

THE VOICE FROM SINAI

THE ETERNAL BASES OF THE MORAL LAW

BY

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"He says, shall make a beginning of the eighth day (i.e., Sunday), that is the beginning of another universe. Wherefore also we keep the eighth day for gladness, on which also Jesus rose from the dead."—BARNABAS, "Ep." 15.

"No longer observing Sabbaths, but fashioning their lives after the Lord's Day, on which our life also arose through Him."—IGNATIUS, "Ep. ad Magn." 9.

"A week filled up with selfishness, and the Sabbath stuffed full of religious exercises, will make a good Pharisee but a poor Christian. There are many persons who think Sunday is a sponge with which to wipe out the sins of the week. Now, God's altar stands from Sunday to Sunday, and the seventh day is no more for religion than any other. It is for rest. The whole seven are for religion, and one of them for rest."—H. W. BACCHUS.

"The Puritans in 1661 complained that the Catechism said nothing about the fourth commandment in 'My Duty towards God.' The Bishops replied, 'It is not true that in that answer there is nothing which refers to the fourth commandment; for the last words of the answer do orderly relate to it.' It appears, therefore, that the Bishops understood the fourth commandment to mean that we should 'serve God truly all the days of our life.'"—NORRIS.

[For the fullest view of the relations between the Jewish Sabbath and the Christian Sunday, see ARCHDEACON HESSEY'S "Bampton Lectures."]

Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy.

Exod. xx. 1.

[THE Sabbath is Saturday, the seventh day of the week; it was to be kept holy by consecrating it to God. The commandment is twice found in the Pentateuch in the form "Ye shall keep my Sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary."* In Deuteronomy, the annex to the commandment—the reason assigned for it—is not the same as in Exodus.† Here, the reason is the work and rest of God in creation, as a mysterious prototype of the rest and work of man.‡ There the Israelites are bidden to keep the day as a commemoration of God's deliverance of Israel out of Egypt; and as the blessed law of sympathy learnt by suffering—that thy man servant and thy maid servant, yes, and even thy cattle, may rest as well as

* Lev. xx. 9; xxvi. 2.

† Deut. v. 15.

‡ Does not the recurrence of movements point to an order and a completion?—F. C. BRICK.

us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation." There is nothing limited, nothing Judaic here. It is a command for the whole race of man. "Six days shalt thou labour"; but that the labour may not be degradingly and exhaustingly wearisome; that the man may not become a mere machine, "worn out by the dust of its own grinding"; that the thread of sorrow, which runs through all labour, may never wholly blacken into despair; that the thread of joy, thin and rarely intertwined with it, may be brightened into spiritual intensity and permanence; therefore, "the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt do no manner of work."*

3. Little need be said on the change from the seventh to the first day of the week. The first disciples kept both days: the Sabbath for rest.

* For the permanency of the Sabbath we might argue its place in the Decalogue, where it stands enshrined among the moralities of a rectitude that is immutable and everlasting; and we might argue the traditional homage and observance, in which it has been held since the days of the Apostles; and we might argue the undoubted and experimental fact that when this day is best kept there also the other graces of Christianity are in their healthful exercise and preservation. But we rather waive for the present all these considerations, and would rest the perpetuity of the Sabbath law on this affirmation, that while it is a day of unceasing drudgery to the formalist, it is to every real Christian a day of holy and heavenly delight; that, wherever there is a true principle of religion, the consecration of the Sabbath is felt, not as a bondage, but as left to be the very beatitude of the soul; and that, therefore, the keeping of it is the direct and genuine fruit of a spiritual impulse on the best affections of the inner man."—Dr. CHALMERS, "On the Christianization of the Sabbath."

the Sunday for worship. The Christian Church made no formal, but a gradual and almost unconscious, transference of the one day to the other. She had been led by the Spirit, whose revelations are continuous, whose inspiration is permanent, to make her week a constant remembrance of her Lord. On Wednesday she recalled His betrayal; on Thursday, His ascension; on Friday, His crucifixion; on Sunday, His resurrection. She set the clock of time, as some one has said, to the epochs of His history. She meant her Sunday to be "a sort of Easter Day in every week;" and, "as the sunflower turns morning and evening to the sun," so the early Church turned for ever to the Sun of Righteousness, who had risen upon her with healing in His wings. *Securus judicat orbis terrarum*. We may be perfectly at our ease about a change in which we follow the authority of every branch of Christ's universal Church.

4. But whether we keep the Sabbath or Sunday, the fourth commandment, in its eternal and moral aspect, bids us to keep one day in the seven holy. And how are we to keep it holy?

Let us look first at the Old Testament. Search it through and through, and you will find two rules, and two only, of Sabbath observance—rest and gladness. "In it thou shalt do no manner of work."* "This is the day that the

* That "rest" was the primary conception of Sabbath observance may be seen in the following passages:—Ex. xvi. 22-30; xxxi.