



the **CALVIN**
ORUM

Democracy and Christianity
An Editorial

The Fourth Commandment
The Westminster View

An Ideal Creation
In the Light of Science

Jesus' Resurrection
Its Apologetic Significance

Dutch Reformed Churches
In European Countries

Letters

Chips

Reviews

Verse

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Maintaining American Institutions

MANY of the most important institutions of this great democracy are the fruit of private and group initiative. We are proud of our churches, colleges, schools, hospitals and the many other agencies of good works. But are they secure in this world of kaleidoscopic changes? Will the ever increasing burden of taxation make it possible for the civic spirits of religious minded men and women to continue to support them? Will the propaganda spread among all Americans, that we should concentrate solely on the unprecedented defense program, cause the significance of our institutions to fade and these agencies themselves be neglected? Will the totalitarian spirit that usually raises its head during times of emergency and that is permitted to do so because it seems much more efficient, snatch away from men the privilege of promoting privately what is dearest to their hearts? These are questions that cannot be ignored. Now, perhaps more than at any other time in our history, every institution must justify its existence under private control. No national waste will be tolerated

on this score. Each must be made to render the maximum service. Each must show that it renders worthwhile values in the realm of national security, not by furnishing munitions and implements of war, of course, but by doing its share in promoting and maintaining healthy and educated citizens. Each must show its worth in perpetuating the kind of public service that can only be born out of the principles of democracy, and that is crushed in every country of Europe because of the exigencies of the war. Each must manifest its worth not by promoting churches, hospitals, schools, etc., as such, but by promoting a wholesome interest in the spirit of the freedom of worship, in the highest spiritual values, and in human beings whom they expect to serve. And, finally, each must, from every Christian's point of view, serve to promote the glory of God. If it can't do that, let the state have them or let them die. Now is the time to put the house of these institutions in order. We must prove their worth or they will go with the old order.

H. S.

As in previous years, the next issue of THE CALVIN FORUM will be an enlarged number and will be combined for the months of June and July. It will appear not in the early but in the latter part of June.

The Fourth Commandment

According to the Westminster Standards

John Murray

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A PERUSAL of the statements of the Westminster Confession of Faith and of the Larger and Shorter Catechisms bearing upon the fourth commandment, will show that the position taken in these Standards is that of the universal and perpetual obligation of the Sabbath and that this obligation rests upon divine commandment. The commandment to which reference is made is, of course, what we know as the fourth in the decalogue. These Standards, however, imply that the Sabbath law, expressed in the fourth commandment, was not first instituted when the ten commandments were promulgated to the children of Israel at Sinai. We know that the Sabbath institution goes back to creation; we know that there is explicit allusion to the observance of the Sabbath and of divine commandment bearing upon that observance prior to Sinai. Of such facts these Standards are not forgetful, and so the language is carefully framed to include and guard these facts. Nevertheless, the law that had been instituted at creation did receive at Sinai formal enunciation and promulgation. It was included in the ten words

given to Moses and written with the finger of God upon the two tables of stone.

At Sinai, then, the Sabbath law was set forth with fulness and explicitness and we do not have evidence that it had before then received similarly full and formal pronouncement. So, for our knowledge of what the content and import of the Sabbath institution are, we are largely dependent upon the fourth commandment. What is this law or institution?

The Sanctity of the Day

First, and most elementally and centrally, it is that one day in seven is distinguished from the other six. That day is to be sanctified, and at the heart of the word "sanctify" is the idea of distinction and separation. This one day is set off, it is placed in a distinct category. This import of the word cannot be evaded and it is to be very carefully marked, for on it depends the whole notion of what we may and must call the "sanctity" of the Sabbath.

It is not, however, the bare notion of distinction or separation that is expressed in the commandment.

The command to sanctify occurs in a context. "Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God." And it is not only in the context of the remainder of the commandment, but also in the context of the other commandments. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." "I the Lord thy God am a jealous God." "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." It is separation, therefore, to God, to the specific purpose of contemplation upon Him and specific occupation with *His* work in contrast with their own work. In this kind of distinction or sanctity the meaning of the fourth commandment resides. Abolish it, and the essence of the commandment is destroyed. There is no purpose in contending for the moral obligation of the commandment unless this sanctity is recognised and preserved, for it is the core around which all else is formed and without which all else disintegrates. Just as there is an ineradicable distinction between the six days of creation and the day of rest by which they were followed, so it is here. And it is precisely with this reminder that the commandment itself ends, "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it."

Israel truly was a holy people; they were separated unto God Jehovah. It might, then, be supposed that the sanctification of one day in seven was inconsistent with the totality of their devotion to God. Yet it is an inescapable fact that this kingdom of priests and holy nation was in the most direct way commanded to separate one day from the other six for a specific purpose. And unless our conception of devotion to God, and of time as it is related to Him, can embrace and appreciate this notion, together with the divine wisdom embodied in it, we can have no understanding of the fourth commandment.

Every Recurring Seventh Day

But second, the law or institution of the Sabbath implies that *every recurring seventh day* is to be sanctified. It is not simply a seventh of our time, not simply one day out of every seven, but it is every recurring seventh day in regular succession.

The controversy that has turned on the question as to whether or not, in the Christian dispensation, the Sabbath is the first day of the week or the seventh, and as to whether we can be said to observe the fourth commandment when we substitute the first day of the week for the seventh, has too often been allowed to obscure the central principle, namely, that every recurring seventh day was by divine ordination distinguished from every other day. The difficulty that may be encountered in determining which day of the week is the Sabbath should never be used as a subterfuge to escape from the central and straightforward import of the commandment, that every recurring seventh day is

specifically holy to God. At the cost of repetitiousness, may we say, that that principle should never be perplexed or prejudiced by the further question: which day in the succession of days should be accorded *that* distinction? We may not minimize the importance of this latter question. But we must not allow the difficulties that may attend this question to unsettle what is antecedent and even more central, the obligation, so far as the fourth commandment is concerned, to recognize the divine distinctiveness of every recurring seventh day. And it must be said that the position taken by the Westminster Standards, to wit, that with the advent of the New Testament dispensation there was signalized the change from the seventh day of the week to the first, in no way interferes with the strictest fulfilment of this principle in the Christian Lord's Day.

The Sabbath a Perpetual Obligation?

But some will say, "All this is conceded with respect to the meaning of the fourth commandment. But of what practical concern is that to us? The fourth commandment does not obligate the Christian." This objection we must now face.

If the fourth commandment is not binding in the Christian dispensation, then we have to take one of two positions. We have either to take the position that the fourth commandment occupies a different position from the other nine commandments in the decalogue, or to take the position that the whole decalogue has been abrogated in the Christian economy.* We shall now discuss the former of these two alternatives.

If we say the fourth commandment is abrogated and the other nine are not, we must understand what we are saying. It would indeed be an amazing phenomenon that in the heart of the decalogue there should be one commandment—and one given such prominence and meticulous elaboration—that is totally different from the others in this regard that they are permanent and it is not. Surely no one will dispute that in the Old Testament the ten commandments constitute a well-rounded and compact unit. And surely no one will dispute that the Old Testament is itself throughout conscious of that fact. If the ten commandments were a loose and disjointed collection of precepts, there would be nothing very extraordinary about the supposition we are now discussing. But that is precisely what the decalogue is not. And so to establish this supposition that the fourth commandment is abrogated, when the other nine are not, would require the most explicit and conclusive evidence.

As we read the Old Testament we do not find any warrant for discrimination between the fourth and the other nine. Nor indeed do we find any intimation in the Old Testament that in the Messianic age

* A third alternative that might be conceived is not of any real importance in the controversy and so may be dismissed.

the Sabbath law would cease. If any commandment is emphasized it is the fourth. Obedience to it is a mark of faithfulness and severe retribution follows its breach. The text we are about to quote epitomises the Old Testament outlook and emphasis. "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it" (Isa. 58:13, 14). If there had been in the Old Testament some evidence that would create a presumption in favour of discrimination, if there had been even something that would justify a strong suspicion that in the Messianic age the Sabbath law would no longer bind, then, of course, even slight confirmation from the New Testament might clinch that suspicion and warrant the inference that the fourth commandment had been abrogated. But no such suspicion is created and the evidence is altogether against such a supposition.

So nothing short of compelling and conclusive evidence from the New Testament would warrant the position that the fourth is to be discriminated from the other nine.

Abrogated in the New Testament?

When we come to the New Testament, do we find such evidence? A good deal has sometimes been made of the alleged silence of the New Testament. It must be admitted that the argument from silence may be made to appear very plausible. But it will have to be said at the outset that an argument from silence is not the compelling and conclusive evidence that would in this case be required. In the Old Testament we have continuous and accumulating emphasis upon the Sabbath law that in no way suggests any distinction in the matter of morality between the fourth commandment and the other nine. Indeed, as we found, the emphasis upon the fourth mounts to a degree that constitutes the very opposite presumption. It is with that manifold of emphasis that we are placed on the threshold of the New Testament economy. Silence on the part of the New Testament will not fulfil the exigencies of the kind of evidence required for abrogation.

We must not, however, conclude that the New Testament exhibits the silence alleged. It is not necessary now to enter into detailed discussion of the implications of all the allusions found in the four gospels to the Sabbath. We need not deal in detail with the implications inherent in our Lord's attitude to the Sabbath. The proper insight and care should show that in the very rebuke that our Lord gave to the unwarranted accretions and impositions with

which pharisaic tradition had obscured and perverted the Sabbath institution, there is implicit the same kind of sanction for the Sabbath law in itself as there is in similar episodes of His example and teaching for other commandments. Suffice it to refer to the one affirmation of His, "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath" (Mark 2:27, 28).

The Sabbath Made for Man

In this affirmation, contrary to much glib but wanton appeal to it, there is not the least hint that the Sabbath law was about to be abrogated. What Jesus was combatting on this occasion was the travesties of application by which the Jews had made void the law of God. Jesus' unsparing condemnation of those artificialities that had turned a beneficent institution into an instrument of tyranny no more argues the abrogation of the institution itself, than does His condemnation of the traditions by which the Jews had made void the fifth commandment argue for the abrogation of the fifth (Cf. Mark 7:8-13). If His condemnation and correction of the tradition by which the Jews of His day had made void the Word of God in the fifth commandment in no way relieves but rather reinforces the divine obligation of this commandment itself, so His statement with reference to the Sabbath quoted above furnishes no support for the abrogation of the fourth commandment. But let us examine Mark 2:27, 28 more closely.

"The sabbath was made for man." Of course, when it is said that it was made, there is but one meaning, namely, that God made it. It is not a device of human expediency or utility. It is a divine creation. It is God's day. The reasonable inference is that this is an allusion to the primeval institution as recorded in Genesis 2:2, 3. We know that the Sabbath institution existed prior to the promulgation of it at Sinai. So the making of it referred to by our Lord cannot reasonably refer simply to the giving of the law at Sinai. And since we must go back to something that antedates Sinai, what is there that more naturally or perfectly suits the allusion than that referred to in Genesis 2:2, 3?

It was "made for man." Perhaps the fact that Jesus says it was made for man and not simply for Israel has sometimes been unduly pressed to establish the universality of the Sabbath law. But recoil from exaggeration must not be allowed to obscure the real force of what is meant. The Sabbath, after all, was made for *man*, and in that word *man* there inheres a reference to what man's very nature as man and man's highest need as man require. When we bear in mind that the point of time referred to in the making of the Sabbath antedates all ethnical distinction, we are constrained to find in this simple statement confirmation of the universality of the obligation and blessing of the Sabbath institution.

Jesus' Lordship and the Sabbath

But Jesus in this passage also asserts His own Lordship over the Sabbath. "The Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath." The title Son of man is distinctly Messianic and points to the dominion which He in His capacity as the Messiah exercises. It is in His capacity as the Son of man that He exercises this Lordship over the Sabbath. And this simply means that, within that universal Lordship and authority that is His as the one to whom all authority in heaven and earth has been committed, the Sabbath has its proper place and function. Abolition of it is, as B. B. Warfield says, "as far as possible from the suggestion of the passage."

Further, we must observe that Jesus says "even of the Sabbath." The presence of the word "even" serves to show the extent of Jesus' Lordship. This Lordship is so comprehensive that it even includes the Sabbath, and surely such an emphasis discloses the high conception of its sanctity and authority Jesus entertained.

Finally, the reason assigned for this Lordship over the Sabbath is the fact that the Sabbath was made for man. It was for the sake of man that Jesus came into the world, it was for man's sake that He died and rose again, it is for man's sake that He is exalted as the Messiah to supreme mediatorial sovereignty. But it was also for man's sake that the Sabbath was made. If, then, it was for man's sake that Jesus came, and suffered, and died, and rose again to ascend up where He was before, is it possible that that which was made for man—the Sabbath—should be annulled and abrogated by that which He became and did for man's sake? There is complete congruity between His Messianic work and Lordship on the one hand and the Sabbath ordinance on the other. They both serve the same purpose. And so His Lordship embraces the Sabbath institution, embraces it too for the purpose of preserving it, confirming it and blessing it. He is Lord of the Sabbath too.

This is the fifth article in a series on the Fourth Commandment and the question of its binding character for Christians today. In the first two articles Dr. Albertus Pieters of Western Seminary took the stand that the Fourth Commandment is abrogated for the New Testament believer; that the New Testament Lord's Day is not observed in obedience to the Sabbath Commandment; and that this is the real view of John Calvin, a view with which neither the Heidelberg Catechism nor the Westminster Standards agree. The third and fourth articles, from the pen of Professor Kromminga, maintained that there is no conflict between the Heidelberg conception of the Fourth Commandment and that of Calvin; that the interpretation of Calvin's teaching offered in an earlier article is unwarranted; that the Calvin-Heidelberg view properly distinguishes between a ceremonial and a moral (and therefore permanently binding) element in the Fourth Commandment; and that this view is in harmony with Scripture. In the present article Professor Murray defends the interpretation of the Fourth Commandment set forth in the Westminster Standards, holding to the permanent validity of the Old Testament sabbath commandment. Next month Professor Murray will complete his exposition and defense of the Westminster position.—EDITOR.

Science and An Ideal Creation

Dudley Joseph Whitney
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Biology and Paradise Lost

IN the first part of this study the Scriptural basis for belief in an ideal Edenic creation was presented, with some evidence from science, but since science is idolized in this day and age by many persons, a more strict analysis of the subject from the standpoint of science and philosophy may well be given.

There are two possible ways to explain nature. One is by assuming that it came to be as it is through evolution. By this the first living thing would have to come into being in a purely natural way, subdivide into two living organisms, and then by natural increase and natural variation all the living things that live or have lived would have to develop. All processes would have to be purely natural, without direction from the deity.

The other explanation is that special acts of God in creation would have to take place. The possibility of there having been both special creation and

naturalistic change can be conceded, but in the real proposition of special creation versus organic evolution the great question is whether natural processes alone acted to originate life and to bring new plant and animal forms into being or whether God used any special acts of creation in the ordering of nature.

Let us assume that if special creation was used at all, God started an ideal earth by a set of divine acts, as Genesis states. So if evolution fails, we will take the Genesis account of creation as correct.

What Evolution Does Not Explain

In the first place then evolution fails utterly as far as the origin of life is concerned. It is helpless to determine how protoplasm could start *naturally* upon a lifeless earth. What is known of physics and chemistry indicates that protoplasm would not start that way. When it comes to the origin of the eye, of sex, of milk glands, of the wings of birds and in-