, and therefore in like manner do they remain permanently with us, receiving by means of his advent in the flesh extension and increase, but not abrogation. The laws of bondage, however, were one by one promulgated by Moses, suited for their instruction or for their punishment. These things therefore, which were given for bondage and for a sign to them, he cancelled by the new covenant of liberty. But he has increased and widened those laws which are natural and noble and common to all, granting to men largely and without grudging...to know God the Father and to love him with all the heart.

Is this not the essence of our confession when it states in chapter 19, section 5:

The moral law doth for ever bind all, as well justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof, and that not only in regard of the matter contained in it, but also in respect of the authority of God the Creator, who gave it; neither doth

*The moral law doth for ever bind all, as well justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof, and that not only in regard of the matter contained in it, but also in respect of the authority of God the Creator, who gave it; neither doth Christ in the Gospel any way dissolve, but much strengthen this obligation.*

Christ in the Gospel any way dissolve, but much strengthen this obligation.

✠ Christ's Purposeful Confrontations with the Jews Regarding the Burden of the Sabbath

The claim here is that Jesus Christ reestablishes the proper use of the Sabbath for worship, work, and witness. The reader is referred to Appendix 3 and the lessons and observations there for more complete coverage of this piece of evidence.

✠ The Submission to and Continuance of a "Sabbatical Structure" of Time

It is clear from a simple reading of the writings of the New Testament, that the church maintained the "sabbatical" structure of time for its corporate life. More is said in elaboration of this point under the heading of practical considerations regarding the Christian Sabbath later in this work.

✠ The Regular Observance of the First Day as "The" Day of Corporate Worship

Acts 20:7 (ESV) On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight.

1 Cor. 16:2 (ESV) On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come.

Rev. 1:10 (ESV) I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet

✠ The Continuance Among Some Early Jewish Christians to Continue to Observe the Sabbath in Contrast to the Observation of the Lord's Day by All

The Scripture seems to imply that among Jewish Christians, there was a continued presence that they held in the synagogues along with their brethren according to the flesh - the Jews.

Acts 9:1-2 (ESV) But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest [2] and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

Acts 22:5 (ESV) as the high priest and the whole council of elders can bear me witness. From them I received letters to the brothers, and I journeyed toward Damascus to take those also who were there and bring them in bonds to Jerusalem to be punished.

Acts 22:19 (ESV) And I said, 'Lord, they themselves know that in one synagogue after another I imprisoned and beat those who believed in you.

However, the body of believers as a whole, met regularly met on the first day of the week or the Lord's Day as it came to be called. Here they would be in their own distinct gathering separate from the synagogue, and its Jewish Sabbath connotations. This practice it would seem developed alongside the practice of the Jewish Christians meeting on the Jewish Sabbath and became the dominant practice among the church. The practice among the Jewish brethren meeting on Saturday eventually died out as the

Lord's Day was firmly established as the proper day for Christian worship. Consider the following texts as pointing toward the dominance of Christian worship on the Lord's Day:

Acts 20:7 (ESV) On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight.

1 Cor. 5:4 (ESV) When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus,

1 Cor. 11:17-18 (ESV) But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. [18] For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part,

1 Cor. 11:20 (ESV) When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat.

1 Cor. 14:19 (ESV) Nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

1 Cor. 14:26 (ESV) What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up.

1 Cor. 14:28 (ESV) But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God.

Hebrews 10:24-25 (ESV) And let us consider how to stir up one

another to love and good works, [25] not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Regarding these texts, and others like them, it has been noted that “We have in these various citations from Scripture incontestable evidence that the first day of the week was at least one of special observance to the apostles, and to Christian contemporary with them” (Swartley, 77).

One further point, is that of how churches chose and followed their own leadership, giving further indication that the New Covenant Christian community was coming to see itself as fully distinct from that of the Jewish community.

Acts 14:23 (ESV) And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

Hebrews 13:7 (ESV) Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.

Hebrews 13:17 (ESV) Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

#### ✘ The Influence of the Synagogue Seen in the Worship of the Early Church

To dig into the influence of the Jewish synagogue (not to mention the Temple itself) on early Christian worship would take us far beyond the scope of this work. Several helpful works and portions of works have been

written on this very issue to which the reader is directed. Those works are listed in the bibliography at the end of the book and have been written by Ralph Martin, W. D. Maxwell, and C. W. Dugmore.

Briefly here we want to note that the principle elements of Jewish worship are those of prayer, praise, and proclamation. These elements unmistakably are adopted by the early church as part and parcel of their corporate worship experience. To see this as mere coincidence is to deny the obvious. This “adopting” of Jewish patterns in worship is sound evidence for the thesis that the early church saw themselves as engaging in the principles of Sabbath worship - even though it was now occurring on a different day of the week. As W. D. Maxwell has noted in his work on Christian worship:

Christian worship, as a distinctive, indigenous thing, arose from the fusion, in the crucible of Christian experience, of the synagogue and the Upper room. . . .The typical worship of the Church is to be found to this day in the union of the worship of the synagogue and the sacramental experience of the Upper room; and that union dates from New Testament times (Maxwell, 5).

Thus we find the Lord's Day worship of the church expressing both continuity with the Jewish Sabbath - being concerned with God-centered elements of prayer, praise and proclamation, as well as discontinuity with Jewish worship - engaging in all these activities in the New Covenant context of Christ-centered worship. In this manner, we see the early church having moved from the Sabbath of the Old Covenant to the Sabbath worship of the New!

✠ The Ethic of The Gospel Being “One” With The Ethic of Old Covenant Law

This will only be treated in brief at this point, as the next section of our work is that of a full treatment of 1Timothy 1:8-11 in an excursus on exegetical evidence for the perpetuity of the Sabbath principle in the New Covenant. Though other texts could easily be listed from the New Testament record, consider briefly, the relationship between the ethical commands of Paul to the NT church and their relationship with the commands embedded in the Decalogue as found in Paul's letter to the Ephesian believers:

Commandment #5: Honor your father and mother.

Eph 6:1-2 (ESV) Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. [2] "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise),

Commandment #6: You shall not murder.

Eph 4:26 (ESV) [26] Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger,

Eph 4:31 (ESV) Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.

Commandment #7: You shall not commit adultery.

Eph 5:3 (ESV) But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.

Commandment #8: You shall not steal.

Eph 4:28 (ESV) Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have

something to share with anyone in need.

Commandment #9: You shall not bear false witness.

Eph 4:25-26 (ESV) Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.

❖The Relationship Between the Rest of God, the Rest of the Believer in Christ, and the Rest of Eternity

Hebrews 4:1-13 (ESV)

Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it. [2] For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened. [3] For we who have believed enter that rest, as he has said,

"As I swore in my wrath,

"They shall not enter my rest,"

although his works were finished from the foundation of the world.

[4] For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way:

"And God rested on the seventh day from all his works." [5] And

again in this passage he said,

"They shall not enter my rest."

[6] Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience,

[7] again he appoints a certain day, "Today," saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted,

"Today, if you hear his voice,

do not harden your hearts."

[8] For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have

spoken of another day later on. [9] So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, [10] for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.

[11] Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. [12] For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. [13] And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

The reader is referred to Appendix 5 for an exegetical treatment of a portion of this text by the noted Puritan scholar John Owen. Owen's comments on vs.9-10 powerfully lay out the truth of the Sabbath principle's abiding validity for Christ's church today. Though we know the explanation of the previous points of evidence to be woefully inadequate (though we believe the points themselves to be strong) for the sake of time, we turn now to the most important evidence - that provided by exegesis.

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## Excursus 5

### Exegetical Evidence for the Perpetuity of the Sabbath Principle in the New Covenant



The assertion that the moral law of God found in the Decalogue (in particular the Sabbath principle of the fourth commandment) is transcovenantal, is commonly met with the objection that the directive to keep the Sabbath holy unto the Lord is nowhere restated in the documents of the New Covenant - specifically in the records of the New Testament. This perpetuates the oft heard and asserted claim that what is not repeated in the New (from the Old) is not binding on the believer today. Or as Richard Barcellos summarizes it: "Not repeated, not binding" (Barcellos, 85). Or as is said by John Reisinger, a noted

representative of New Covenant Theology, “Nine of the ten (commandments that make up the Decalogue) are repeated in the New Testament Scriptures and are therefore just as binding on a Christian as they were on an Israelite” (Barcellos, 85, taken from Reisinger Tablets of Stone, 99). But there are several problems with this line of reasoning. For the sake of time, I will mention only two, touching lightly on the first, and pursuing the second in more detail. The first is hermeneutical, the second, exegetical.

The well worn phrase “not repeated, not binding” makes far too much of the “discontinuity” that exists between the testaments. Often a wedge is driven between the Old Testament and the New that the early church would not have assumed. To see Christ contra Moses we think is unwise and unsound. As Willem VanGemeran has aptly noted, we must

*Often a wedge is driven  
between the Old  
Testament and the New  
that the early church  
would not have assumed.  
To see Christ contra  
Moses we think is unwise  
and unsound.*

maintain a “consciousness of unity between the Old Testament and the New Testament, between the various parts of Scripture” (Feinberg, 37). Furthermore “old and new stand together and not over against each other” (Feinberg, 62). This is an affirmation of the Reformation principle of *tota Scriptura* - we affirm the “whole” or “all” of Scripture. This is not to say that those brethren who do not hold to the perpetuity of the “Sabbath principle” do not hold to or believe in “all” of Scripture. It is simply to demonstrate that at root, the issue of continuity vs. discontinuity is one of hermeneutics, and we

believe, that holding to the principle of the perpetuity of the Sabbath, is a direct result of a more consistent holding to *tota Scriptura* in practice. Much more really needs to be said about this. In fact much has already been said by many and the reader is directed to several works in the bibliography of this volume, most notably the work edited by John Feinberg, Continuity and Discontinuity, a helpful text on this very issue written by numerous covenantal and dispensational theologians. However, for the sake of time

and focus, the remainder of our response must be directed to the second issue noted above, that is, the response of exegesis.

It is to the claim that the commandment to keep the Sabbath holy to the Lord is in fact not repeated in the documents that make up the New Testament, to which we must turn the bulk of our attention. We think a sound and honest examination of the New Testament documents themselves sets forth a different picture. Though many texts could in fact be cited as providing evidence for the perpetuity of the Sabbath as a principle for the people of God, (the reader will recall that many have been cited in the previous section - the post-Mosaic evidence section - of this work) we are going to restrict ourselves to a text from Paul's first letter to Timothy, chapter 1, verses 8-11. The text reads as follows:

1 Tim. 1:8-11 (ESV) Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, [9] understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, [10] the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, [11] in accordance with the glorious gospel of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.

In lining out our exegesis of the text, we must set forth what we hope will prove to be a sound exegetical outline of the text itself. Our outline is as follows, with the text noted in italics and the outline in normal face type:

#### I. The Proper Use of the Law:

*Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully,*

## II. The Proper Subjects of the Law:

### A. Understanding for Whom the Law is Not Given

*understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just*

### B. Understanding for Whom the Law is Given

- but for the lawless and disobedient,*
- for the ungodly and sinners,*
- for the unholy and profane,*
- for those who strike their fathers and mothers,*
- for murderers,*
- the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality,*
- enslavers,*
- liars, perjurers*

## III. The Proper Relations of the Law:

### A. The Relationship of the Law to Sound Doctrine

*and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine,*

### B. The Relationship of the Law to the Gospel

*in accordance with the glorious gospel of the blessed God*

*with which I have been entrusted.*

In offering a full analysis of the text, there are a variety of issues that will be stated and answered. We have put them together, stated as questions,

in the following table:

- ⌘ What is the significance of Paul stressing the “goodness” of the law?
- ⌘ What would constitute a “lawful” verses an “unlawful” use of the law?
- ⌘ Why does Paul bring up “the lawful use” issue at this point?
- ⌘ What does it mean that the law has been “laid down”?
- ⌘ Who is the “just” man of which Paul speaks?
- ⌘ What is the law to which Paul is making reference?
- ⌘ What are the particular sins which are exposed by this law?
- ⌘ What is the source for Paul’s list of vices that define “lawlessness”?
- ⌘ What is the “sound doctrine” of which Paul writes?
- ⌘ What is the relation of the law and the gospel?

In analyzing the passage we will examine each question in turn, spending more or less time on each, beginning with the first.

⌘ What is the significance of Paul stressing the “goodness” of the law?

Paul states emphatically to Timothy, and couches in terms with which Timothy would agree, a strong affirmation of the goodness of the law. He simply states “Now we know that the law is good...” (1Tim 1:8). This is stated in such a way that we are led to believe that this is the common affirmation of the church of Christ regarding the inherent moral goodness of the law of God. When Paul says that “we know,” he is including himself, as well as Timothy, in the common affirmation of the church at large regarding the law given by God to his people. George Knight III rightly states that “‘We know...’ is used by Paul to indicate that what he says is, in fact, the recognized Christian

*Paul states emphatically to Timothy, and couches in terms with which Timothy would agree - a strong affirmation of the goodness of the law.*

understanding of the subject, one that is commonly known, believed, and accepted” (Knight, 80). Paul has said as much elsewhere. Consider the following, taken from his letter to the Romans:

Romans 7:12 (ESV) So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

Romans 7:14 (ESV) For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin.

Romans 7:16 (ESV) Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good.

Romans 7:19 (ESV) For I do not do the good (that which is designated as such by the law) I want, but the evil (that which is also designated as such by the same law) I do not want is what I keep on doing.

Romans 8:4 (ESV) in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Consider, further, Paul’s admonition to Timothy regarding the “goodness” of the Old Testament in his second letter to his young apprentice. Although he does not use the terminology of “goodness,” he couches his thoughts with like sentiment referring to the Old Testament (including the law found therein) as “profitable.”

2 Tim. 3:14-17 (ESV) But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it [15] and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. [16] All Scripture is breathed out by

God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, [17] that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

Surely Paul has in mind here the whole of the Old Testament corpus. But in the words of D. R. DeLacey, "it would be monstrous to suppose that "Scripture" could here exclude the law" (Carson, 174)! Paul is not however a solo voice. This sound and positive affirmation of the moral goodness of the law is not without widespread attestation. Consider other notes that sound the same melody from other voices in the Apostolic witness. James writes of that law of Moses, focusing his thoughts in particular in the Decalogue, that it is the perfect law, the law of liberty, and a law seen as royal in character.

James 1:25 (ESV) But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

James 2:8 (ESV) If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well.

James 2:12 (ESV) So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty.

It will be helpful at this point for the reader to take special note of the context of James's thought here in his writing. What is this liberating, perfect and royal law of which he speaks. The context would make clear that the law James has in mind is that law of God that is imbedded in the Decalogue - the Ten Commandments of the Mosaic Covenant. James states in chapter 2 the following:

James 2:8-12 (ESV) If you really fulfill the royal law according to the

Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. [9] But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. [10] For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. [11] For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. [12] So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. [See also here Romans 13:8-10]

Though further study on James's treatment of the law would be well worth our time and would prove to be both helpful and supportive of our overall premise regarding continuity between the testaments concerning the law of God for the church and its ethic, to do so at this point goes beyond our present time and space constraints.

Peter also notes that the law that is set forth for sinners to heed, that is to bring conviction and turn them from sin to the way of righteousness found in Christ Jesus, is a holy commandment.

2 Peter 2:21 (ESV) For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them.

And finally, the Apostle John, weighing in on the matter, states that in essence, sin is lawlessness. He writes in 1 John 3:4 that "Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness." In other words, the law - holy, righteous, good, spiritual, perfect, liberating, and royal - stands in a complete antithesis to the evil of sin.

This positive and consistent affirmation of the goodness of the law for the New Covenant community was but a contiguous affirmation inherited from their Old Covenant fathers which encouraged their own

affirmation of the good law of God. Perhaps no more clear and glorious affirmation in all of Scripture regarding the goodness of Holy Writ has ever been penned under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God than that found in the 19<sup>th</sup> Psalm:

Psalm 19:7-9 (ESV) The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; [8] the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; [9] the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether.

Such a glorious law and precious truth must only be used by Timothy and us in a way that is both fitting and right. To the examination of that subject, we turn our attention.

✠What would constitute a “lawful” verses an “unlawful” use of the law?

When Paul states to Timothy in v.8 that “the law is good, if one uses it lawfully” he is clearly implying that there is such a thing as a lawful, and conversely, such a thing as an unlawful use of the law of God. He is also encouraging the former and discouraging the latter. Briefly stated, the “lawful” use of the law is to make use of the law for that which it was intended. The law has been given by God for specific purposes.

When men use it for those very clear and divine purposes, they use it rightly. Rogers notes that this kind of use of the law is using it “agreeably to the design” for which it was intended (Rogers, 488). The law must be used in a proper way and on a proper subject. As George Knight notes: “This principle both exposes the error of the ‘teachers of the law’ or the ‘law-teachers’ and prepares the way for the following remarks” (Knight, 81). This brings us to another question.

✠ Why does Paul bring “the lawful use” issue up at this point?

In order for us to fully grasp the rationale of the Apostle in pointing Timothy to the “lawful” use of the law, we must set the broader context of the situation into which Paul’s first pastoral epistle was thrust. The proper use of the law had been corrupted by the would be “law-teachers” who had crept in to the church over which Timothy had been given responsibility. Like Titus on the isle of Crete, Timothy had been left in Ephesus to “put what remained into order” (ESV Tit 1:5).

A challenge was being placed against a proper understanding of the use of the law of God among the people of God. Unlike the Galatian heresy in the encroachment of the Judaizers who sought to bind the liberty of

*A challenge was being placed against a proper understanding of the use of the law of God among the people of God.*

Christian people in the legal use of law as a means of justification, the would be “law-teachers” of the Ephesian church were seeking to lead men away from proper ethical use of the law of God, into making use of the law for useless speculation and argumentation. In doing this they were exalting fallen human imagination, and pursuing spirituality at the expense of holiness and a pure conscience before God.

Paul points to this corruption in the opening of his epistle to young Timothy:

1 Tim. 1:3-7 (ESV) As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, [4] nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith. [5] The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a

sincere faith. [6] Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, [7] desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions.

Timothy is in danger of being led astray, or at the very least challenged in his position of oversight of the flock, by these “wannabe” teachers who do not understand the purpose of the law, in spite of the boldness with which they speak. He must be pulled back to and exhorted in the true and sound use of God’s law as a corrective against sin and a means by which God holds men on the path of holiness in the things of Christ and his church. Rather than turn aside to myths - the made up “truths” of the fallen mind of man - Timothy must hold the course of faith (soundness of doctrine as taught by the law and the gospel) and a good conscience (the purity of life that comes from the healthy teaching of the prophets and the apostles).

Paul addresses this situation in Timothy’s context where the heart intention of the law of God is being missed. Paul wants Timothy to know that the law is not for discussion and debate; it is not to satisfy the curiosity of men who would exalt themselves to be its teachers but refuse to humble themselves to be its students. The law is given for the purpose of defining what is right and what is wrong. The law makes a clear demarcation between what is moral and immoral, between what God wants and what He doesn’t want. Paul says in effect, that if Timothy makes use of the law lawfully, it will be useful in exposing sinners and their sin. The law is designed here to line out an ethical standard that must be heeded.

Paul warns Timothy and Titus both, of these insidious errors that are creeping into

*Paul wants Timothy to know that the law is not for discussion and debate; it is not to satisfy the curiosity of men who would exalt themselves to be its teachers but refuse to humble themselves to be its students.*

the church:

1 Tim. 4:7 (ESV) Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness.

2 Tim. 4:3-4 (ESV) For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, [4] and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

Titus 1:10-16 (ESV) For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. [11] They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach. [12] One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." [13] This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, [14] not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth. [15] To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled. [16] They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.

Titus 3:9 (ESV) But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless.

It is for this very ethical use of the law, that it was in fact given. To the important point of the law having been given, or "laid down" we turn now in our exegesis.

✠What does it mean that the law has been “laid down”?

There are several ideas being highlighted in the mentioning of the law as having been “laid down.” Paul notes that: “we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, understanding this, that the law is...laid down for the...lawless.”

Stating that the law has been “laid down” points to several aspects of the law as it stands in the context of 1 Timothy 1 - its finality, its validity, its authority, and finally its origin.

First, it points to the form and content of the law being final. No alteration is allowed to the law in this terminology by the Apostle. The law being “laid down” indicates that it has been established and stands “as is” with no alteration in sight.

Second, this very fact of its unalterability points to its enduring validity as the fixed standard of righteousness. This will lend authority and usefulness to the law in its position as an expositor of sin. It defines sin in every age, place, and event. It never changes. It is fixed. Its ethic never changes.

Third, these points listed above draw our attention toward the law's enduring authority. It forever stands over all who would challenge its definition of righteousness and, furthermore, holds all in its judgement for failing to live up to its standard. None will escape its assessment of their failure to meet its demands.

Fourth, and finally, the fact that the law has been laid down points to its origin.

*[The law] forever stands over all who would challenge its definition of righteousness and, furthermore, holds all in its judgement for failing to live up to its standard. None will escape its assessment of their failure to meet its demands.*

It points to something that has been given to man. Grammatically it is a passive voice verb, which often indicates what theologically we would refer to as a divine passive. This indicates that it has been given to men by God. Or in other words, it has been set forth or laid down for men by God Himself.

✳Who is the “just” man of which Paul speaks?

“The meaning of...‘righteous man,’” states George Knight, “is crucial for our understanding of this passage” (Knight, 80). To go astray at this point will lead to very opposing conclusions. Consider the text again in verses 8-9:

Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless.

Other Translations Vary Somewhat from This:

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NASB: “a righteous person”

KJV: “a righteous man”

NIV: “the righteous”

So the question that must be addressed is this: “Who is this righteous man or person” of whom Paul writes? In order to help us further along the path of answering this very important question we will layout some options:

Option 1: The righteous man is the man who obeys the law.

Option 2: The righteous man is the man declared righteous by Christ.

Option 3: The righteous man is Christ.

Option 4: The righteous man is the self-righteous or hypocritical man.

Consider option 3 first. Identifying the righteous man as Christ seems foreign to the context. Paul seems to be thinking about men in general, people as a whole, a larger category of men than simply Christ himself. Furthermore, one might effectively make a case that the law was “for Christ” in that it is the very law of God that Christ in fact came to fulfill and obey in its completeness.

Consider secondly, option 4: the self-righteous person. This also is most likely not the man of whom the Apostle writes. For the law seems at many points in Scripture to be given especially for such as the self-righteous and hypocritical. The law is good and useful for exposing the sins that the self-righteous man denies he in fact is guilty of having committed.

The first two options are a little more difficult. Let's begin with option 2. If we say that the law is in fact not made for the believer, what we just determined previously - that the ethic of the law and the ethic of the gospel are the same - then basically we are almost forced to conclude that if the law is not for the believer, the gospel is not either. This cannot be what the Apostle intends. Furthermore, this would seem to go against what the Apostle Paul himself says elsewhere, where he clearly indicates that the law does in fact have continuing validity for the believer in Christ. More will be said about this as we go on, but consider as an example Romans 13:8-10:

Rom 13:8-10 (ESV) Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other

commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

This would be a strange thing to write to Christian people if in fact the law had nothing whatsoever to do with them in the living of the life of Christ-following. The commandments regarding adultery, murder, stealing, coveting are found where? The Decalogue. Notice Paul also has other commandments in mind that he does not list, indicating that the other commandments are also in his mind, but he does not feel the need to mention them. Thus, we conclude, that if the just or righteous man in 1Timothy is in fact the man "in Christ," then Paul is speaking in a manner that directly contradicts what he has said elsewhere in his epistles.

We come now to our final option: Option 1 - the man who in fact obeys the law. This man is already in conformity to the law of God and therefore, the law is not for him in this ethical sense. Consider the following as an illustration. You are driving down the highway in a 60 mph zone and you are going 60 mph. You happen out of the corner of your eye to notice that along the side of the road is a police officer - the law! You continue on. You don't hit the breaks. That is unless you have a guilty conscience because you are normally a little heavy with the foot! But you continue on uninterrupted. Why? Because he is not there for you. You are in full conformity to the law of the land - he is waiting for another. The law is meant to come in like a flood when man lacks conformity to its fixed standards. This is what one might consider a contextual argument for our position. For Paul is in fact arguing for just such an ethical understanding of the law's usefulness in 1Timothy 1:8-11. He is, as we have already asserted earlier, arguing that the proper use of the law is in fact in the field of ethics.

*The law, as well as the gospel, speak with one voice when it comes to the issue of defining righteousness.*

The law, as well as the gospel, speak with one voice when it comes to

the issue of defining righteousness. Furthermore, in support of our position here, is the evidence in the New Testament itself that the righteous man can be both a believer and an unbeliever. Paul speaks in terms of the righteousness of an unbeliever, using himself as an example in Philippians 3; James uses terms of righteousness to describe men like Elijah, Old Testament saints who had been covered with the very righteousness of Christ in a saving way in days of old.

✠What is the law to which Paul is making reference?

All that has been said up to this point is somewhat preliminary to the point at hand - discerning the nature and the specific identity of the "law" of which Paul speaks. This will point us more directly to the issue of the perpetuity or transcovenantal nature of the Sabbath principle which we are seeking to defend in this exegetical section of our work. The options regarding the specific "law" to which Paul refers are 1) a general principle of law to which all are privy via general revelation through the conscience and the natural law written on the heart or 2) a specific law - the Mosaic law - revealed by God to man in the Old Testament.

The following list of observations or considerations puts forth our case for viewing "law" - as referenced in 1Timothy 1:8-11 - as a specific reference to Mosaic law, specifically the moral law as codified in the Decalogue or the Ten Commandments. We will comment on each as far as is necessary. It may be helpful as well to hear again the text under consideration from the Apostle:

1 Tim. 1:8-11 (ESV) Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, [9] understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, [10] the sexually immoral, men

who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, [11] in accordance with the glorious gospel of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.

**Considerations Informing Our Decision:**

**Consideration 1:** “Law” is definite, accompanied by the Greek definite article, when introduced in v.8.

Our first consideration is in regard to the definitive statement regarding “law” by Paul in v.8. In making reference to “law” Paul clearly makes reference to “the” law. He intentionally makes use of the definite article in the Greek text which in turn unmistakably points to a known, definite law, rather than a vague, general, and undefined principle of “law.”

**Consideration 2:** “Law” without the article in Pauline writings normally points to Mosaic law.

The above consideration is not rendered moot by the fact that in v.9 Paul turns and makes reference to the law again though this time without the article. Not only does the terminology for “law” in v.9 draw its distinctness from its near antecedent reference in v.8 (where Paul uses “law” with the definite article as noted above), additionally in Paul’s other epistolary writings when making reference to the law as Mosaic law he often makes reference to it without the article. Some examples of “law” specifically pointing to Mosaic law without the article in the Greek text are as follows:

Romans 2:17 (ESV) But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God

Romans 2:25 (ESV) For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey

the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision.

Romans 3:20 (ESV) For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

Galatians 2:19 (ESV) For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ.

Galatians 6:13 (ESV) For even those who are circumcised do not themselves keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh.

All of these references, which are anarthrous (without the definite article), clearly point to Mosaic law in the contexts in which they are found. To make them point to “law” in general without reference to Mosaic law causes the arguments of the texts to fall short of their intended meaning and import. As A. T. Robertson, hailed by many as the most noteworthy Greek scholar of all time, has rightfully noted: “In general, when ‘law’ (nomos) is anarthrous (not accompanied by the article) in Paul, it refers to the Mosaic Law” (Robertson, 796).

*In general, when ‘law’ (nomos) is anarthrous (not accompanied by the article) in Paul, it refers to the Mosaic*

**Consideration 3:** The terminology of “law” as set forth herein is that it has been “given” or “laid down” which in turn points to its permanence and that it continues to exist in a clearly known definitive form.

The ESV translates the Greek here as “laid down” in reference to the law that has been given by God to men. The reader is referred back to

the question above regarding what is meant by the law being “laid down.” Simply put here, we note that the law being thus “laid down” points to permanence, unalterability, and its abiding authority over men. This too points away from some general, vague “law” and draws our attention toward the Mosaic law clearly given by God and permanently existing in a well known and accessible form.

**Consideration 4:** In the context, “law” is being utilized by false teachers as if it were a known and possessed body of material.

These next two considerations require us to think of those whose presence serve as the driving impetus for the Apostle as he writes to young Timothy. Timothy is faced with teachers who would pervert the proper or right use of the law of God. He communicates this clearly to Timothy right up front in his first epistle to him, stating:

1 Tim. 1:3-7 (ESV) As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, [4] nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith. [5] The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. [6] Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, [7] desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions.

The “vain discussions” into which these would be law-teachers are wandering, are no less than discussions about “the law.” They are making confident assertions or conclusions regarding this law. All of this would be senseless if the law to which Paul is referring is some vague, abstract, undefined principle of law.

**Consideration 5:** Every other occurrence of the phrase “teachers of the law” (one word in the Greek) in the New Testament clearly points to those who teach the Law of Moses.

The Greek term which is translated by the ESV as “teachers of the law” is made use of at two other points in the New Testament record. The occurrences are as follows:

Luke 5:17 (ESV) On one of those days, as he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was with him to heal.

Acts 5:34 (ESV) But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in honor by all the people, stood up and gave orders to put the men outside for a little while.

When Luke makes reference to the “teachers of the law” and specifically to Gamaliel, a Pharisee (in Acts), as “a teacher of the law” this clearly in the context is making reference to the position of the Pharisees as the “teachers of Israel” (cf. John 3:10 where Jesus refers to Nicodemus - a Pharisee - as “the teacher of Israel”). Though Luke makes a distinction between the Pharisees and the “teachers of the law,” this is probably not a hard and fast distinction. Earl Ellis states that the phrase “teachers of the law” is “used in the rabbinic writings of those who give ‘halacha’ - the authoritative interpretation of Scripture” (Ellis, 104). This is most likely a reference to another group of Jewish leaders - the scribes - although the Pharisees also played an important role in instructing the nation in the law of God. At any rate, the phrase from 1 Timothy 1:7 is without question - when consideration is taken of the only other uses of the same term in the New Testament record - a reference to those who were seen in Israel as the official teachers of the Mosaic law and the rightful interpreters of its meaning

and use.

**Consideration 6:** Points of relation with Titus (the companion pastoral epistle to Paul's first and second letters written to Timothy) support our conclusion that the Apostle is making reference to Mosaic law in referring to "the law:"

Consider the following from Paul's letter to Titus:

Titus Confronted with Jewish False Teachers: Titus 1:10 (ESV) For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially (or "that is") those of the circumcision party.

False Teachers Focus on Jewish Myths: Titus 1:14 (ESV) [They devote] themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth.

False Teachers Quarrel About the Law: Titus 3:9 (ESV) Avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless.

The heresy that was creeping into the churches over which Titus was responsible were in a similar situation to the church in Ephesus over which Timothy had charge. These churches were in danger of being led astray by Jewish, would-be law-teachers ("those of the circumcision party") who through empty talk and deceit were leading unsuspecting and unwise church members "away from the truth," causing "dissensions" and "quarrels" about the law.

These churches were in danger of being led astray by Jewish, would-be law-teachers (“those of the circumcision party”) who through empty talk and deceit were leading unsuspecting and unwise church members “away from the truth,” causing “dissensions” and “quarrels” about the law.

**Consideration 7:** Paul normally has the Mosaic Law in mind when setting it alongside the gospel in his epistles.

Though the texts are too long to quote here, the reader is referred to Romans 3:19-31, 7-8, Galatians 3-4, and Philippians 3:7-9 to see how Paul, in discussing the gospel in his writings, often discusses the gospel along with the law, and in these contexts, “the law” being referenced is clearly Mosaic law.

**Consideration 8:** The statement made in v.9 about the law, that it is “laid down...for the lawless and disobedient” is connected to a particular listing of sins by the adversative conjunction “but,” demonstrating that it is in fact the Mosaic Law that is occupying Paul’s thoughts at this point.

In the context, “law” defines particular sins or clearly points out particular people who engage in particular vices. As we examine these particular violations or transgressions, it will become obvious to the reader that Paul is making reference to violations of none other than codified Mosaic law, found in the Decalogue itself.

✘What are the particular sins which are exposed by this law?

For an answer to this question in chart form, the reader is directed

to Appendix 4: The Ethical Violations of 1Tim 1:8-11. What follows here is offered as somewhat of a running commentary or narrative exegesis of the chart itself. One notices immediately upon consulting the chart regarding the ethical violations listed in 1Timothy 1:9b-11 that our study of them is distinguished by five categories. The first category is an examination of the translation, as found in the ESV, and a stating of the Greek text that stands behind the English. In our explanation of the chart, in the following commentary, we have only included the transliteration of the Greek. For the Greek text, the reader is directed to the chart itself. Second, a few (though certainly not an exhaustive listing) of the principle occurrences of the terms as found in the New Testament record are listed. This is followed by a third category, that of the command from the Decalogue that we believe is being referred to in summary fashion by the Apostle. Fourth, we spend some time examining the Old Testament background behind the thinking of Paul. And finally, we will seek to elaborate somewhat on the significance of each law violation as necessary to answer our stated question and lead into the next portion of the study.

As Paul states very clearly, the lawful or proper employment of Mosaic law is designed for the purpose (at least one of the purposes) of exposing the sins of

[9b]the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, [10] the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, [11] in accordance with the glorious gospel of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted (1Tim 1:9b-11 ESV).

Several general observations need to be made regarding the whole of the text before we descend into the particulars of the chart itself. The bulk of our comments will be made in observation #1, leaving our comments in

the rest of the observations rather brief.

**Observation #1:** The list given points out particular sins by drawing our attention to the types of people who engage in them.

Consider again briefly this list of violations mentioned in 1 Timothy 1:9b-10a

[9b]the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, [10] the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers...

Paul is zealous for Timothy's holiness, as well as being zealous for the holiness of Timothy's fellow elders, and those whom they pastor. The heresy that is sweeping through the Ephesian and Cretan churches differs from the Judaizing heresy sweeping through - say - the Galatian churches.

Though we have commented previously on this very point in brief, here we want to address the issue more fully. At this point, in the Apostle's concern, the problem is not principally soteriological, but ethical. Consider the following as support for the assertion that Paul has a passion for Timothy and his brethren to remain pure:

1 Tim. 1:3-6 (ESV) As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, [4]

*The heresy that is sweeping through the Ephesian and Cretan churches differs from the Judaizing heresy sweeping through - say - the Galatian churches..[Here] the problem is not principally soteriological, but ethical.*

nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith. [5] The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. [6] Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion.

Detaching themselves from the ethical principles of the law, men begin to wander from the purity of the Christian life. They begin to detach themselves from true spirituality - consisting of obedience to the commands of God - and drift into what they perceive to be some higher form of spirituality that in truth distances them from the truth of God and the real and right use of the law. Some might retort that true spirituality consists of love for God, not simply obedience to the commands of God. We agree! But what kind of love for God is it that is not made visible by obedience to his commands. To drive a wedge between obedience and love is never safe! Consider further:

1 Tim. 1:18-20 (ESV) This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, [19] holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith, [20] among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.

The good warfare to which Paul calls Timothy is not simply that of apologetics but a call to hold to the truth of the word of God with a

*Some might retort - that true spirituality consists of love for God, not simply obedience to the commands of God. We agree! But what kind of love for God is it that is not made visible by obedience to his commands. To drive a wedge between obedience and love is never safe!*

good/pure/clean conscience. Doctrines must not be simply held intellectually but embraced affectionately. To fail at this is to make “shipwreck” of the faith. Those who take the truth and do not hold to it with purity are guilty of blasphemy! Listen to what Paul writes to Timothy in this regard in 1Timothy 4

1 Tim. 4:11-16 (ESV) Command and teach these things. [12] Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. [13] Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. [14] Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. [15] Practice these things, devote yourself to them, so that all may see your progress. [16] Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

Timothy must give careful watch to his doctrine as well as his life! Our practice should not outstretch our doctrine, or we will find ourselves living without proper grounding. Furthermore, our doctrine must not so outstretch our pattern of living, that we find ourselves speaking empty words in the wind with no power of true godliness to back up what we say. Think about the one who asks, “Should I give more attention to holiness, or should I give more attention to the truth?” What kind of question is that!? Paul says: “Watch your life and your doctrine closely!” Consider further the sixth chapter of this pastoral letter

1 Tim. 6:11-21 (ESV) But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. [12] Fight the good fight of the faith (See 1:18). Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. [13] I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things,

and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, [14] to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, [15] which he will display at the proper time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, [16] who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen. [17] As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. [18] They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, [19] thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life. [20] O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called "knowledge," [21] for by professing it some have swerved from the faith. Grace be with you.

All of these exhortations from the Apostle to young Timothy to “watch his life and doctrine” point to the rationale behind Paul’s mentioning of the law, as we have already asserted in our study, that he is in fact not thinking in a soteriological, but rather in an ethical framework. It is Paul’s point here to counter the ethical malfunction of the would be law-teacher’s instruction. Hence he points Timothy to a lawful or proper use of the law, that of identifying sin and extolling righteousness - the very righteousness that is also held forth in the gospel.

For some, however, the fact that Paul is summarizing a list of people, not sins, actually

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argues against our position that Paul is making a case for the law to be applicable to both Christians and non-Christians in making distinctions between that behavior which is righteous and that which is unrighteous. Though we would disagree with their conclusions, for the sake of argument, let's hear their side of the story. They would contend that Paul is pointing out people, not sins, and the very people to whom he is pointing are those who have the character of... "murders, adulterers, etc..." Thus, it cannot be believers - in any sense - that he applies the law in this case.

Let us hear from the opponents themselves, first from Mike Adams (representative of the viewpoint of many New Covenant theologians on this text) who has written a work entitled In Defense of the New Covenant which is a response to the work of Richard Barcellos' work - In Defense of the Decalogue. Adams contends that Paul is not exposing evil vices in 1 Timothy chapter 1; he is exposing evil people. He is not enumerating a list of wicked practices; he is enumerating a list of wicked sinners (Adams, 30). He goes on to add later in his work:

The context of 1 Timothy 1 shows that Paul is not giving us a list of sins as Barcellos asserts; he is giving us a list of sinners. He is not enumerating a list of bad habits; he is supplying Timothy with a list of bad people (Adams, 31).

Along this same line of reasoning comes Tom Wells and Fred Zaspel in their work - New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, and Defense. In this work, Wells points out that Paul's list in 1 Timothy 1 highlights evil people, rather than sins, by pointing to a similar use of language found in Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 Paul writes

1Co 6:9-11 (ESV) Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who

practice homosexuality, (10) nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. (11) And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Wells makes the following comment on this section from Paul's letter:

Here Paul not only gives us a list of persons, but he makes sure that we understand this is in no sense a list of Christians. [We agree.] Such people "will not inherit the kingdom of God." Someone might reasonably ask, "Don't you know, Paul, that Christians can commit some of these sins?" But Paul would reply, "I am not giving you a list of sins. I'm giving you a list of people. They are lost because these things characterize them (Wells, 194).

There are several observations that we are compelled to make at this point. First, why does Paul have a list such as this, given as it is, to the church in Corinth? This is a portion of a letter written to a congregation of believers. Could it be that many of the things that Paul takes time to mention are actually occurring within the fellowship of believers in the church at Corinth? Yes! In fact immorality of the grossest kind was mentioned in chapter 5 where we read the following:

1Co 5:1-13 (ESV) It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. (2) And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you. (3) For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing. (4) When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, (5) you are to deliver this man

to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord. (6) Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? (7) Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. (8) Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. (9) I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— (10) not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. (11) But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one. (12) For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? (13) God judges those outside. "Purge the evil person from among you."

Not only, though, was this occurring in the body, it had the potential of infecting the rest of the fellowship (See v.6). Therefore Paul says, purge, and so protect the fellowship. For a further reason as to why Paul mentions this "list of persons" in chapter 6:9-11, we need to read what he states immediately following v.11 in vs.12-20

1Co 6:12-20 (ESV) "All things are lawful for me," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful for me," but I will not be enslaved by anything. (13) "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food"—and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. (14) And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. (15) Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! (16) Or do you not

know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "The two will become one flesh." (17) But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. (18) Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. (19) Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, (20) for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

Consider Paul's word to the church in v.18, "Flee from sexual immorality." This is to the church! The whole point of writing 1Corinthians 6:9-10 is to demonstrate the absolute contradiction of allowing immorality to go on in their midst. However, though it is a contradiction, it is a real and actual possibility for immorality to be found even among the people of God. Therefore, Paul writes, "flee" from it now! Consider what Paul writes in other letters:

Eph 4:17-24 (ESV) Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. (18) They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. (19) They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. (20) But that is not the way you learned Christ!- (21) assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, (22) to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires,

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(23) and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, (24) and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Eph 5:5-10 (ESV) For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. (6) Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. (7) Therefore do not become partners with them; (8) for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (9) (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), (10) and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.

1Th 4:3-7 (ESV) For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; (4) that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, (5) not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; (6) that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. (7) For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness.

Heb 12:14-15 (ESV) Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. (15) See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled;

1Pe 4:13-17 (ESV) But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. (14) If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. (15)

But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. (16) Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. (17) For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

What is the point of the listing of all these texts? Over and over again in the New Testament epistles there are exhortations to believers like these to “Stop doing what you are doing because that is not who you are in Christ!” “Don’t live like that kind of person.” “Put off the old, put on the new.” “You are not that kind of person.” “Don’t live like that.” “You are

a new creature in Christ - the old has gone, the new has come.” “Your position is secure, but your practice is pitiful.” “Put on righteousness, put on the Lord Jesus Christ!” Over and over again Paul holds these truths before believing communities so that the true believers will look and declare, “That is not who I am - I must live for Christ! And Christ alone!”

As a concluding response to Adams and Wells, we end this section of our study with words from our brother Greg Welty, from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Professor Welty has provided the following response to Mike Adams (it fits in regard to Zaspel and Wells also):

Adams seems to think that because Christians are saved by grace and are therefore not ‘evil people’ (in the sense of hell-bound pagans), that therefore the obligation to avoid the example and

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lifestyle of 'evil people' is not relevant to the Christian. I can't think of a more dangerous assumption for a Christian to make. Why would Paul and other biblical writers spend so much time exhorting Christians not to be like evil people, unless there was a danger that Christians could fall into at least the vices of these people? According to many texts (like those listed above), Christians are exhorted not to be like pagan Gentiles, fornicators, unclean persons, covetous men, the Gentiles who do not know God, those who have no hope, those who love money to their own destruction, Esau, murderers, thieves, evildoers, and Cain.

This proves that the law, which according to 1Tim 1:8-11 identifies these evil people for us, is entirely relevant to Christians. Christians are as much exhorted to avoid being like evil people as they are exhorted to avoid the vices of those people; indeed, such exhortations amount to the same thing. Adams's distinction is valid and may even contribute to a more accurate exegesis of the passage, but is nevertheless useless against Barcellos' overall interpretation of the passage. If the Decalogue identifies who evil people are in the NT era, then the Decalogue continues in its authority in the NT era: it is what identifies both sin and sinful people, and that identification is eminently useful for Christians. Indeed, if the law indeed is that which identifies evil people, and if Christians are exhorted again and again not to be like these evil people, then the law is eminently useful for the Christian. To be sure, "law's condemning ministry in exposing those sinful persons not in conformity to it" is "opposed to the merciful ministry of grace in unconditionally redeeming some of those same guilty persons." But why think that this condemning ministry of the law is not relevant to the Christian? The discussion of these last two paragraphs refutes such a notion. Fundamentally, Adams seems to imply that the law has no relevance for the justified sinner, even though this same law identifies precisely those evil people whose example Christians are exhorted to flee from again and again. No matter how you slice it,

whether 'bad habits' or 'bad people,' the law of God is for the Christian too (Welty, 34-35).

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With that said by Welty, we move on to a second observation.

**Observation #2:** The list is given in pointed terminology, summarizing gross violations of principled commandments with single, summary terms.

One will notice as we proceed through the violations (or violators) that each is stated in very aggressive and terse terms. For example, for the violation of the commandment to "honor one's father and mother," Paul makes use of two terms in the Greek to point to the aggressive violation of this commandment, as with the aggravated violation of murder,

summarizing the violation of the commandment of God - "You shall not kill."

**Observation #3:** The list given is practical or applicatory rather than didactic, pointing to the applicational nature of Paul's intentions, demonstrating his emphasis on the ethical use of the law.

This point somewhat echos the previous one, yet says a bit more. It is our belief that the list, being practical and applicatory rather than didactic or instructional, helps us further in identifying the purpose of Paul in indicating again the proper use of the law - in this context - as an ethical, not a soteriological one. In other words, Paul is not giving a list of laws, but rather is highlighting a list of violations or violators of the law. Or as George

Knight III has noted: "The terms that follow in the list specify sins to be avoided and show that the law was given for a specific ethical use, not to be used in any other way with the righteous" (Knight, 83). Or as Knight previously notes: "So concerned is Paul to make this ethical point that he does not even mention the law's soteriological use here" (Knight, 83).

**Observation #4:** The list is patterned, ordered and not random, indicating that Paul has a previous set of norms guiding his thinking.

Having narrowed our understanding of the law in this context to that of Mosaic law, it seems most plausible, with Paul giving such a detailed list of violations, that he may very well have as a point of reference in his mind a specific listing of commands in that very Mosaic corpus of writing, of which these sins are violations.

In examining the violations themselves, which we will here attempt to do, it seems most plausible to us that in no other place than the Decalogue can these violations be found in the exact order listed and applied in similar fashion as they were in Exodus and the rest of the Mosaic writings. In other words, the violations of the law as set forth in 1Timothy 1, are given in exactly the same order as the commands that these very actions stand against in Exodus 20 in the giving of the Decalogue.

*The violations of the law as set forth in 1Timothy 1, are given in exactly the same order as the commands that these very actions stand against in Exodus 20*

**Observation #5:** The list is progressive, moving from violations regarding one's relationship with God, to those violations that particularly transpire in one's relations with others.

This is a further encouragement for us to see in these violations, sins against the very contents of the Ten Commandments as given by God to Moses. These clearly distinguish between violations regarding one's relation to God (Commandments 1-4) and commandments addressing one's relation to his fellow man (Commandments 5-10).

With those five general observations having been made, we turn now to the particular sins themselves. In order to answer the questions as to the nature of the particular sins which are being treated here in our text, and to help us identify and lay groundwork for our next question, that of the source of Paul's list, we will examine each section of the list by way of the following five categories:

- Category 1: English/Greek Terms
- Category 2: New Testament Usage
- Category 3: Decalogue Parallel
- Category 4: Old Testament Background
- Category 5: Significance/Comments

Before examining these categories in detail for each term in the list, let's hear from the text once again:

1 Tim. 1:8-11 (ESV) Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, [9] understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, [10] the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, [11] in accordance with the glorious gospel of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.

Paul begins by setting in juxtaposition to the just, a group of people

that he designates as “the lawless and disobedient.” But though that is where the text itself begins, we want (for purposes that will become clearer as we proceed) to begin in a different place. We find, as a starting point for our analysis of this portion of our text, the mid-point of the passage in the phrase “those who strike their fathers and mothers.” This may at first sound strange, but we seek the reader’s patience as we unfold the heart of the text - from the inside out!

### **THOSE WHO STRIKE THEIR FATHERS AND MOTHERS**

The Apostle identifies the fifth category of violators as “those who strike their fathers and mothers.” In the Greek text these are identified by

one word each. We have transliterated the text for you in English letters as: *patroloais* and *matroloais*. One finds no other occurrences of these terms in the New Testament documents. Most commentators seem to be in agreement that standing behind it is the commandment of Moses given in Exodus 20:12 where he commanded the people:

Exodus 20:12 (ESV) Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

The NIV probably overstates the case by translating this word “those who kill their fathers and mothers.” Furthermore, lending strength to the translation, “smite,” or “strike” is the application of the commandment itself in very positive terms in Exodus 21:15. Following the giving of the law in Exo 20:12, Moses gives further application of the commandment in chapter 21 where he writes in v.15

Exodus 21:15 (ESV) Whoever strikes his father or his mother shall be put to death.

Paul is placing emphasis upon the flagrant violation and the violator of the fifth commandment. He is placing this in the strongest negative terms, in contrast to the positive form of the commandment itself. Cleon Rogers in The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament notes that “the words speak of a most unnatural and shameful violation of the honor due to parents.” Knight states here that:

This strong negative, expressed in just two words, rather than the positive phrase “honor your father and mother,” emphasizes the correcting and restraining character of the law and thereby brings out its serious ethical character (Knight, 85).

## MURDERERS

We find this same negative character of the violation of positive law emphasized in the sixth category of violators: “murderers.” Again this terminology, transliterated as *androphonoi* - is utilized only here in the NT. Standing behind this violation is the sixth commandment of the decalogue found in Exo 20:13 where we read:

Exodus 20:13 (ESV) You shall not murder.

Adding light to our understanding of it as the application of the 6<sup>th</sup> commandment as found in the Decalogue is the application of it in the near context of Exodus 20:13, that of Exodus 21:12-14. There we read:

Exodus 21:12-14 (ESV) Whoever strikes a man so that he dies shall be put to death. [13] But if he did not lie in wait for him, but God let him fall into his hand, then I will appoint for you a place to which he may flee. [14] But if a man willfully attacks another to kill him by cunning, you shall take him from my altar, that he may die.

The violation of the commandment is found in the one who flagrantly and violently takes the life of another. If there was no intention/premeditation in the slaying of another, no lying “in wait” for another, it was not to be seen as a violation of the commandment. Instead, he would be allowed to flee to the city of refuge and have his life spared. However, though one may seek refuge, even at the horns of the altar, if he has intentionally taken the life of another, his life will not be spared.

It would seem that it is this kind of violator that Paul has in mind in 1 Timothy 1 with the single term - murderer. In sum, Paul’s emphasis here is that of a flagrant violation of the sixth commandment.

## THE SEXUALLY IMMORAL

The seventh category of violation Paul notes is that of the sexually immoral, and mentioned by him specifically are those “men who practice homosexuality.” Behind the “wordy” phrasing in the English is the very terse Greek transliterated as: *pornois* and *arsenokoitais*.

These sins or violations of the law of God are spoken of often in the New Testament record. Two examples are from the epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, who had gross problems with immorality in their very fellowship:

1 Cor. 5:9-11 (ESV) I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— [10] not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. [11] But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one.

1Co 6:9-10 (ESV) Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

Standing behind these violations is one commandment - the seventh of the Decalogue:

Exodus 20:14 (ESV) You shall not commit adultery.

Violation of this commandment in Jewish life found expression in general

forms of sexual immorality, not simply in being unfaithful to one's spouse. Additionally, an example of the aggravated form of the violation was to be found in the sin of homosexuality.

### General Violation: Immorality

Exodus 22:16-17 (ESV) "If a man seduces a virgin who is not engaged to be married and lies with her, he shall give the bride-price for her and make her his wife. [17] If her father utterly refuses to give her to him, he shall pay money equal to the bride-price for virgins.

Deut. 22:22-30 (ESV) "If a man is found lying with the wife of another man, both of them shall die, the man who lay with the woman, and the woman. So you shall purge the evil from Israel. [23] "If there is a betrothed virgin, and a man meets her in the city and lies with her, [24] then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city, and you shall stone them to death with stones, the young woman because she did not cry for help though she was in the city, and the man because he violated his neighbor's wife. So you shall purge the evil from your midst. [25] "But if in the open country a man meets a young woman who is betrothed, and the man seizes her and lies with her, then only the man who lay with her shall die. [26] But you shall do nothing to the young woman; she has committed no offense punishable by death. For this case is like that of a man attacking and murdering his neighbor, [27] because he met her in the open country, and though the betrothed young woman cried for help there was no one to rescue her. [28] "If a man meets a virgin

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who is not betrothed, and seizes her and lies with her, and they are found, [29] then the man who lay with her shall give to the father of the young woman fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife, because he has violated her. He may not divorce her all his days. [30] "A man shall not take his father's wife, so that he does not uncover his father's nakedness.

### **Aggravated Violation: Homosexuality**

Leviticus 18:22 (ESV) You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.

Leviticus 20:13 (ESV) If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them.

The emphasis here is that of a flagrant violation of the seventh commandment.

### **ENSLAVERS**

The eighth category of violation is that of enslavement, or as some translations have - kidnaping! In the ESV the Greek is translated "term for term" and has as the original transliterated text: *andrapodistais*. Literally the term means to catch and hold a man by the foot. Rogers notes that "it includes all who exploit other men and women for their own selfish ends."

Only here is this term used in the New Testament, but it clearly points to violation of the eight commandment from Exo 20:15, where the Scripture plainly states: "You shall not steal." Standing behind it are texts such as: Exo 21:16 and Deut 24:7

Exodus 21:16 (ESV) Whoever steals a man and sells him, and anyone found in possession of him, shall be put to death.

Deut. 24:7 (ESV) If a man is found stealing one of his brothers, the people of Israel, and if he treats him as a slave or sells him, then that thief shall die. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.

The emphasis here is that of a flagrant violation of the eight commandment.

## LIARS - PERJURERS

This brings us to the ninth and final category Paul holds before us for our consideration, that of liars and perjurers. On the whole we treat these as one, though there may be a subtle nuance of distinction toward which the Apostle is trying to point. The Greek holds these violations out in two terms - the transliteration listed here for the reader: *pseustais* and *epiorkois*.

The first - liars (*pseustais*) - is used in the New Testament record in Titus and in John's first epistle.

Titus 1:12 (ESV) One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons."

1 John 2:4 (ESV) Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him,

The term for perjurer (*epiorkois*) is only found here in the New Testament record. Standing behind these in the OT record, are the commands of the Decalogue in Exodus 20.

Exodus 20:16-17 (ESV) "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

This commandment embedded within the Decalogue is given covenantal application in the book of Leviticus:

Leviticus 19:11 (ESV) You shall not steal; you shall not deal falsely; you shall not lie to one another.

This is clearly a violation of the ninth commandment.

Previously, the reader will recall, we made allusion to the possibility of there being a distinction in the mind of the Apostle in mentioning liars and perjurers. When examining this list given by the Apostle, the question naturally arises at this point: What about the commandment not to covet? Could perjuring oneself be the violation Paul is making use of here to point to it as well? Possibly. The tenth commandment reads thus:

Exo 20:17 (ESV) You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's."

Standing behind this may in fact be the covenantal application of this commandment given in Exodus 23:1-8

Exodus 23:1-8 (ESV) "You shall not spread a false report. You shall not join hands with a wicked man to be a malicious witness. [2] You shall not fall in with the many to do evil, nor shall you bear witness in a lawsuit, siding with the many, so as to pervert justice, [3] nor shall you be partial to a poor man in his lawsuit. [4] "If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey going astray, you shall bring it back to him. [5] If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying down

under its burden, you shall refrain from leaving him with it; you shall rescue it with him. [6] "You shall not pervert the justice due to your poor in his lawsuit. [7] Keep far from a false charge, and do not kill the innocent and righteous, for I will not acquit the wicked. [8] And you shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the clear-sighted and subverts the cause of those who are in the right.

One often finds himself swearing falsely, lying, perjuring oneself, in order to gain that which is not rightfully his or her own. Is this not at the heart of covetousness - longing for that which is not rightfully yours? Could this be what Paul is directing our thoughts toward in mentioning the sin of perjury here at the end of his list of vices, to which the law is directly opposed?

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Consider in this light, the following comments by William Hendriksen in his commentary on Paul's first letter to Timothy:

If we bear in mind that the sin of swearing falsely was sometimes committed with a view to obtaining possession of the neighbor's property, it becomes clear that the theory is not too far-fetched that in making mention of this particular violation of the moral law Paul is thinking not only of sin against the ninth but also of sin against the tenth commandment, "You shall not covet your neighbor's house...or anything that is your neighbor's" (Exo 20:17). False swearing often (perhaps we can even say always) has as its root covetousness (Hendriksen, 70).

This makes at least plausible, if not even most convincing, that Paul has in

his mind here all ten of the commandments found in the tables of the Decalogue!

Yet before we get ahead of ourselves, it will be important for us - with all that has been said about the commonly designated commands contained in the second table of the Decalogue - to turn our attention at this point to the commands contained in the first table of the tablets that we believe Paul also had in mind in the violations listed in the earlier portion of our text. Helpful here at this point of transition are the following words from George Knight III from his commentary on the Greek text of this passage:

Once it is recognized that from “strikers of father and mother” onward the order of the second part of the Decalogue is followed, then the question naturally arises whether the preceding part of the list in v.9 corresponds to the earlier part of the Decalogue. An interesting correlation may well exist, especially if it is borne in mind that single words are used in the latter part of the list to refer to violators of a specific commandment, and therefore single words could also be used in the former part to characterize violators of the earlier commandments (Knight, 84).

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With these thoughts in mind, we need at this point to turn our attention to the violators of the previous portion of the text, beginning with the one mentioned immediately prior to “those who strike fathers and mothers.” In particular, the “profane.”

## PROFANERS

This category of violators we list forth in order of categories on our chart. The term in the transliterated Greek text reads: *bebalois*. The word is found in various contexts in the New Testament in its noun form, as used here in 1Timothy, and in its verbal form as well.

In its noun form the ESV translates this in a variety of fashions: profane, irreverent, and unholy.

1 Tim. 1:9 (ESV) understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers

1 Tim. 4:7 (ESV) Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness.

1 Tim. 6:20 (ESV) O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called "knowledge."

2 Tim. 2:16 (ESV) But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness.

Hebrews 12:16 (ESV) that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal

Rogers, in his Linguistic Key, states that it points toward "that which is accessible to everybody, the opposite of inaccessible or sacred, profane. It speaks of irreverent and contemptuous behavior toward the things more particularly associated with the name of God" (Rogers, 488). This distinction is particularly felt in the NT use of the verbal form of the word.

Both uses in the NT are associated with the temple, which in Judaism was the central location of association with the name of God for his people. Consider its use in Acts 24:6:

Acts 24:6 (ESV) He even tried to profane the temple, but we seized him.

Its use in Matthew 12 is even more to the point in our study. It is not the temple itself that is profaned, but the Sabbath day:

Matthew 12:5 (ESV) Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless?

Thus, when particular sins are pointed to in the NT relating to the issue of “profaning” things - this irreverence or lack of holiness - is directly associated with the name of God, the temple and the Sabbath day! We believe that standing behind the injunction by the law of God mentioned in 1Timothy 1 against the “profane” rests the fourth commandment of God in the Decalogue found in Exodus 20. There we read:

Exodus 20:8-11 (ESV) "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. [9] Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, [10] but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. [11] For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

The Sabbath, of all the days of the week, was to be seen as a holy day. To desecrate it would be to treat it in a profane manner - common, accessible to all. This is the essence of God's command to Moses:

Exodus 31:14 (ESV) You shall keep the Sabbath, because it is holy for you. Everyone who profanes it shall be put to death. Whoever does any work on it, that soul shall be cut off from among his people.

In fact, the profaning of the day was one of the sins of the people for which they were eventually sent away into exile. The prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel both spoke to this issue:

Jeremiah 17:19-27 (ESV) Thus said the Lord to me: "Go and stand in the People's Gate, by which the kings of Judah enter and by which they go out, and in all the gates of Jerusalem, [20] and say: 'Hear the word of the Lord, you kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who enter by these gates. [21] Thus says the Lord: Take care for the sake of your lives, and do not bear a burden on the Sabbath day or bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem. [22] And do not carry a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath or do any work, but keep the Sabbath day holy, as I commanded your fathers. [23] Yet they did not listen or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck, that they might not hear and receive instruction. [24] " 'But if you listen to me, declares the Lord, and bring in no burden by the gates of this city on the Sabbath day, but keep the Sabbath day holy and do no work on it, [25] then there shall enter by the gates of this city kings and princes who sit on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they and their officials, the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And this city shall be inhabited forever. [26] And people shall come from the cities of Judah and the places around Jerusalem, from the land of Benjamin, from the Shephelah, from the hill country, and from the Negeb, bringing burnt offerings and sacrifices, grain offerings and frankincense, and bringing thank offerings to the house of the Lord. [27] But if you do not listen to me, to keep the Sabbath day holy, and not to bear a burden and enter by the gates

of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, then I will kindle a fire in its gates, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem and shall not be quenched.' "

Ezekiel 20:13 (ESV) But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness. They did not walk in my statutes but rejected my rules, by which, if a person does them, he shall live; and my Sabbaths they greatly profaned. "Then I said I would pour out my wrath upon them in the wilderness, to make a full end of them.

Ezekiel 23:38-39 (ESV) Moreover, this they have done to me: they have defiled my sanctuary on the same day and profaned my Sabbaths. [39] For when they had slaughtered their children in sacrifice to their idols, on the same day they came into my sanctuary to profane it. And behold, this is what they did in my house.

Furthermore, this sin of profaning the Sabbath day continued to plague the people of God even after their return from exile, as found in the writings of the reforms of the man of God - Nehemiah:

Neh. 13:15-18 (ESV) In those days I saw in Judah people treading winepresses on the Sabbath, and bringing in heaps of grain and loading them on donkeys, and also wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of loads, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. And I warned them on the day when they sold food. [16] Tyrians also, who lived in the city, brought in fish and all kinds of goods and sold them on the Sabbath to the people of Judah, in Jerusalem itself! [17] Then I confronted the nobles of Judah and said to them, "What is this evil thing that you are doing, profaning the Sabbath day? [18] Did not your fathers act in this way, and did not our God bring all this disaster on us and on this city? Now you are bringing more wrath on Israel by profaning the Sabbath."

Is this sin being pointed to by the Apostle Paul in 1Timothy 1? We believe so. Richard Barcellos gives several compelling reasons to think this may in fact be the case. I am rewording and adding to his comments here:

1. Paul would have been very familiar with the Septuagint and the texts to which we referred above.
2. Paul was already, as we have established, reducing the other commands of the Decalogue to one word summaries.
3. Paul has been, as we have seen in categories 5-10, keeping to the order and content of the Decalogue commands.
4. Paul has been reducing these commands to single words in a negative form, that stand in violation of the positive commandments (Barcellos, 53)

Additionally, we agree with George Knight when he states that:

Since the keynote of the Sabbath command is to keep it holy (Exo 20:8), and since Paul's list is in negative terms, the single term *bebalos* (profane)...might well characterize those who profane that day, putting the command negatively in terms of its violation (Knight, 84).

More could be said here, but we need to turn our attention toward the third category of violators mentioned by the Apostle.

## UNHOLY

Continuing to work our way backwards

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from strikers of “fathers and mothers” we come next to those listed as “unholy.” The transliteration of the Greek text here reads as *anosiois*. Its use in the New Testament is limited and is only found here and in 2Timothy 3:2, both translated by the ESV in both places as “unholy.” We find this designation pointing in the context of 1Timothy 1 to a clear violation of the third commandment found in Exodus 20 regarding the treatment by men of the name of God - ie. God Himself!

Exodus 20:7 (ESV) You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.

In the Old Testament it was clear, God was to be regarded as holy, set apart, distinct from everything else in all creation. The following texts make clear that God takes violations of his holiness very seriously! They are taken from the history of the Hebrew people wandering through the wilderness on their way to the promised land. Moses and Aaron were forbidden from leading the people into the promised land having failed to treat God as holy in the presence of all the people:

Numbers 20:12 (ESV) And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe in me, to uphold me as holy in the eyes of the people of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them."

Num 27:12-14 (ESV)The LORD said to Moses, "Go up into this mountain of Abarim and see the land that I have given to the people of Israel. (13) When you have seen it, you also shall be gathered to your people, as your brother Aaron was, (14) because you rebelled against my word in the wilderness of Zin when the congregation quarreled, failing to uphold me as holy at the waters before their eyes." (These are the waters of Meribah of Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin.)

Deut. 32:51 (ESV) because you broke faith with me in the midst of the people of Israel at the waters of Meribah-kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin, and because you did not treat me as holy in the midst of the people of Israel.

The prophet Isaiah sums up well the posture that all the people were to maintain before their holy God:

Isaiah 8:13 (ESV) But the Lord of hosts, him you shall regard as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.

If one was searching for a negative term to express violation of this moral obligation by man, “unholy” would be a solid choice. The third commandment prohibits taking God’s name in a vain or unholy way. The sin here (as noted by Paul in 1Tim 1:9) is that of treating what is sacred as common. These are people who have no regard for the Holy. As Knight notes:

Those who take the Lord’s name in vain might well be designated negatively by a single term as those who are “unholy”...This understanding is strengthened if the language associated with this command has been influenced by the petition in the Lord’s Prayer that the Lord’s name be hallowed or regarded as holy (Knight, 84).

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## SINNERS

At this point we come to the second category in the overall picture of violators mentioned by

the Apostle, that of “sinners.” The Greek is the very common *hamartolois*. The term is used over forty times in the New Testament to designate a general class of men who have, from conception, been in rebellion against God. It refers to all those outside of Christ - needing to be reconciled to God. Paul uses it in this general sense in 1Timothy 1:15 in offering the following self-testimony:

1 Tim. 1:15 (ESV) The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.

The word is designated in the BAGD lexicon as referring to “irreligious, unobservant people. . .who did not observe the law in detail” (BAGD, 44). Thus in Galatians 2:15 Paul writes of a distinction between Jews who devote themselves to the law of God and Gentiles who have no regard for it.

Galatians 2:15 (ESV) We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners.

This would have been the common thought of the Jew toward the Gentile. As a matter of fact, the BAGD lexicon goes on to state in reference to the use of this term in Gal 2:15 that it is “a favorite term for (the) Heathen” (BAGD, 44)! However, this distinction also prevailed amongst the Jews themselves. The leaders of the Jews often held this superior viewpoint of themselves in comparison with the common people, who failed to be as scrupulous as the leaders in regard to the intricacies of the law. This term is made use of in this manner in the following texts:

Matthew 9:10-11 (ESV) And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. [11] And when the Pharisees saw this,

they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

Matthew 11:19 (ESV) The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds."

Mark 2:15-16 (ESV) And as he reclined at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. [16] And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

Luke 5:30 (ESV) And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?"

Luke 7:34 (ESV) The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!'

Luke 15:1 (ESV) Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him.

Consider further the proclivity among the Gentiles to engage in the sin of idolatry (see Rom 2:22) - a "characterizing sin" among the heathen. Would not the designation "sinner" fit well in regard to one who had neglected the second commandment of the Decalogue which specifically prohibits idolatry?

Exodus 20:4-6 (ESV) "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is

in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. [5] You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, [6] but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

Additionally, as a footnote to our conclusions and adding weight to our exegesis, consider the phrase “the iniquity of the fathers” as it is found in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament. It was this translation of the Hebrew Old Testament that was made use of frequently by the Apostle Paul in his mission work among the Gentile nations. In the Greek of Exodus 20, the term used for iniquity that is translated “sinners” in our text in 1 Timothy 1:9. We believe this adds further support to the plausibility of our conclusions relating Paul’s thoughts in 1 Timothy 1 regarding “sinners” to those who violate the second commandment of the Decalogue.

## THE UNGODLY

Finally this brings us to our concluding category of violators, which is actually Paul’s first, and toward which the proper use of the law points: the ungodly. The Greek word here is again a very common word for ungodliness. The transliteration of the Greek is *asebesi*. The general meaning of the term points toward that which is ungodly, irreverent, and irreligious. Strictly speaking, the Greek term has as its root the term for “godly” with the Greek “alpha privative” placed on the front of the term which serves to negate the term’s root meaning. Hence we have a term now that designates a person as “godless” or “without regard for God or the things of God.”

Those in the New Testament who embrace a God-centered view of

life and embrace what Knight refers to as the “ethical monotheism of the Old Testament” stand as the anti-thesis of our term (Knight, 84). The following is a listing of texts that highlight this characteristic of several “godly” persons found in the New Testament:

Acts 13:43 (ESV) And after the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who, as they spoke with them, urged them to continue in the grace of God.

Acts 13:50 (ESV) But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district.

Acts 16:14 (ESV) One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.

Acts 17:4 (ESV) And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women.

Acts 17:17 (ESV) So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there.

Acts 18:7 (ESV) And he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. His house was next door to the synagogue.

They are designated in these texts as worshipers or as devout. Those who refuse to live in this God-centered frame of reference would easily be

designated as “ungodly.” This gives credibility to our assertion that those so deemed by Paul in 1 Timothy 1 as “ungodly” are those that are living in clear violation of the first commandment of the Decalogue:

Exodus 20:3 (ESV) You shall have no other gods before me.

In summation, using the words of Knight once again, with which we concur: “the order of the Decalogue seems, then, to give a satisfactory explanation of Paul’s list from ‘ungodly’ onward” (Knight, 84).

## THE LAWLESS AND DISOBEDIENT

This brings us to an interesting point in our study, which we will press by seeking to give an answer to one remaining question regarding our list of violators and violations of the law. What is the relationship of “the lawless and disobedient” to the rest of the list? Have we misnumbered? Should we have started with “lawless?” Did we simply make our list conform to a preconceived idea regarding the relationship of this list to that of the Decalogue? Though that charge may very well be put to us, and often is, we strongly believe sound exegesis puts it in the clear.

“The lawless and the disobedient” serve, we believe, as an introductory header for the rest of the list. They stand in direct contrast to the term “just” in v.9 as indicated by the contrasting conjunction “but.” Hear from the text again in v.9:

1 Tim. 1:9 (ESV) the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient

The Greek behind the translation is very general: *anomos* and *unupotaktos*. The two terms basically carry the meaning to be “without law” and “to not be in subordination to law.” These terms lend themselves quite

naturally to be introductory to a listing of violators and violations that stand against law itself. They provide, as Fairbairn notes, a “general description” before he launches out into particulars (Barcellos, 50). Knight notes that

these two terms bring into perspective those for whom the law is given, namely, those who need its discipline and restraint in their propensity for lawlessness and disobedience (Knight, 85).

Three questions remain from our original list. To them we quickly turn as we seek to make a sound conclusion to our exegesis.

✘What is the source for Paul’s list of vices that define “lawlessness”?

This may seem like a moot point after all that has been said. Yet, though we intend here to be brief, we believe there still is need for some clarity to be provided. It seems that solid exegesis has led us to the conclusion that Paul’s law in 1Timothy 1:8-11 is none other than the moral or ethical standards of God found in the Ten Commandments. This moral law, though it predates the giving of the “law” at Mt. Sinai, having been written on the heart of every man from creation, is nevertheless, set forth in the Mosaic covenant, in the giving of the Decalogue for all to see. As Richard Barcellos has stated:

It now becomes quite obvious what law Paul was referring to in 1Timothy 1:8-11. He was referring to the heart of the law of the Old and New Covenants. He was referring to the basic, fundamental law of the Bible. He was referring to the law common to believer and unbeliever alike, the law whose work is written on the hearts of all men by creation. He was referring to the Decalogue in its function of revealing god-defined, ethical norms for all men (Barcellos, 56).

Two objections are often made regarding this line of exegetical reasoning and this will be as good a place as any to address them, and to hopefully lay them to rest. One objection relates to our method of exegesis itself, and the other to our application of our exegetical method. The first objection, relating to our method of exegesis, is framed in terms of objecting to the method of our argument. It is charged that we have inferred from the cumulation of points made looking at all the violators listed, that this is the best “plausible” argument to draw from the text. In other words, the charge is being made that we have drawn our conclusions from inference, rather than strict exegesis. OK - We have been caught!

Yet, we ask, “Is this not the case with most, good exegesis?” We say, “Yes, it is!” In the words of professor Welty, this is “the nature of most exegesis of Scriptural texts. We must decide which is the best reading among plausible alternatives” (Welty, 32). Not all of our arguments are afforded the luxury of an “air-tight” case, as much as we would like them to be. This method of exegesis is at times referred to as the “cumulative case argument,” meaning that in order to support one’s point, a list of data that perhaps would not be able to stand on their own, are accumulated and put forth together to make a stronger case. In application to our case, it is contended by some that none of the “violations (or violators)” listed, really in truth points to the Decalogue, but taken all together, the case is more sound than when laid out individually. However, we believe that each of the violations, even when looked at individually, stands as a viable example of transgression against the commandment on its own! Then, put together, the case is strengthened as a whole.

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A second objection relates to the first, but is somewhat distinct. In the application of our exegetical method, the charge is often made as a further objection to our conclusions, that we have limited or forced the meanings of particular words to point toward the Decalogue rather than let the words simply have their natural meanings and simply point to violators in a general or broad sense. Yet, even those who disagree with us strongly in our conclusions, can often be found in agreement with us that “the Decalogue is the foundation of (Paul’s thought in) 1 Timothy 1:8ff” (Wells, 197). And furthermore that there is in fact a “formal relation” “between the passage (1 Timothy 1:8ff) and the Decalogue” and that “Paul used the Decalogue as a pattern for what he had to write” (Wells, 197).

One reads statements like this and wonders how an alternate conclusion could possibly be reached other than the one we have set forth. Just to show however, how confusing the writings of our opponents often get, Wells goes so far as to grant that

the author (referring to Barcellos - In Defense of the Decalogue) is right in finding an allusion to the Sabbath in the word ‘profane’ yet still is moved to conclude “nothing here demands the ‘perpetuity of the fourth commandment’...nothing here repeats it in the sense of laying it upon anyone under the New Covenant, and nothing here makes it ‘binding on all men’ (Wells, 198).

Wells is able to draw this conclusion for he believes that though Paul is “adopting Moses’ forms” he is far from “adopting Moses’ content” (Wells, 198). One wonders if Paul’s original readers would have been sufficiently trained in New Covenant Theology to have made this subtle, if not invisible

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*On the hypothesis that Paul was intending to summarize each of the commandments in just one or two words, he couldn't have made a better choice of words than the choice he made. Is there another word which is better suited to do the job? Thus, since a good argument can be given that Paul is indeed summarizing the Decalogue, the overall argument is clinched. The most simple, straightforward explanation of the text is (this) interpretation.*

My question is...Who's exegesis is unsound here? There is a good reason Paul sounds like he is referring to the Decalogue - because he is! The Apostle has taken care to make use of terms that point toward and summarize violations of all ten of the commandments of the Decalogue. As Knight has well stated: "Paul's list follows the order of the Decalogue and utilizes the applications of those commandments found elsewhere in the OT" (Knight 87). If the charge is made that these words, in their Old Testament context, have a broader meaning than we have allowed them to have here - the point is well taken. But the point we are trying to make is this: If Paul is trying to sum up violations of the Decalogue by pointing to the violators of those very commands themselves, what other words would our opponents suggest he should have used. Our contention is, Paul has chosen a listing of well suited words to fulfill his purpose. That the words Paul has chosen can be used in other contexts is no

secret. Yet as Professor Welty has well noted:

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Decalogue, the overall argument is clinched. The most simple, straightforward explanation of the text is (this) interpretation (Welty, 36).

✠What is the “sound doctrine” of which Paul writes?

Before we answer this question, it might be good for us to have before us once again the text of 1 Timothy 1:8-11

Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, [9] understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, [10] the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, [11] in accordance with the glorious gospel of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.

Standing as somewhat of a bridge between Paul's focus on the law and the turning of his attention toward the gospel of which he has been given a trust, is this terse statement, yet very helpful to us, regarding “sound doctrine.” The term “sound” here carries the meaning of healthy. It can be used of health relating to the body, as it is in Luke 5:31, 7:10 and 15:27. But the point being made here by the Apostle is not health relating to the body, but that kind of health which is inherently part and parcel of our doctrine. The doctrine of the church is “healthy” doctrine. This truth is reiterated by the Apostle over and over again, especially in the Pastoral Epistles (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus). Consider the following texts:

1 Tim. 6:3 (ESV) If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness,

2 Tim. 1:13 (ESV) Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

2 Tim. 4:3 (ESV) For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions,

Titus 1:9 (ESV) He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

Titus 1:13 (ESV) This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith.

Titus 2:1 (ESV) But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.

Titus 2:2 (ESV) Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness.

Most instructive of all these texts may be the one from 1 Timothy 6:3. There Paul sets in clear contrast “different doctrine” with “the sound words of...Jesus!” This sound teaching of Christ stands in opposition to sin in the same manner it is opposed by the law of God. Hence, healthy doctrine is correct, right, or true doctrine - ie. sound. We refer to this as somewhat of a bridge between Paul’s comments on the law and the gospel, for it seems to connect to two together in regard to their ethic. With this we turn our attention to a final question in our exegesis.

✠What is the relation of the law and the gospel?

Simply put, the law and the gospel speak with one voice on the subject of sin in the ethical application of their intentions. Consider again Paul's words:

1 Tim. 1:9-11 (ESV) The law is...laid down for...the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, [10] the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, [11] in accordance with the glorious gospel of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.

The gospel, that sets forth the glory of the blessed God, and the law, that is inherently good, springing from, and being an expression of the very nature of God Himself, stand together sounding one single note of righteousness, and opposing sin in every form. The gospel and the law are in no contradiction when it comes to their ethic. As Knight rightly has asserted:

Paul has shown how the law may be used lawfully in accordance with its purpose as an ethical guide to warn against sin. He has demonstrated this by presenting a list that shows that the Decalogue is so understood in the OT. He has concluded by stating that this is also the ethical perspective of the truly healthy teaching based on the gospel, so that both it and a proper use of the law concur in terms of their concern for a righteous life and in their teaching against sin. Thus when the law is rightly applied as an ethical restraint against sin, it is in full accordance

*The gospel, that sets forth the glory of the blessed God, and the law, that is inherently good, springing from, and being an expression of the very nature of God Himself, stand together sounding one single note of righteousness, and*

with the ethical norm given in the gospel as the standard for the redeemed life. A different use of the law, for example, in a mythological or genealogical application to the righteous, is thereby shown to be out of accord with the law's given purpose and the gospel and its teaching (Knight, 91-92).

This exegetical conclusion, we believe, is most sound and beyond any solid refutation. Earlier in his commentary Knight had stated the following that should also be heard in this line of reasoning regarding the relationship of the law and the gospel in their ethic:

The concluding clause “and whatever else...” like “and any other commandment...” in Romans 13:9, reminds the readers that the law's moral obligations are not circumscribed by this list that reflects OT application of the Decalogue...Furthermore, the clause goes on to say that the “sound teaching” of the Christian faith has the same ethical perspective as the law, and that teaching also points out sins that are contrary to it (Knight, 88).

This is further driven home for the reader to hear with one final comment by Knight:

In v.10 the phrase “contrary to” “means ‘be opposed to, or contrary to; and is possibly used here in wordplay (clearly noticed in the Greek text, but difficult to discern in the English translations) with ‘laid down’ (v.9a). The law is made (‘laid down’) for sinners, and for whatever else is contrary to (v.10) ‘sound teaching,’ which by its very contrariety to sound teaching is marked as sinful. By this Paul indicates that law and “sound teaching;” are together in opposing these sins and therefore have a common ethical perspective (Knight, 88).

One might wonder why we did not just have the reader go and read

Knight's commentary on 1 Timothy 1:8-11? Reading Knight would be highly encouraged! Obviously we have been highly influenced in our exegesis by our brothers George Knight and Richard Barcellos. We hope that what we have offered has built on their work and not misrepresented it in any way. We trust that this exegesis has furthered the reader's understanding of the text and most importantly that it has helped address the issue as to whether or not the principle of the Sabbath is still considered as "to be observed" by those who find themselves under the New Covenant, that our obedience might conform ever more to his holy and revealed will, to the glory of his great name!

*A Study on the Sabbath: Sabbath, Christian Sabbath, or Lord's Day?*

# Section IV

The Practice of the Christian Sabbath



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# The Practice of the Christian Sabbath



If it is true that...

✠The Law of Nature Commands That a General Proportion of Time Be Set Apart for the Worship of God:

Rom 2:12-16 (ESV) For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. (13) For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be

justified. (14) For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. (15) They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them (16) on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

✠God by His Word - by Way of a Positive, Moral, and Perpetual Commandment Binding All Men in All Ages - Has Appointed a Day in Which Men Should Worship Him:

Gen 2:2-3 (ESV) And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. (3) So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

✠The Sabbath Has Been Made for Man and His Benefit:

Mar 2:27-28 (ESV) And he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. (28) So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath."

✠A Sabbath-keeping Remains for the People of God:

Heb 4:9-10 (ESV) So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, (10) for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.

Then...

the perpetuity of the Sabbath is firmly established on the Scripture, and supported by the confessional standards as observed in chapter 22, article 7:

As it is the law of nature, that in general a proportion of time, by God's appointment, be set apart for the worship of God, so by his Word, in 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 is called the Lord's day: and is to be continued to the end of the world as the Christian Sabbath, the observation of the last day of the week being abolished.

This leaves us with the very real practical issue of answering the question as to “how” the Sabbath is to be kept. To answer this challenging question, we again turn to our confessional standards for wise guidance. Our confession states in chapter 22, article 8, that:

The Sabbath is then kept holy unto the Lord, when men, after a due preparing of their hearts, and ordering their common affairs aforehand, do not only observe an holy rest all day, from their own works, words and thoughts, about their worldly employment and recreations, but are also taken up the whole time in the public and private exercises of his worship, and in the duties of necessity and mercy.

Here is set forth sound wisdom for the keeping of the day. To make

a serious attempt at unfolding the truths encouraged in this statement, the following will serve as an outline for our study on the subject of the practice of the Sabbath. We divide the statement broadly into two categories regarding the practice of the Sabbath: Manner and Means. The outline provided here has already been provided for the reader in Section II of our work. We restate a portion of it here, that portion relating to the practice of the Sabbath, to serve as a reminder and ready reference for the portion of our study to follow:

## II. The Practice of the Christian Sabbath - 22.8

The Sabbath is then kept holy unto the Lord, when men, after a due preparing of their hearts, and ordering their common affairs beforehand, do not only observe an holy rest all day, from their own works, words and thoughts, about their worldly employment and recreations, but are also taken up the whole time in the public and private exercises of his worship, and in the duties of necessity and mercy.

A. Practice - Manner

B. Practice - Means

1. Preparation and Planning
2. Putting Off and Putting On
  - a) Worship
    - 1) Public
    - 2) Private
  - b) Work
  - c) Witness

With that, we turn our attention first to the fundamental issue in the keeping of the Sabbath: the manner of our practice.

## The Keeping of the Sabbath



### Practice - Manner

The confessional standards state rather briefly that “The Sabbath is then kept holy unto the Lord.” This becomes the guiding and overarching directive of the confession in regard to “how” the day should be kept. It is the fundamental emphasis that needs to drive everything else about our practice of the Sabbath principle in our worship of the Lord on his day. Above all else, and as the end goal in the keeping of the day, it is to be kept in a manner that is to be characterized as “holy.”

As to why the confession puts this “up front” in such prominent fashion, one need only consult the authority of the confession itself - the Holy Scriptures - which do the very same thing. This confessional directive

springs from the giving of the abiding moral principle that was to guide God's people in the keeping of the Sabbath as they were told in Exodus 20:

Exo 20:8 (ESV) Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

Additionally, it has been the driving moral principle for all mankind - called to keep the Sabbath holy - it being rooted in the words of God given at the close of creation itself from Genesis 2:

Gen 2:2-3 (ESV) And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. (3) So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

Thus the fundamental emphasis on the day of Christian worship is to be that of rejoicing and celebrating the "holiness" of the day. This is to see it, at its basic level, as a "different day" than all other days of the week. Under the Old Covenant this day was the seventh from the dawn of creation, but is to be for the people of God now remembered on the first day of every week.

The exegetical defense of this statement and the unfolding of it as found in the confession itself in the preceding article to the one we are examining here, has already been set forth in the previous section of our study. The reader is referred to that study for the information supporting the change of the day in regard to the principle of the Sabbath. As to the priority, and obvious distinction, of the first day of the week of the New Covenant people of God, several things in the NT set apart this day from all others in the week. Consider the following points of emphasis from the New Testament Scriptures themselves to support the priority of the first day of the week for today's church:

✠The Resurrection of Christ Occurred on this Day.

Mat 28:1-10 (ESV) Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. (2) And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. (3) His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. (4) And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. (5) But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. (6) He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. (7) Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you." (8) So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. (9) And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. (10) Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me."

Mark 16:2 (ESV) And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb.

Mark 16:9 (ESV) Now when he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons.

Luke 24:1 (ESV) But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared.

John 20:1 (ESV) Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.

✠The Appearances of Christ Occurred on this Day.

Luke 24:13-36 (ESV) That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, (14) and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. (15) While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. (16) But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. (17) And he said to them, "What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?" And they stood still, looking sad. (18) Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" (19) And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, (20) and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. (21) But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. (22) Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, (23) and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. (24) Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see." (25) And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! (26) Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" (27) And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. (28) So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, (29) but they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent." So he went in to stay with them. (30)

When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. (31) And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. (32) They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?" (33) And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, (34) saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" (35) Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread. (36) As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, "Peace to you!"

John 20:19 (ESV) On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

✠The Church Was Born as the New Covenant Community on this Day - the Day of Pentecost.

The historical accounting of this event is recorded for us by Luke in the book of the Acts of the Apostles.

Act 2:1-5 (ESV) When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. (2) And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. (3) And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. (4) And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. (5) Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven.

According to P. K. Jewett “the Spirit’s descent at Pentecost - occurred on Sunday” (Jewett, 128). Though this dating is at times disputed, Jewett states (with the support of The New Bible Dictionary) that the dating or placing of Pentecost on Sunday is in accordance with the dating practices of the Sadducees. It was the Sadducees who were at that time, prior to the fall of the temple in A. D. 70, the regulators of the Jewish observance of the festival (Jewett, 128).

✘The Church Habitually Gathered on this Day for Worship: The Breaking of Bread.

Act 20:7-12 (ESV) On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight. (8) There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered. (9) And a young man named Eutychus, sitting at the window, sank into a deep sleep as Paul talked still longer. And being overcome by sleep, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead. (10) But Paul went down and bent over him, and taking him in his arms, said, "Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him." (11) And when Paul had gone up and had broken bread and eaten, he conversed with them a long while, until daybreak, and so departed. (12) And they took the youth away alive, and were not a little comforted.

✘The Church Collected its Offerings on this Day as a Proper Element of Christian Worship.

1Co 16:1-2 (ESV) Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. (2) On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and

store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come.

✠The Church Came to Call this Day Specifically “The Lord’s Day.”

Rev 1:10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet

An important question faces us at this point: How geographically spread out was “Lord’s Day” or “First Day” worship? Refer to the following map for the results of our study. Each ▲ marks an area in which the practice of the church was that of meeting on the first day of the week for



worship:

Thus, we conclude, that everywhere the church spread in the missionary enterprise of the first century, evidence of Lord's Day - first day of the week worship - dominates the scene.

It should be noted that affirming the priority of the first day of the week, as expressive of the Sabbath principle in the new covenant community, is no contradiction (as is often asserted) with the words of the Apostle Paul in Romans 14:

Rom 14:1-12 (ESV) As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. (2) One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. (3) Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. (4) Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand. (5) One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. (6) The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God. (7) For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. (8) For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. (9) For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. (10) Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; (11) for it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." (12) So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.

Compare Paul's "relaxed approach" in Romans with his passionate warning in Galatians.

Gal 4:8-11 (ESV) Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods. (9) But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more? (10) You observe days and months and seasons and years! (11) I am afraid I may have labored over you in vain.

That these “Jewish Days” (See v.10 above) were no longer to be binding on the New Covenant believer is made clear in Colossians 2:13-17 since they were but shadows that pointed us forward to Christ.

Col 2:13-17 (ESV) And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, (14) by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. (15) He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him. (16) Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. (17) These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.

J. B. Lightfoot, in commenting on the phrase “a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath,” states that this refers to the full calendar of days in the Jewish system (Source - Dr. James Renihan, 2005 Founder’s Conference Sermon on New Covenant Theology). Thus these days are distinctively Jewish and are not to be seen as binding on the New Covenant believer in Christ.

However, this should not be taken as indicating that “no day” was to be seen as distinct for the New Covenant believer in Christ. Paul himself was fully in support of the church’s practice of setting apart the first day for

the worship of God with the brethren.

Act 20:7-11 (ESV) On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight. (8) There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered. (9) And a young man named Eutychus, sitting at the window, sank into a deep sleep as Paul talked still longer. And being overcome by sleep, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead. (10) But Paul went down and bent over him, and taking him in his arms, said, "Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him." (11) And when Paul had gone up and had broken bread and eaten, he conversed with them a long while, until daybreak, and so departed.

In drawing our thoughts in this section to a close, the following words by P. K. Jewett are apropos regarding the Apostle's remarks in Romans 14:5. The reader should keep in mind that Jewett is no Sabbatarian. One might say he's still wandering in the wilderness between holding to the Christian Sabbath position and the Lord's Day position. Nevertheless, his words here are sound and should be heard by all:

"One man," he says, "esteems one day above another, another every day alike; let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." What does he mean? It is commonly affirmed that Paul is here saying Christians are free from every distinction of days (so the Protestant Reformers understood the Apostle). But this can hardly be so, if the weekly division of time was accepted in the very Christian circles where he labored. The fact that he gathered with these Christians to break bread on a day designated as "the one of the Sabbaths" (Acts 20:7), and that he designated the same day for setting aside monies toward an offering for the poor saints in Jerusalem (1Cor 16:2), shows that he not only knew that Christians distinguished

that day from others by using it for religious worship, but also approved this distinction by making it himself...Paul himself regarded the first day of the week above others. He “clung to the number seven,” the very thing that Calvin declared that he would never do; and approved for his converts a division of time “based on a Jewish foundation,” the very thing Luther said ought never to be done. It is

unconvincing, therefore, to press Paul’s statement in Romans 14:5 so absolutely as to allow for no distinction in days whatever, as though

he would have considered John a Judaizer for having called one day in the week the Lord’s Day (Rev 1:10), thus giving it the preeminence (Jewett, 77-78).

*(Paul) “clung to the number seven,” the very thing that Calvin declared that he would never do; and approved for his converts a division of time “based on a Jewish foundation,” the very thing Luther said ought never to be done.*

Wow! Jewett’s lack of Sabbatarian conviction aside, I like what he had to say. The day has the preeminence among days! It is to be seen and embraced as “holy.” More needs to be said regarding the manner of our keeping the Sabbath, but this will have to be sufficient for now. We need at this point, to turn our attention to the subject of the means of our keeping the day holy.

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## The Keeping of the Sabbath



### Practice - Means

Where the preceding section of the confessional statement placed its emphasis on the overarching manner in which we should make the day distinct from all other days, treating it as a holy, and separated day, the next portion of the confession begins to narrow our focus as to the “how” of the day. Just what am I going to do (and not do) on the Sabbath day to make it a holy day, not simply in habit, but principally in heart?

Let's hear again from the confession itself:

The Sabbath is then kept holy unto the Lord, when men, after a due

preparing of their hearts, and ordering their common affairs beforehand, do not only observe an holy rest all day, from their own works, words and thoughts, about their worldly employment and recreations, but are also taken up the whole time in the public and private exercises of his worship, and in the duties of necessity and mercy.

Clearly it is the issue of the “means” or application of the keeping of the Sabbath holy that takes up the majority of the space in lining out the confessional statement. But a word of caution must be noted before proceeding. We must not lose sight of the forest for the trees. Much of the overarching beauty of the Sabbath is ever in danger of being lost at the very point of well-intentioned application. The following from J. I. Packer in his work on the Puritans should be heard and kept in mind as we cautiously proceed into the fruitful yet dangerous realm of application:

Legalism - the negative habit of mind which stresses what one must not do on the Lord's Day and stops there, and pharisaism - the self-justifying habit of mind which is all too ready to censure others for real or fancied lapses in this matter, are both a violation of the spirit of the gospel (Packer, 242).

To approach our study, we have made the following distinctions in this section of the confession: 1) Preparation and Planning and 2) Putting Off and Putting On. To begin, we will look at the section that we have entitled: Preparation and Planning.

### **⌘Preparation and Planning**

The confession states that the Sabbath will not be kept holy until we first engage in “a due preparing of (our) hearts, and ordering of (our) common affairs beforehand.” In short, we need to get ready for Sunday -

before Sunday comes! Now this seems like the consummate “no-brainer,” but as straightforward as it may be, we just don’t seem to get it. As the proverb goes, “He who fails to plan, plans to fail!” How many Lord’s Days have “gone by the way” for this very simple reason. The confession points to two essential spheres of our lives that must be put in order or the chaos of the Sabbath will commence and overtake us body and soul.

### Sphere 1: Heart Preparation

The first sphere we label here as that of “heart preparation.” As we will see as we proceed, the principle activity on the Lord’s Day is that of worship. And worship fundamentally is a matter of the heart - it is spiritual at its deepest roots. As J. I. Packer has well said:

Preparing the heart is the most important matter of all, for the Lord’s Day is pre-eminently ‘a day for heart-work.’ From this point of view, the battle for our Sundays is usually won or lost on the foregoing Saturday night, when time should be set aside for self-examination, confession and prayer for the coming day (Packer, 241).

In Packer’s *A Quest for Godliness*, his highly regarded work on the Puritans, Packer tells of the practice of Richard Baxter, a Puritan pastor, and a fellowship of young people whom he used to meet with Saturday evenings for three hours. Their principle purpose in meeting was to make preparation for the Sabbath day (See Packer, 241). George Swinnock, worthy Puritan of old, offers the following oft noted advice:

If thou wouldst thus leave thy heart with God on the Saturday night thou shouldst find it with him in the Lord’s Day morning (Packer, 241).

Not only, however, is internal planning required for a beneficial

Sabbath day, preparation of life itself is necessary as well. This moves us to examine a second sphere that requires planning per the confessional standards - life planning.

### Sphere 2: Life Planning

The confession advises us further to order our “common affairs” prior to Sunday. By “common affairs” the confession points to those daily activities that eat up our time Monday through Saturday that have to get done, but by their very existence often leave time for little else.

Later we will see the confessional statement regarding the reserving of the day for deeds of necessity. Common affairs are not deeds of necessity. Common, every day activities like going to the store, paying bills, homework, etc. . .are activities that per the normal course of life fill up our days. Who really enjoys going to Wal-Mart! We wish to indicate in no way that these activities are sinful, bad or even wrong. The confession is pointing rather to the importance of getting this daily “stuff” out of the way so the heart and life can be given to the things that really matter on the Lord’s Day.

### Three Things to Encourage Both Preparation and Planning:

1. Confession: There needs to be confession or agreement on my part that the Lord’s Day belongs to none other than the Lord himself. Christ must be seen as Lord of the day or I will always view it as mine and fill it with the things in which I am interested. Or as Isaiah notes, my foot will ever be directed toward my own pleasure:

Isa 58:13-14 "If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the LORD honorable; if you honor it, not

*Christ must be seen as Lord of the day or I will always view it as mine and fill it with the things in which I am interested.*

going your own ways, or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly; (14) then you shall take delight in the LORD, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

This issue must not be passed by lightly or casually rejected without proper consideration. The knee jerk reaction at this point usually goes something like this: "You mean I can't eat out on Sunday!?" "Surely you don't mean I can't watch ESPN!?" A whole list of questioning responses could be provided. These responses miss the fundamental issue regarding the day. I personally was stuck there for years. It is time to get "unstuck!" We are trapped in the temporal and can't see the beauty of the eternal. We are so worried God is going to take away our favorite toys and leave us with nothing to do. The fundamental issue of the day is not about "not doing" - nor is it necessarily about "doing." The heart of the matter of the day is about one thing: Lordship. Who's day is in anyway! Mine or Christ's? Bruce Ray from his delightful work, [Celebrating the Sabbath](#), offers the following helpful point on this issue:

The real Sabbath conflicts are not over Sabbath activities per se, but over the authority of Christ. Jesus insisted, "The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:28). Here is the real issue: is Jesus Christ Lord, or is he not? If he is, then he is Lord of the Sabbath and has the authority to define its intention, function, meaning, and proper use (Ray, 84).

We may in fact come to different conclusions about the propriety of eating out or watching sports on the Lord's Day. But let's not disagree on this point - it is the Lord's Day! Bishop J. C. Ryle, the 19<sup>th</sup> century bishop of Liverpool in England adds:

Our Lord claims the right to dispense with all the traditional rules, and man-made laws about the Sabbath, with which the Pharisees

had overloaded the day of rest. As Son of man, who came not to destroy, but to save, He asserts His power to set free the blessed Sabbath from the false and superstitious notions with which the Rabbis had clogged and poisoned it, and to restore it to its proper meaning and use. He declares that the Sabbath is His day, His by creation and institution, since He first gave it in paradise and at Sinai, and proclaims His determination to defend and purify His day from Jewish imposition, and to give it to His disciples as a day of blessing, comfort, and benefit, according to its original intention (Ryle, cited in Ray, 84-85).

We must start with this as our “confession.” There is however, a second issue that will work to encourage our preparation and planning, that of conviction.

2. Conviction: Second, there needs to be conviction regarding the priority of the day, as practiced in the early church, and confessionally held throughout the centuries. Several thoughts may prove helpful here:

- The Lord's Day should be seen as the apex of the week.
- The whole of the week flows “out of” and “into” the Lord's Day.
- The day is to be given priority in heart and hand.
- Nothing will get in the way of the Lord's Day!

There is also a third and final issue that we believe will work toward our encouragement in preparation and planning for the day.

3. Consideration: There needs to be consideration given to the

needs of the soul that can only be met by an encounter with God himself. In the words of Jonathan Edwards:

God hath made it our duty, by his institution, to set apart this day for a special seeking of his grace and blessing. From which we may argue, that he will be especially ready to confer his grace on those who thus seek it...The Sabbath day is an accepted time, a day of salvation, a time wherein God especially loves to be sought, and loves to be found (Edwards, on The Perpetuity and the Change of the Sabbath).

*The Sabbath day is an accepted time, a day of salvation, a time wherein God especially loves to be sought, and loves to be found.*

We trust that these three encouragements regarding confession, conviction and consideration, will be helpful to the reader in making proper preparation and plans his worship of God on his day. We need to turn our attention at this point, to further words of the confession itself that help in this preparation and planning by pointing out things that can be put off in our living to make more room for things that need in particular on the Lord's Day to be put on in order to produce the greatest benefit from the day for our souls and God's glory.

### **✘Putting Off and Putting On**

Do you ever get to the end of a Sunday and do a "double-take" being unable to figure out how on the "day of rest" you are absolutely exhausted and wonder if you have enough strength to lift you body into bed? Be encouraged you are not alone, and furthermore, it doesn't have to be this way!

Though spending ourselves on the Lord's Day in the Lord's work is not in and of itself a bad thing, often a large portion of our exhaustion is fueled by a simple point of misunderstanding. In addition to all the weekly "Sabbath stuff" that legitimately gets added to the plate on the Lord's Day, if we are not careful to "put-off" some of the "weekly stuff" on this special day - our Sunday will soon become over loaded! To aid us in avoiding this, the confession wisely directs us to "put-off" before we ever "put-on."

**Putting Off:** The confession states:

do not only observe an holy rest all day, from their own works, words and thoughts, about their worldly employment and recreations,

Stated in "negative terms" the point of the confession is to place stress on the positive aspects of the daily engagement. There are certain things I need to put off to make room for the things that are most necessary to the soul. Consider the following question and answer from the Westminster Larger Catechism:

Question 117: How is the Sabbath or the Lord's day to be sanctified?

Answer: The Sabbath or Lord's day is to be sanctified by an holy resting all the day, not only from such works as are at all times sinful, but even from such worldly employments and recreations as are on other days lawful...that we may be the more free and fit for the duties of that day.

Isaac Watts thought in these terms of "putting-off" the "vain world" that he might taste more of Christ on the Sabbath day when he wrote these lines in the hymn - *The Enjoyment of Christ*

*Far from my thoughts, vain world, be gone,*

*Let my religious hours alone;  
Fain would my eyes my Savior see;  
I wait a visit, Lord, from Thee.  
My heart grows warm with holy fire,  
And kindles with a pure desire;  
Come, my dear Jesus, from above,  
And feed my soul with heavenly love.  
The trees of life immortal stand,  
In fragrant rows at Thy right hand;  
And in sweet murmurs, by their side,  
Rivers of bliss perpetual glide.  
Haste, then, but with a smiling face,  
And spread the table of Thy grace;  
Bring down a taste of fruit divine,  
And cheer my heart with sacred wine.  
Blessed Jesus, what delicious fare;  
How sweet Thy entertainments are!  
Never did angels taste above,  
Redeeming grace, and dying love.  
Hail, great Immanuel, all divine!  
In Thee Thy Father's glories shine;  
Thou brightest, sweetest, fairest One,  
That eyes have seen or angels known.*

We must ever remember: The heart will not be prepared to savor much of Christ on the Lord's Day if the day is "over-filled" with the vain and empty pursuits of the vanity of the world.

**Putting On:** The confession further admonishes us on the Lord's Day to be:

taken up the whole time in the public and private exercises of his worship, and in the duties of necessity and mercy.

This is where things may become difficult. The question raised at this point by many is this, "What is meant by the phrase 'the whole time?'" In order to answer this adequately, several points need to be pursued. We see at least the following five: subscription, liberty, conscience, history, practicality.

### **Issue 1: Subscription**

There are several levels to which one may be said to subscribe to the confessional standards. Jim Renihan, of the Institute for Reformed Baptist Studies, has offered a helpful piece of writing entitled: *Terms of Confessional Subscription* which he shared with me via email correspondence. Dr. Renihan's entire article is most helpful, and the reader is encouraged to pursue it. However, for our purposes here, we will specifically focus on what is commonly designated as giving "full subscription" (which is our position) to the confession. The following is taken from that email regarding this issue of subscription:

The next category is *Full Subscription*, also sometimes designated as *Strict Subscription*. In this view, the entire body of doctrine in a confession is considered as a cohesive system, and thus is received as a whole. Every doctrine contained in the statement is recognized for its importance and place in the system of Christian doctrine. This does not imply that they are all considered to be of equal importance, simply that all of them are true and should be received as such.

I am indebted to Dr. Morton H. Smith for the suggestion of the terminology "Full Subscription." According to him, "strict or full subscription takes at face value" the terminology used in adopting a confession of faith. As an example, we may note the language found in the documents used by the Association of Reformed Baptist Churches of America to define its theological commitments. When

the association began it stated, "We declare that our primary rule of faith and practice is the inerrant Word of God, and adopt as our subordinate standards the excellent document commonly known as the London Baptist Confession of 1689, and the Constitution of this Association." The constitution of the Association states, "While we hold tenaciously to the inerrant and infallible Word of God as found in the sixty-six books of the Bible (this being our final source of faith and practice), we embrace and adopt the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689 as a faithful expression of the doctrine taught in the Scriptures. This Confession is the doctrinal standard of the Association," and when a new church seeks admission it signs this statement: "We accept the London Confession of Faith of 1689 as an accurate and reliable expression of what the Scriptures teach and the faith we confess." In each case, the member churches commit themselves to the Confession as a whole, maintaining the primacy of the Scriptures, and "embrace and adopt" the Confession as a truthful expression of their convictions with regard to the details of Scripture.

Taken at face value, these words imply, even though they do not explicitly state, strict, or full subscription. This does not mean that every doctrine within the Confession is treated as if it was equally important, but rather that the churches commit themselves to all of the doctrines of the Confession. In addition, as Dr. Smith says so well, "full subscription does not require the adoption of every word of the Confession or Catechisms, but positively believes that we are adopting every doctrine or teaching of the Confession or Catechisms." This is an important distinction, and needs to be understood. Several years ago I received a very thoughtful letter from a friend who visited our church. He has served as a pastor and a seminary professor, and has a Ph. D. in New Testament from a major Reformed seminary. But he was not familiar with our Confession, and took it home to read it with interest. His letter

asked me several questions about the contents of the document, specifically wondering, for example, if we really did believe that the Pope was *the* Antichrist, or if we used wine in our observance of the Lord's Table. I responded by telling him that these matters are non-issues among our churches. Our eschatology does not press us to identify the Pope with the Antichrist, though we would affirm that he and the Roman system *are* antichrist, nor do we insist that only wine is suitable at the Lord's Table, believing that the "fruit of the vine" as it is called in Scripture, is all that is required for true observance of the Supper. Full subscription does not require absolute commitment to these words. It recognizes that a man may scruple over a statement here and there and still remain true to the doctrinal intent of the Confession. Substituting grape juice for wine is qualitatively different from substituting lemonade or *Coca-Cola*<sup>TM</sup>. Likewise reluctance to identify the pope with *the* man of sin is vastly different from signing *Evangelicals and Catholics Together* (Renihan, Personal Email Correspondence).

## Issue 2: Liberty

Another issue that comes up in consideration of the "whole time" of the day being taken up with worship, work, and witness is that of Christian liberty. In other words, what part does Christian liberty play in the "keeping of the Sabbath?" What dangers do we encounter when being "too strict" with personal positions and further, in imposing them on others? Is there a danger of a Sabbath legalism that we must guard against?

The Puritan pastor Richard Baxter offers some wise counsel at this point:

I will first look at a man's positive duties on the Lord's Day, how he heareth and readeth and prayeth and spendeth his time, and how he

instructeth and helpeth his family; and if he be diligent in seeking God, and ply his heavenly business, I shall be very backward to judge him for a word or action about worldly things that falls in on the by (Packer, 242).

### **Issue 3: Conscience**

A third issue of note at this point is the conscience of the individual involved. We must (especially as pastors) take care not to bind the conscience of our brethren to our “man-made” traditions, rather than pointing them to the word of God.

Jesus’ own words in Mark 7 should be heard by us all regarding the Sabbath. Even though his words are not directly related to the Sabbath principle, by way of application the instruction cannot be missed by the discerning reader.

Mar 7:1-13 Now when the Pharisees gathered to him, with some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem, (2) they saw that some of his disciples ate with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed. (3) (For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands, holding to the tradition of the elders, (4) and when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other traditions that they observe, such as the washing of cups and pots and copper vessels and dining couches.) (5) And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, "Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?" (6) And he said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, "This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; (7) in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' (8) You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of

men." (9) And he said to them, "You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition! (10) For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.' (11) But you say, 'If a man tells his father or his mother, "Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban"' (that is, given to God)- (12) then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, (13) thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And many such things you do."

There is ever a danger, especially writing as a pastor, of binding the consciences of our brothers and sisters in this matter of "Sabbath practice." Bruce Ray has helpfully stated here that:

The day of rest had become an unbelievable day of bondage, with people laboring under a burden of oppressive traditions. Liberty had become slavery, rejoicing had become spying (Ray, 83).

Along this same line of thinking, Walt Chantry, from his well-balanced book, [Call the Sabbath A Delight](#), offers the following caution, that should especially be heard by pastors:

In this day of disregard for the Ten Commandments, authoritarian oversight has emerged. Elders are determined to insist that church members keep the Sabbath in detailed specific application. Very specific instructions are given to all members and close watch is kept on their practices. It is then said that with this procedure the elders care for their souls. A rigid, over-bearing eldership begins to lord it over the flock regarding the Sabbath and a host of other moral issues. These authoritarian tactics begin to take away the liberty Jesus Christ has given to his people...Interfacing scrutiny and excessive directions from a misconceived eldership drives Christians back into a legal obedience, a cheerless, wrong-intentioned patter of

good works (Chantry, 80-81).

#### **Issue 4: History**

A fourth issue is that of history. The time we have in our work does not permit a full study of history regarding this point. We must save the study of it for a later time or for the reader himself to pursue. Suffice it to say, that a variety of approaches, even among confessional brethren, have been pursued in the “keeping” of the “whole time” of the Sabbath throughout the history of the church of Christ.

#### **Issue 5: Practicality**

Finally there is the issue of practicality that must be considered. Most of us would agree that forbidding children to engage in play, or for us to take a walk with our spouse would be out of keeping with the heart of the commandment to keep the Sabbath holy and see the day as distinct. But that is in fact what many do with the Sabbath in making an extensive list of “do’s and don’ts” for the day.

Bruce Ray recounts the interesting experience of John Winthrop, first governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony, in his work on Celebrating the Sabbath. Winthrop found that brief exercise on the Sabbath prevented him from becoming discouraged during the remaining portion of the day. One needs to make his own decisions about things such as this and be honest with himself - if his recreation (or whatever else he chooses to pursue on this special day) is helping or hindering his ability to worship his Lord. What begins as a help, often, due to the folly of our hearts can quickly turn into a hindrance. We must ever guard against “good things” that will rob us of the “best things,” especially on the Lord’s Day.

In light of all that has been said, what exactly is it that is to occupy “the whole time” of the Lord’s Day for the believer that he might delight more fully in Christ who is the Sovereign Lord of the believer’s rest? The confession points the believer toward the following three engagements for his delight in the day:

### **Engagement 1: Worship**

Fundamentally the day is a day for the worship of God. The confession states in the same chapter in article 6 the following helpful words:

1689.22.6 God is to be worshiped everywhere in spirit and in truth; as in private families daily, and in secret each one by himself; so more solemnly in the public assemblies, which are not carelessly nor wilfully to be neglected or forsaken, when God by his word or providence calleth thereunto.

The confession states the “whole time” is to be filled with both “public and private exercises of his (God’s) worship.” Stress should be placed here on the word “filled.” The time of the Sabbath is to be filled with “activity.” As J. I. Packer helpfully states:

We do not keep the Sabbath holy by lounging around doing nothing. We are to rest from the business of our earthly calling in order to prosecute the business of our heavenly calling. If we do not spend the day doing the latter, we fail to keep it holy.

This worship is to be both public and private. Consider first that it is to be public. This is not put first by mistake. It is put first for it has the priority. Consider Question 103 of the Heidelberg Catechism:

Question: What does God require in the fourth commandment?

Answer: That I, especially on the Sabbath, that is, on the day of rest, diligently frequent the church of God, to hear his word, to use the sacraments, publicly to call upon the Lord, and contribute to the relief of the poor.

The Psalmist saw the beauty of congregational worship and wrote a special psalm for singing on that very occasion. In fact all the psalms were a collection of hymns to be sung in the worship of God on the Sabbath.

Psalm 92:1-15 A Psalm. A Song for the Sabbath. It is good to give thanks to the LORD, to sing praises to your name, O Most High; (2) to declare your steadfast love in the morning, and your faithfulness by night, (3) to the music of the lute and the harp, to the melody of the lyre. (4) For you, O LORD, have made me glad by your work; at the works of your hands I sing for joy. (5) How great are your works, O LORD! Your thoughts are very deep! (6) The stupid man cannot know; the fool cannot understand this: (7) that though the wicked sprout like grass and all evildoers flourish, they are doomed to destruction forever; (8) but you, O LORD, are on high forever. (9) For behold, your enemies, O LORD, for behold, your enemies shall perish; all evildoers shall be scattered. (10) But you have exalted my horn like that of the wild ox; you have poured over me fresh oil. (11) My eyes have seen the downfall of my enemies; my ears have heard the doom of my evil assailants. (12) The righteous flourish like the palm tree and grow like a cedar in Lebanon. (13) They are planted in the house of the LORD; they flourish in the courts of our God. (14) They still bear fruit in old age; they are ever full of sap and green, (15) to declare that the LORD is upright; he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.

*The psalms were a collection of hymns to be sung in the worship of God on the Sabbath.*

Packer notes that

Public worship must be central on the Lord's Day. The day must be built round public worship, morning and afternoon or evening...Private devotions must take second place to this, if one or the other for any reason has to go (Packer, 241).

But, even if it is so (and it is) that private worship is secondary to public, this is not to say private worship is a little matter. Private worship is to be a matter of preparing the heart for the public worship of God on the Lord's Day, as well as carrying on and deepening the work begun in the preaching of the word in the corporate meeting of the church. Again to note the direction of the confession heard earlier:

1689.22.6 God is to be worshiped everywhere in spirit and in truth; as in private families daily, and in secret each one by himself; so more solemnly in the public assemblies, which are not carelessly nor wilfully to be neglected or forsaken, when God by his word or providence calleth thereunto.

Not only worship however, but also the positive engagements of "work" and "witness," the doing of deeds of necessity and mercy are to occupy the day as well. Helpful in giving some biblical roots to these two directives is the teaching of Matthew regarding the ministry of Christ on the Sabbath from Matthew 12.

Mat 12:1-14 At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. (2) But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, "Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath." (3) He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and those who were with him: (4) how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which

it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? (5) Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless? (6) I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. (7) And if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. (8) For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath." (9) He went on from there and entered their synagogue. (10) And a man was there with a withered hand. And they asked him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"—so that they might accuse him. (11) He said to them, "Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out? (12) Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." (13) Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And the man stretched it out, and it was restored, healthy like the other. (14) But the Pharisees went out and conspired against him, how to destroy him.

In light of this text from the ministry of Christ consider the following two engagements that are encourage in this text (among others): Work and Witness. The reader is further directed to Appendix 3 for more information as to how “work” and “witness” are engagements with which the believer’s time should be filled on the Lord’s Day. Consider first the engagement of work.

### **Engagement 2: Work**

The confession states its directive regarding work, in terms of the day being given to “duties of necessity.” Several points here should be briefly noted. Keeping work limited to “works of necessity” provides at least two helps for the day: the first is practical and the second is more abstract .

Practically speaking, keeping the work of the Sabbath to “works of necessity” limits the items that can encroach upon the needful things of the day. Limiting our works to “works of necessity” guards the day from unnecessary things crowding out the things that are most needful for our souls. In the story from the gospel the disciples need to eat, and so do we. The Sabbath is no fast - it is a feast. The benefit of personal rest and refreshment is to be treasured on the Lord’s Sabbath and not surrendered to “work” that could be left for another day.

Secondly, limiting our “works” on the Sabbath to “works of necessity” points us to the one who in all truth is our real worker - Christ himself. The Father and the Son as John points out in his gospel record in chapter 5, verses 1-17, are the only legitimate workers on the day. The Sabbath is a day to delight in the completed and finished work of Christ for our redemption. To fully do this, we must turn from our self-effort that has trapped and discouraged us all week long, and delight with our brothers and sisters in the full, complete, and sufficient work that he has wrought on our behalf, for his glory and our good. This will move us to delightfully sing with Watts praise to God for his work, instead of taking delight in ours:

*Sweet is the work, my God, my King, to praise Thy Name, give thanks and sing,  
To show Thy love by morning light and talk of all Thy truth at night.*

*Sweet is the day of sacred rest, no mortal cares shall seize my breast.  
O may my heart in tune be found, like David’s harp of solemn sound!*

*My heart shall triumph in my Lord and bless His works and bless His Word.  
Thy works of grace, how bright they shine! How deep Thy counsels, how divine!*

### **Engagement 3: Witness**

What we have entitled here as witness, the confession states as

“duties of...mercy.” This also takes its direction from the ministry of Jesus as does the above direction to “duties of necessity.” The reader is directed to Appendix 3 at the back of this work on “The Messianic Mission of Christ and the Sabbath Controversy” to observe the lessons learned from the work of Christ on the Sabbath day. In engaging in “duties of...mercy” we in fact embody the very life of Christ to a lost and needy world around us.

Robert Shaw, in his Exposition of the Westminster Confession of Faith, offers the following helpful words on this point that also serve as a thought-filled conclusion to our work:

Works of necessity and mercy are allowed on the Sabbath. By the former are meant works which could not have been done on the preceding day, and cannot be delayed till the day following. By the latter are meant those works which are performed from compassion to our fellow-creatures. Under these heads are included such works as these: traveling to and from the house of God; defending a town or city that is invaded by enemies; working a vessel at sea; quenching a fire, and removing goods which would be destroyed by it, or by a sudden inundation; feeding cattle, and preserving their lives from danger; visiting the sick, and ministering to their comfort and necessities; and taking care of children. In short, there is nothing of this kind forbidden, though it may, in a great measure, sometimes hinder the proper work of the day; for "God will have mercy, and not sacrifice." Jesus healed the sick on the Sabbath-day, and his disciples rubbed out the corn from the ears, when they were hungry; and though the Pharisees reprov'd them, yet the Lord pronounced them blameless.

"The Sabbath was made for man." It is not an arbitrary appointment, but a most benevolent institution—designed for the benefit and advantage of man. Viewed merely as a day of cessation from labour, it must be regarded as a merciful and beneficial institution. It is

intended to give to the laborious classes of mankind an opportunity of resting from toil; and the return of the hebdomadal rest is found to be absolutely necessary for the preservation of health and strength. Every member of the community ought to be secured in the full enjoyment of that day of rest which God in his goodness, and by his authority, has allowed him. But the Sabbath is not merely a season of rest from the fatigues and anxieties of secular business—it is a cessation from ordinary labour, that we may attend with greater diligence to the duties of religion. And surely one whole day in seven is not too much for the immediate service of God, for the improvement of our souls, and for preparation for eternity (Shaw, 284-285).

*A Study on the Sabbath: Sabbath, Christian Sabbath, or Lord's Day?*

# Section V

Appendices



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# Appendices



Appendix 1: The Content of the Law:  
The Natural Law - The Mosaic Law - The Law of Christ

Appendix 2: Tabernacle Imagery in Genesis

Appendix 3: The Messianic Mission of Christ and the Sabbath  
Controversy

Appendix 4: Ethical Violations of 1Timothy 1:8-11

Appendix 5: Exegesis of Hebrews 4:9-10

Appendix 6: Bibliography

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*A Study on the Sabbath: Sabbath, Christian Sabbath, or Lord's Day?*

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## **Appendix 1: The Content of Law - Conclusions**

❖ Though there may in fact be “expressive distinctions” between the natural law written on the heart of every man, the moral law summed up in the decalogue given to Israel at Sinai, and the law of Christ as taught by Jesus and the Apostles, they are all “essentially” the same at their core.

*- God gave to Adam a law of universal obedience written in his heart. [1689.19.1]*

*- The same law that was first written in the heart of man continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness after the fall, and was delivered by God upon Mount Sinai, in ten commandments, and written in two tables, the four first containing our duty towards God, and the other six, our duty to man. [1689.19.2]*

*- Neither are the aforementioned uses of the law contrary to the grace of the Gospel, but do sweetly comply with it, the Spirit of Christ subduing and enabling the will of man to do that freely and cheerfully which the will of God, revealed in the law, requireth to be done. [1689.19.7]*

❖ More examples could be amassed for each of these laws/commands/principles, demonstrating that these are in no way isolated precepts and expressions of obedience (or disobedience).

❖ This moves us forward in demonstrating that the ethical standards of righteousness for man before God are essentially the same in every age. This means that the “rule of life” for the believer in the gospel is essentially the same “rule of life” for the member of the old covenant community, as well as those who came before. As the confession states:

- The moral law doth for ever bind all, as well justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof, and that not only in regard of the matter contained in it, but also in respect of the authority of God the Creator, who gave it; neither doth Christ in the Gospel any way dissolve, but much strengthen this obligation. [1689.19.5]

- Although true believers be not under the law as a covenant of works, to be thereby justified or condemned, yet it is of great use to them as well as to others, in that as a rule of life, informing them of the will of God and their duty, it directs and binds them to walk accordingly. [1689.19.6]

❖ This further moves us forward in our quest for understanding the Sabbath commandment - placing it forward as essentially a command directing men in every age to set aside time for the worship of the true and living God. This is what the confession points toward when it states that:

- The light of nature shews that there is a God, who hath lordship and sovereignty over all; is just, good and doth good unto all; and is therefore to be feared, loved, praised, called upon, trusted in, and served, with all the heart and all the soul, and with all the might. [1689.22.1]

- It is the law of nature, that in general a proportion of time, by God's appointment, be set apart for the worship of God. [1689.22.7]

*A Study on the Sabbath: Sabbath, Christian Sabbath, or Lord's Day?*

**Appendix 2: The Tabernacle Imagery in Genesis**

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*A Study on the Sabbath: Sabbath, Christian Sabbath, or Lord's Day?*

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*A Study on the Sabbath: Sabbath, Christian Sabbath, or Lord's Day?*

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## **Appendix 5: Exegesis of Hebrews 4:9-10 by John Owen**

The following is from John Owen's commentary on the book of Hebrews. His comments display the depth of Puritan exegesis, with soundness of thought and Christ-centered affection. His whole section on Hebrews 4 is recommended, but these words on vs.9-10 will suffice as a sound exhortation for the continuance of the need for "Sabbath keeping" among God's new covenant people. We believe it will serve as a great help to the student of the Sabbath as it is held forth in the writings of the New Testament.

We hear first from the text of Hebrews 4:9-10. It is this text that the following exegesis of Owen is based:

Heb 4:9-10 So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, (10) for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.

### **Hebrews 4:9**

Here the Apostle completes the due analogy that is between the several rests of God and his people, which he hath discoursed of in this chapter. For as at the beginning of the world there was first the work of God and his rest thereon; which made way for a rest for his people in himself, and in his worship, by the contemplation of his works which he had made, and on whose finishing he rested; and a day designed, determined, blessed, and sanctified, to express that rest of God, whence mention is made of those works in the command for the observation of that day, seeing the worship of God in and on that day consisted principally in the glorifying of God by and for those works of his, as also to be a means to further men in their entrance into his eternal rest, whereunto all these things do tend; and this was the "Sabbath keeping" of the people of God from the foundation of the

world: and as at the giving of the law there was a great work of God, and his rest thereon, in the finishing of his work and the establishing of his worship in the land of Canaan; which made way for the people's entering into his rest in that worship and country, and had a day assigned them to express the one and the other, and to help them to enter finally into the rest of God, all which were types and shadows of the rest mentioned by David; and this was their sabbatizing rest: so now, under the gospel, there is a sabbatism comprehensive of all these; for there was, as we shall see, a great work of God, and a rest of his own that ensued thereon; on this is founded the promise of rest, spiritual and eternal, unto them that do believe; and the determination of a new day, expressive of the one and the other, that is, the rest of God, and our rest in him; which is the sabbatism that our apostle here affirms to remain for the people of God. And what day this is hath been declared, namely, the first day of the week.

Now, besides the evidence that ariseth from the consideration of the whole context, there are two things which make it undeniably manifest that the apostle here proves and asserts the granting of an evangelical Sabbath, or day of rest, for the worship of God to be constantly observed. This, I say, he doth, though he doth not this only, nor separately: which whilst some have aimed to prove, they have failed of their aim, not being able to maintain a Sabbath rest exclusively, in opposition either to a spiritual or eternal rest; for so it is not here considered, but only in the manner and order before laid down.

Now these are, first, the introduction of the seventh day's rest into this discourse, and the mentioning of our gospel rest by the name of a "day." Unless the apostle had designed the declaration of a day of rest now under the gospel, as well as a real spiritual rest by believing, there is no tolerable reason to be given of his mentioning the works of God and his rest, and his appointment of the old Sabbath; which, without respect unto another day, doth greatly obscure and involve his whole discourse. Again; his use of this word, framed and as it were coined to this purpose, that it might both

comprise the spiritual rest aimed at, and also express a Sabbath-keeping or observation. When he speaks of our rest in general, he still doth it by adding there was an especial day for its enjoyment. Here he introduceth sabbatismos, which his way of arguing would not have allowed, had he not designed to express the Christian Sabbath.

Secondly, He shows who they are to whom this sabbatism doth belong, who are to enter into this rest, to enjoy it, with all the privileges that do attend it; and these are the people of God. Those of old to whom the rest of Canaan was proposed were the people of God, and God hath a people still; and wherever he hath so, rest is promised to them and prepared for them. These he had before described by their own grace and obedience, verse 3, "We who have believed do enter into rest." Here he doth it by their relation unto God, and the privilege that depended thereon; they are the "people of God" that are interested in this sabbatism.

And the apostle makes use of this description of them upon a double account:

1. Because their being of "the people of God," that is, in covenant (for where a people is God's people, he is their God, Hosea 2:23), was the greatest and most comprehensive privilege that the Hebrews had to boast of or to trust in. This was their glory, and that which exalted them above all nations in the world. So their church pleads with respect unto all others, Isaiah 63:19, "We are thine: thou never barest rule over them; thy name was not called on them;" that is, they were never called the people of Jehovah, because never taken into covenant with him. This privilege whereunto they trusted, the apostle lets them know belongs as well to them that believe under the new testament as it did to them under the old.

Abram was now become Abraham, "a father of many nations." And as those who were his carnal seed of old were the people of God, so God had now a people in and of all those who were his children according to the faith. They

may see, therefore, that they shall lose nothing, no privilege, by coming over to the gospel state by faith in Christ Jesus. Upon a new account they become "the people of God;" which interests them and their children in the covenant, with the seals and all the ordinances of it, even as formerly. For this name, "people," doth not firstly respect individuals, but a collective body of men, with and in all their relations. Believers, not singly considered, but they and their seed, or their children, are this people; and where they are excluded from the initial ordinance of the covenant, I know not how believers can be called "the people of God."

2. He proceeds further, and shows them that indeed this privilege is now transferred over from the old estate and Canaan rest unto them that shall and do enter into this rest of God under the gospel. Hence, instead of losing the privilege of being "the people of God" by faith in Christ, he lets them know that they could no longer retain it without it. If they failed herein, they would be no longer "the people of God;" and as a signification thereof, they would become "no people" at all. And so hath it fallen out with them. For ever since they ceased to be God's people they have been "no people," or enjoy no political rule and society in the world. Thus, then, "there remaineth a rest" (or "Sabbath-keeping") "for the people of God." But yet there is a considerable difficulty that ariseth against the whole design of the apostle: and this is, that this sabbatism of the people of God wanteth a due foundation in an especial work and rest of God. For as, if God had not done a new work, and rested in it, at the giving of the law and establishment of his worship, whereby a new world as it were was erected, there could have been no new rest for his people to enter into, but all must have regarded the rest that was from the foundation of the world; so, if there be not a new work and rest of God now wrought and entered into by him, there cannot be a new rest and a new day of rest for the people of God. This objection, therefore, the apostle removes, and manifests that there is a new blessed foundation of that rest which he now proposeth to the Hebrews, verse 10, as we shall see.

**Observation 1: Believers under the New Testament have lost nothing, no privilege that was enjoyed by them under the old.**

Many things they have gained, and those of unspeakable excellency, but they have lost nothing at all. Whatever they had of privilege in any ordinance, that is continued; and whatever was of burden or bondage, that is taken away. All that they had of old was on this account, that they were the people of God. To them as such did all their advantages and privileges belong. But they were yet so the people of God as to be kept like servants, under the severe discipline of the law, Galatians 4:1. Into this great fountain-privilege believers under the gospel are now succeeded. And what was of servitude in reference unto the law is removed and taken away; but whatever was of advantage is continued unto them, as the people of God. This, I suppose, is unquestionable, that God making them to be "his people who were not a people," would not cut them short of any privilege which belonged before to his people as such, Romans 9:25,26. Besides, the state of the gospel is an estate of more grace and favor from God than that under the law, John 1:17. The whole gospel is an ampliation of divine spiritual grace and favor to God's people. So is it a better estate than that which went before, accompanied with "better promises," more liberty, grace, and privileges, than it. Nothing, then, of this but all privileges at any time granted unto the people of God are made over to them that under the gospel are so. Let men but give one instance to this purpose, and not beg the matter in question, and it shall suffice.

Moreover, God hath so ordered all things in the dispensation of his grace and institution of his worship, that Jesus Christ should have the pre-eminence in all. All things are gathered up unto a head in him. And is it possible that any man should be a loser by the coming of Christ, or by his own coming unto Christ? It is against the whole gospel once to imagine it in the least instance. Let it now be inquired whether it were not a great privilege of the people of God of old, that their infant seed were taken into covenant with them, and were made partakers of the initial seal thereof? Doubtless it

was the greatest they enjoyed, next to the grace they received for the saving of their own souls. That it was so granted them, so esteemed by them, may be easily proved. And without this, whatever they were, they were not a people.

Believers under the gospel are, as we have spoken, the people of God; and that with all sorts of advantages annexed unto that condition, above what were enjoyed by them who of old were so. How is it, then, that this people of God, made so by Jesus Christ in the gospel, should have their charter, upon its renewal, razed with a deprivation of one of their choicest rights and privileges? Assuredly it is not so. And therefore if believers are now, as the apostle says they are, "the people of God," their children have a right to the initial seal of the covenant.

**Observation 2: It is the people of God alone who have a right unto all the privileges of the gospel, and who in a due manner can perform all the duties of it.**

The rest of the gospel and all that is comprised in it, is for them, and for them only. All others who lay hands on them, or use them are wrongful invaders of the rights and enclosures of others; and or do but unjustly possess what they have injuriously seized on. And the reason hereof is, because all gospel privileges are but adjuncts of and annexed unto the covenant of grace, and the administration of it. Without an interest in that covenant, none can attain the least right unto them; and this they alone have who are the people of God, for by that interest they become so. There is, therefore, great rapine and spoil committed upon the gospel and its ordinances in the world. Every one thinks he is born with a right to the chiefest of them, and cannot be excluded from them without the highest injustice. But ask some whether they are the people of God or no, and they will be ready to deride both name and thing. Custom, and an opinion received by tradition, hath put an esteem and valuation upon the enjoyment

of the ordinances of the gospel. These, therefore, or their pretended right unto them, men will by no means forego, nor suffer themselves to be divested of them; but for the true, real, spiritual foundation and use of them, they are generally despised. But all may know that this is the method of the gospel, – first become the people of God, by entering into covenant with him in Jesus Christ, and all other spiritual mercies will be added unto you.

**Observation 3: The people of God, as such, have work to do, and labor incumbent on them. Rest and labor are correlates; the one supposeth the other.**

Affirming, therefore, that there is a rest for them, it includes in like manner that they have work to do. What this is cannot here be declared in particular: none that knows in any measure what is their condition in themselves, what their station in the world, what enemies they have to conflict withal, what duties are continually incumbent on them, but knows there is work and labor required of them. Thus our Savior expresseth his approbation of his churches by, “I know thy works, and thy labor,” Revelation 2:2. The people of God dwell not as Laish, in security; nor are Sybarites, spending their time in sloth, luxury, and riot: but they are an industrious, working people; and I wish that those who profess themselves to be so were less industrious in earthly things, and more in heavenly; although I must say that those who are industrious heavenwards will not be altogether negligent or slothful in their stations in this world. But Christ calls men to work, sad that our portion in this world is intermixed withal.

**Observation 4: God hath graciously given his people an entrance into rest during their state of work and labor, to sweeten it unto them, and to enable them for it.**

The state of sin under the law is a state of all labor, and no rest; for

“there is no peace,” or rest, “to the wicked,” saith God, Isaiah 57:21. The future state of glory is all of rest, all rest. The present state of believing and obedience is a mixed state, partly of labor, partly of rest: of labor in ourselves, in the world, against sin, under affliction and persecution; of rest in Christ, in his love, in his worship, and grace. And these things have a great mutual respect unto one another. Our labor makes our rest sweet, and our rest makes our labor easy. So is God pleased to fill us, and exercise us; all to prepare us duly for eternal rest with himself.

**Observation 5: Believers may and do find assured rest in a due attendance unto and performance of the duties of the gospel This is that which the apostle asserts and proves.**

**Observation 6: There is a weekly sacred day of rest appointed for believers under the gospel, as will appear from the next verse.**

#### Hebrews 4:10

So are the words to be read. Speaking of the works of God, he calls them “his own,” “from his own;” and of the other compared with him, he says only, “his works:” somewhat otherwise than they are rendered in our version.

Expositors generally apply these words unto believers, and their entering into the rest of God; whether satisfactorily to themselves or others, either as to their design, coherence, scope, or signification of particular expressions, I know not. Nor is it my way to oppose or confute the expositions of others, unless they are of such as wrest the Scripture to the confirmation of errors and heresies, or pervert the testimonies which in any texts or places are given unto important and fundamental truths of the

gospel; such as we have met with many in our passage. But where things spoken or delivered are true with respect unto the analogy of faith, though they may not be rightly or regularly deduced from this or that text in particular, yet they may have their use unto edification, through their conformity unto what is taught in other places; in such cases I shall not contend with any, but with all humility propose my own thoughts and reasons to the consideration of them who are wise, learned, and godly. I am not, then, satisfied with the exposition mentioned of this place, but look upon it as that which neither suits the design of the apostle, nor can bear a tolerable sense in its particular application. For, first, supposing believers to be here intended, what are the works they are said to rest from? Their sins, say some; their labors, sorrows, and sufferings, say others; from these they rest in heaven. But how can they be said to rest from these works as God rested from his own? for God so rested from his as to take the greatest delight and satisfaction in them, to be refreshed by them: "In six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed," Exodus 31:17. He so rested from them as that he rested *in them*, and blessed them, and blessed and sanctified the time wherein they were finished. Indeed God's rest from and upon his works, besides a mere cessation of working, consisted principally in the satisfaction and complacency that he had in them. But now, if those mentioned be the works here intended, men cannot so rest from them as God did from his; but they cease from them with a detestation of them as far as they are sinful, and joy for their deliverance from them as far as they are sorrowful. Now, this is not to rest as God rested. Again, when are men supposed to rest from these works? It cannot be in this world, for here we rest not at all from temptations, sufferings, and sorrows; and for that mortification of sin which we attain unto, we are to fight continually, "resisting even unto blood." It must therefore be in heaven that they so rest; and this is affirmed accordingly. But this utterly excludes the rest in and of the gospel from the apostle's discourse, and enervates it, so as that his whole present argument is nothing to his purpose, as we have showed before.

It appears, therefore, that it is the rest of another that is here intended, even the rest of Christ from his works, which is compared with the rest of God from his at the foundation of the world; for, – First, The conjunction “for,” which introduceth this assertion, manifests that the apostle in these words gives an account whence it is that there is a new sabbatism remaining for the people of God. He had proved before that there could be no such rest but what was founded in the works of God, and his rest that ensued thereon. Such a foundation therefore, he saith, this new rest must have; and it hath it. Now this is, and must be, in the works and rest of him by whom the church was built, that is Christ, who is God, as it is expressly argued, Hebrews 3:3,4. For as that rest which all the world was to observe was founded in his works and rest who built or made the world and all things in it; so *the rest of the church of the gospel* is to be founded in his works and rest by whom the church itself was built, that is Jesus Christ; for he, on the account of his works and rest, is also Lord of the Sabbath, to abrogate one day of rest and to institute another.

Secondly, The apostle here changeth the manner of his expression; from the plural absolutely, “We who believe,” or virtually in the name of a multitude, “the people of God,” into that which is absolutely singular: “He that is entered.” A single person is here expressed; one on whose account the things mentioned are asserted. And of this change of phrase there can no reason be given, but only to signify the introduction of a singular person.

Thirdly, The rest which he is said to enter into is called “his rest,” absolutely. As God, speaking of the former rest, calls it “my rest,” so this is the “my rest” of another, “his rest,” namely, the rest of Christ. When the entering of believers into rest is mentioned, it is called either “God’s rest,” “They shall enter into my rest;” or “rest” absolutely, “We that believe do enter into rest:” but not ‘their rest,’ or ‘our rest;’ for it is not our own, but God’s rest whereinto we enter, and wherein we rest. The rest here is the rest of him whose it is, who is the author of it; that is, of Christ.

Fourthly, There is a direct parallel in the whole verse between the works of the old creation and those of the new, which the apostle is openly comparing together:

1. For the authors of them: Of the one it is said to be God, — “As God did from his;” that is, the Creator: of the other, “He,” ‘who is that He of whom we speak,’ saith our apostle, ‘verse 13,’ — for in these words he makes also a transition to the person of Christ, allowing only the interposition of an applicatory exhortation, verse 11.

2. The works of the one and the other are expressed. The works of the Creator are “his proper works,” “his own works,” the works of the old creation. And there are the works of him of whom he speaks, “his works;” those which he wrought in like manner as God did his own at the beginning, — that is, the work of building the church.

For these works must answer each other, and have the same respect unto their authors or workers. They must be good and complete in their kind, and such as rest and refreshment may be taken in as well as upon. To compare the sins or the sufferings of men with the works of God, our apostle did not intend.

3. There is the rest of the one and the other. And these must also have their proportion to one another. Now God rested from his own works of creation:

1) By ceasing from creating, only continuing all things by his power in their order, and propagating them to his glory.

2) By his respect unto them or refreshment in them, as those which set forth his praise and satisfied his glorious

design.

And so also must he rest who is here spoken of.

1) He must cease from working in the like kind. He must suffer no more, die no more, but only continue the work of his grace, in the preservation of the new creature, and orderly increase and propagation of it by the Spirit.

2) In his delight and satisfaction which he taketh in his works, which Jesus Christ hath to the utmost. "He sees of the travail of his soul, and is satisfied," and is in possession of that "glory which was set before him" whilst he was at his work.

From what hath been spoken, I suppose it will appear plainly, to unprejudiced and impartial minds, that it is the person of Jesus Christ that is the subject here spoken of; and we shall confidently allow a supposition thereof to regulate our exposition of this verse.

First: The person spoken of, "He that is entered into his rest;" that is, the Lord Jesus Christ, the builder of the church, the author of the new creation. And this gives an account of the causal connection, "for:" "There remaineth a sabbatism now for the people of God, for Christ is entered into his rest."

Secondly, There are the *works* that this rest of his respects, which it is said he hath "ceased" or "rested from." These words have been fully opened and declared on the third and fourth verses of the third chapter, whither we refer the reader. All that he did and suffered, from his incarnation to his resurrection, as the mediator of the new covenant, with all the fruits, effects, and consequences of what he so did and suffered, belong to these works.

Thirdly, There is the rest that he entered into to be considered. Hereof we have seen before in general that there are two parts:

1. A cessation from his works; he hungered no more, was tempted no more, in a word, died no more.
2. A satisfaction in his works and the product of them. This Christ had in his; whence he says, upon a view of their effects, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage," Psalm 16:6.

Fourthly, His entrance into his rest is in like manner proposed unto us. Now this was not his lying down in the grave. His body, indeed, there rested for a while; but that was no part of his mediatory rest, as the founder and builder of the church. For 1) It was a part of his humiliation; not only his death, but his abode or continuance in the state of death was so, and that a principal part of it. For after the whole human nature was personally united unto the Son of God, to have it brought into a state of dissolution, to have the body and soul separated from each other, was a great humiliation. And every thing of this sort belonged to his works, not his rest. 2) This separation of body and soul under the power of death was penal, part of the sentence of the law which he underwent. And therefore Peter declares that the pains of death were not loosed but in his resurrection, Acts 2:24: "Whom God," saith he, "hath raised up, loosing the pains of death; because it was not possible that he should be holden of it."

Whilst he was held of it, he was under it penally. This therefore could not be his rest, nor any part of it; nor did he in it enter into his rest, but continued his work. Nor, secondly, did he first enter into his rest at his ascension. Then, indeed, he took actual possession of his glory, as to the full public manifestation of it. But to enter into rest is one thing, and to take possession of glory another. And it is placed by our apostle as a remote consequence of the Lord Christ's being "justified in the Spirit," when he

entered into his rest, 1 Timothy 3:16. But this his entrance into rest was in, by, and at his resurrection from the dead.

1. Therein and then was he freed from the sentence, power, and stroke of the law, and discharged of all the debt of our sin, which he had undertaken to make satisfaction for, Acts 2:24.

2. Then and therein were all types, all prophecies and predictions fulfilled, that concerned the work of our redemption.

3. Then indeed his work was done; I mean that which answered God's creating work, though he still continueth that which answers his work of preservation. Then was the law fully satisfied, Satan absolutely subdued, peace with God made, the price of our redemption paid, and the whole foundation of the church gloriously laid in and upon his own person. Then "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy."

4. Then and therein was he "declared to be the Son of God with power," Romans 1:4; God manifesting to all that this was he concerning and to whom he said, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee," Acts 13:33.

This might be further confirmed, but that, as I know, it is not much questioned. Therefore did the Lord Christ enter into his rest, after he had finished and ceased from his works, "on the morning of the first day of the week," when he arose from the dead, the foundation of the new creation being laid and perfected. Here lieth the foundation of our sabbatizing, of the sabbatism that remains for the people of God. This reason doth the apostle give of it. He had before asserted it; and there remained no more for him to do but to manifest that as those other rests which were past, the one at the beginning of the world, the other at the giving of the law, had their foundation in the works and rests of God, whence a day of rest was given out

to the church; so had this new rest a foundation in the works and rest of Christ, who built all these things and is God, determining a day for our use, in and by that whereon himself entered into his rest, – that is, the first day of the week.

**Concluding Observations:**

**Observation 1:** The whole church, all the duties, worship, and privileges of it, are founded in the person, authority, and actions of Jesus Christ.

**Observation 2:** The first day of the week, the day of the resurrection of Christ, when he rested from his works, is appointed and determined for a day of rest or Sabbath unto the church, to be constantly observed in the room of the seventh day, appointed and observed from the foundation of the world and under the old testament.

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This work presents the most clearly articulated presentation of NCT available to my knowledge and has several very helpful chapters in understanding the NCT position on the Sabbath.