

THE SABBATH.*

By Prof. D. B. Willson.

Gentlemen of the Theological class:—

We greet you to-night at your appearing to take up the studies of the session of 1914-1915. You have made a good choice for your life work.

The nations of Europe are battling to-day to decide whose will shall prevail, what nation shall be paramount. We have peace in our land, and plenty: and for these blessings gratitude is due to God. His will should be recognized by this nation, and in all lands his law should prevail. Then there will be peace, for not unto any man or unto any nation, but unto him are we taught to pray, Thy will be done in earth.

I propose this evening to discuss one of his commands, the law of the Sabbath, a law which vitally affects national welfare. The first day of the week, under the name Sunday, is noticed in the Constitution of this nation. In Article 1, section vii, paragraph 2, in laying down the part of the President in the legislation, it says: "If any bill shall not be returned by the President within ten days (Sundays excepted), after it shall have been presented to him, the same shall be a law, in like manner as if he had signed it, unless the Congress by their adjournment prevent its return, in which case it shall not be a law." This exception is made in keeping with the Colonial provisions for Sabbath observance, and is the only Constitutional recognition of the Higher Law. It is confined to the Executive, though the statutes go further, and is not made avowedly on moral grounds. Hence what followed early in our national history. The mail service on the first day of the week became a mighty factor in breaking down the Colonial customs and laws, as the mail coach drove through the villages and towns, dis-

* Opening lecture of the session, 1914-1915, of the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh, Pa., September 15, 1914.

men it may be said, after the ages of human experience, after the years of observation and research by men competent to judge of the body and mind of man, there is an obligation in the very constitution of man. One of the latest notes on this matter is from the Journal of the American Medical Association. We are told:

"That Dr. Martin and some of his associates in the Laboratory of Physiology at the Harvard Medical School, have been making a careful study of the whole question of fatigue and efficiency from a physiological standpoint. A long series of experiments have been made on first-year medical students who were following a regular routine of school work during six days of each week. The routine was interrupted weekly by the Sunday recess, an interval occupied variously by the students, but in no case in precisely the manner of the week days. The daily observations made on these persons during several weeks show that at the beginning of the week the nerve reaction tends to be high, that from then until the end of the week there is a fairly continuous decline, and that following the intervention of Sunday, it returns to the original high point."

But I do not intend to dwell on this, for I am speaking to those who know the moral reasons for the obligation.

Within the period of our race before the Flood, three institutions had their origin--the Sabbath, Marriage, and Sacrifice. Two of these, the Sabbath and Marriage, began in the unfallen period and antedate Church and State. In the second chapter of Genesis, the second and third verses are: "And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made." The work was God's, the act was sanctification, setting apart the one day as holy. The reason is given because of God's cessation from creative work.

This was in the beginning. Hence we should expect to find, after this, the period of seven days referred to in the Scriptures, and also in other records of the race. And so we do. In the fourth chapter of Genesis, we read, in the fourth verse, of the worship of Cain and Abel, and it is said to have been observed "at the end of days." Since we have read that the seventh day was sanctified, when we consider the service of the brothers, what more natural interpretation have we of the words "The end of days," than the close of the week? Through all the account of the Flood; the seven days appear, especially in connection with the clearing sky and the abating waters, in the grace and mercy of God. Genesis 7:4, Yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights. 10. And it came to pass, after seven days, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth. Genes's 8:8. He sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground: 9. But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark. . . . Then he put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark. And he stayed yet other seven days. This same expression is repeated in verse 12: And he stayed yet other seven days.

When Israel was delivered from bondage in Egypt, and journeyed in the wilderness, the people were fed with manna. The word as to the supply, and the directions as to gathering and husbanding it bring out clearly and emphasize the seven day period, and the sanctity of the Sabbath. They had not yet come to Sinai, and yet all these expressions are definite as to the day and its observance. Exodus 16:26. Six day ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the Sabbath, in it there shall be none.

The Sabbath having been early instituted, we may look for notices among other nations of the week. The records of the early history of the Gentiles show the knowledge of the Sabbath day. Laplace observes: "The week is perhaps the

most ancient and incontestable monument of human knowledge."

We come now to the explicit command at Sinai: Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor the stranger that is within thy gates. 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. The word Remember calls man away from labor to rest, to the Sabbath as a divine institution. The early record in Genesis had declared it a day set apart. The precept commands its observance by man, forbids him to labor, gives him this charge also as a parent, as an employer, as a magistrate. The Sabbath law is part of the Decalogue. All of the other precepts are applicable to all men. There is but one God, the God of all the earth. Idolatry and profanity are wrong for all men. Filial obedience is a duty common to all. Murder, adultery, theft, lying are forbidden to all men. Covetousness, the prolific source of evil, is condemned in all. There are no racial lines here. In the midst of all these commands, the Sabbath law is found, being intimately related to both parts. The Sabbath is God's institution, and the Sabbath was made for man.

Ah, it is said, do you not know that the contents of Genesis, second chapter, relating to the Sabbath are proleptic, that is, are inserted in advance, with reference to the following Sinaitic law; and that the Sabbath law is Jewish, and was done away at the coming of Christ, and that the New Testament day has the church, but not divine authority back of it? No, I do not know that the Decalogue is only for the Jews. This Mosaic law—the moral law—is fundamental in legislation and bears on all people, and far from being solely Jewish, human society is impossible with-

out respect to it in part; else there is chaos. "The Laws of the Decalogue are the fundamental principles of society and government. They are co-operant units like the links of a chain and the breaking of one is a violation of all." (George Guirey.)

Ah, but do you not know that present day scholarship does away with all these records as of old, and postpones their appearance to later times, and thus nothing can be built upon this legendary matter of later Judaism, to bind all men in all times? Evolution must be taken into account, and all this voice of authority from early ages can gain no hearing now.

Yes, I hear your words, but I know that the same Lord who quelled the storm on Galilee, who raised Lazarus from the dead, who foretold the manner and circumstances of his own death, and also that he would rise on the first day of the week, referred to these early records, both in the first and second chapters of Genesis, asking the Pharisees: "Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh." Between the two portions of this record thus brought forward to determine the law of marriage, comes the portion I have quoted, referring to God's appointment of the Sabbath. They then who cavil at the words of Christ and all word of authority may find themselves impelled on and on, as the young rabbi at Scranton was last winter, who, abandoning the subject in hand in his zeal against religion, inveighed on a Sabbath evening not only against the Messiah but the Torah and the other books as well, and thus severed his relation with the synagogue of his people.

Yes, the Sabbath, as Marriage, is a primal institution of the human race, concerned with God's glory, and fundamental to the welfare of the race. The law is written in the Bible, and in the constitution of man.

The change of day owing to the resurrection of Christ in no way lessens the obligation. Rev. George Guirey says: "The law of the Sabbath is one from Genesis to Revelation." The facts of the change appear. We have first, the resurrection of Christ; second, Christ's appearance again on the first day of the week; third, the day of Pentecost; fourth, the first day service at Troas; fifth, the first day service at Corinth; sixth, the Lord's day of Revelation, first chapter. Thus the first day of the week became established as the day of rest, the Sabbath, being the day of worship; in its period, the memorial of creation, the rest of God; in the day, the first day of the week, the memorial of the resurrection. Those Christian socialists, who to suit all men press for "one day in seven" for the laboring man, and not for the first day of the week, the Christian Sabbath, for him, are off the foundation. They may lose all. The security for the day as a day of rest for the laborer is largely based on the appreciation of it as a day of worship. The toilers themselves know best of all what benefit this moral law is. John Henderson of Scotland offered prizes, towards the close of 1847, to this class for essays on The Temporal Advantages of the Sabbath to the Laboring Classes, because the Sabbath railway facilities had been pressed as for their benefit. In three months 1,045 essays were received. Prince Albert added to the prizes. In 1852 it was published that 609,750 copies of the essays had been circulated.

The law of the Sabbath is that labor shall cease. This command, as we have said, is given to each one, to the head of the family, to the employer of men, to the civil ruler in his control of all in his jurisdiction. Christ by his conduct and words brought out the Sabbath law in its definiteness, freed from the additions of Jewish teachers, thus making it plain to those who wanted light. There was on his part no abrogation of the law. This is the obligation of the law, Thou shalt not labor.

This freedom from labor opens up the way for those who fear God, to employ the day for his worship, his special service. Families gather together, societies are made up, congregations are formed, religion flourishes. Within the circles are nourished the characters that bless the world, that promote peace and good-will in the earth. The church is the salt of the earth; it is the light of the world.

What of the great multitude that do not use the day for worship, that have no mind to do so, and to whom therefore it will be a day as other days, for labor and for self? Are they free to follow their own will? Do they involve themselves alone in any disregard of the law? Let us look at this in the light of other laws of the same group. Does the violation of the sixth commandment with impunity involve only the actual transgressor? By no means, "Blood, it defileth the land." Does stealing with impunity involve only the thief? In all cases of laws violated with impunity, the burden of guilt heaps up on the community itself. The commands come to all, and this Fourth command as well—not for enforced worship, but for outward respect to the law, in rest from labor and in good behavior.

The State is under the Decalogue. The Government of a people, as well as the people, themselves may be immoral. It may be idolatrous. It may rob. It may be unmerciful. It may ignore the law of the Sabbath. The interchange of notes between the Powers of Europe, before the present war began in all its breadth, as exhibited in the Blue Book of England of August 6th, and the White Book of Germany, exhibits charges on either side, measured by this great law, showing that there is a Higher Law than their will. Therein "Each nation's grounds for fighting with a clear conscience are stated." (The World, August 18.) The nations are calling one another to account. God calls them to account.

I quote some weighty testimonies as to the importance of these matters. Earl Russell said:

"There is no necessity, in the nature of things, that nations should die. History points to no people which, while strong in faith, in reverence, in truthfulness, in chastity, in frugality, in the virtues of the temple and of the hearth has sunk into atrophy and decline. We may decide, therefore, that so long as moral energy fails not, the life of the nation will not fall." Dr. Schaff has said: "Take away the Sabbath and you destroy the most humane and most democratic institution which in every respect was made for man, but more particularly for the man of labor and toil, of poverty and sorrow. Take away the Sabbath, and you destroy a mighty conservative force, and dry up a fountain from which the family, the Church, and the state receive constant nourishment and support." (Princeton Review, vol. XXXV.) Blackstone said: "A corruption of morals usually follows a profanation of the Sabbath." Justice McLean of the Supreme Court said "Where there is no Christian Sabbath, there is no Christian morality; and without this, free institutions cannot long be sustained."

Gladstone said: "The religious observance of Sunday is a main prop of the religious character of the country. From a moral, social and physical point of view, the observance of Sunday is a duty of absolute consequence."

These testimonies are easily multiplied from the great teachers and statesmen of the world.

The Sabbath is wounded in these days, and its maintenance in the State is handicapped by the treatment of it by Christian people. Consider our excellent President. What noble views are these uttered by him in Philadelphia on the Fourth July, this summer:

"I am sometimes very much interested in seeing gentlemen supposing that popularity is the way to success in America. The way to success in America is to show you are not afraid of anybody except God and His judgments. If I did not believe that, I would not believe in democracy. If I did not believe that, I would not be-

lieve people could govern themselves; if I did not believe that the moral judgment would be the last and final judgment in the minds of men as well as at the tribunal of God, I could not believe in popular government, but I do believe these things, and therefore I earnestly believe in the democracy, not only of America, but in the power of any awakened people to govern and control its own affairs."

After his election in 1912, he visited his birthplace at Staunton, Virginia, at the close of December, and left there on the Sabbath morning after his Saturday reception, and travelled to Princeton, New Jersey, reaching there in the evening. Since his term of office began, he left Philadelphia after the public ceremonies there on a Saturday, and travelled all day Sabbath to Macon, Georgia, for the Commercial Exposition on Monday. The Secretary of State in 1912 attended the Chicago Republican Convention as a reporter, and left at its close on Saturday night, and journeyed through the Sabbath to Baltimore to the Democratic Convention of Monday. In instance these cases as showing how men prominent in the church and State regard Sabbath travel. What is needed is an arrest of thought.

Again, the country has spread before it through these years the progress of evangelism on a defined plan. The forerunners see to the districting of the city for prayer meetings. Homes are opened up in advance, and there are many praying circles before the evangelist comes. The support he asks besides is the closing of the city churches on Sabbath morning. For example, this city was districted, its suburbs and adjacent boroughs, and by sections the churches were closed on Sabbath mornings, tickets for seats being provided for the people. Thus multitudes from a distance made their way to service. The cars were most of all weighted down on the Sabbath day. Of course, the prayer meetings were to revive religion, to create an interest in the

coming work, and to pray for the divine blessing on it, not to fill the temporary structure. There is the problem of Sabbath travel, though, in these days of federating, more and more the direction seems to be in the way of massive buildings, united churches, cathedral services. Is there need of this to promote religion? Christ says, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." While these words in their connection refer to church administration, yet they are true of concerted prayer, of social worship, of small congregations.

But no scruples as to any Sabbath journey ever perplex some professing Christians. They take the day for "recreation" by train, or car, or machine, and so they use it, mingling service and "recreation." An Eastern Pennsylvania rector, this last summer, in guiding his flock, went on the well-equipped play grounds and led the way in Sabbath sport. Those who commented on his course received this answer:

"I have told such of my people as I deal with in these months, told them plainly, and told them frankly, that if they will say their prayers with the clergy at one hour of the Lord's day, the clergy are perfectly willing to play base-ball with them at another hour of the same day, which is their day of rest, which rest is recreation; that if they will comply with the requirements of the Church and observe Sunday first of all as a day of prayer, they may have the rest of it as a day of play, and that if they have stopped their work in order to worship," they may "walk abroad and recreate themselves. If this be treason, either to the Church or to the day, let those who wish to do so make the most of it."

This is the course of others also of the clergy. The London Times had this item last summer in the Home News: "The proposal to allow Sunday golf on the municipal course at Hainault Forest was defeated at Tuesday's meeting of the London

County Council. In the course of the discussion the Rev. Stewart Headlam asked what harm was done to God or man by taking a few balls out and knocking them about while on a Sunday morning walk. By creating artificial sins they blurred the colors of good and evil."

This is nothing new. Back in 1618, James I of England issued The Declaration for Sports on the Lord's day. Morton, the Bishop of Durham, had a considerable shame in its preparation, and his biographer takes up the task of excusing him. The Declaration was to be read from every parish pulpit. Laud was raised by Charles I to the Primacy, August 16, 1633, and that Fall the Second Declaration of Sports appeared. About 800 of the parish clergy refused to read it, and suffered for this. But they had acted as faithful Churchmen. For in 1551 when the Book of Common Prayer was confirmed by Parliament, the commandments were added to the Liturgy, the Fourth, as well as the others, succeeded by the prayer, "Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law." Dr. Twisse was among the early protesters in the time of James, and in his treatise, The Morality of the Fourth Commandment, defending his views, he says, they are "the doctrines of Dr. Andrewes, afterwards bishop of Winchester; I could show them to be the doctrines of many other worthy prelates that have been of this kingdom, and it may be, that if the votes of the bishops of this kingdom were taken, the major part would concur with us, as touching the doctrine of the Sabbath, rather than against us." If so under the tyranny of the Stuart kings, more so now should we reckon the English Church and the American Church opposed to Sabbath sport.

Is all this concern for the observance of the Fourth Commandment by Church and State an idle matter? We look again at the Decalogue, and read the sixth command, and the seventh command, the eighth command, the ninth com-

mand, the tenth command, and then consider the pride and oppression in the earth, the lust and the revenge, all so patent now. Does God look on with no concern? It may not in modern times be pointed out to a nation under trial why it suffers, as clearly as it was to our beloved country in 1861-1865. Mr. Lincoln's Second Inaugural acknowledged the justice of God in that terrible war on account of oppression. Tolerated offences against the law of God bring national judgments. The book of Joshua in the 20th verse of the 22nd chapter has this question: "Did not Achan the son of Zerah commit a trespass in the accursed thing and wrath fell on all the congregation of Israel? and that man perished not alone in his iniquity?" Achan's theft at Jericho brought defeat to Israel.

Are there any judgments indicated for violation of the law of the Sabbath? Should we here in be "afraid of God and His judgments?"

In the seventeenth chapter of Jeremiah we read: "Thus said the Lord unto me: Go and stand in the gate of the children of the people, whereby the kings of Judah come in, and by the which they go out, and in all the gates of Jerusalem; and say unto them, Hear ye the word of the Lord, ye kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that enter in by these gates: Thus saith the Lord: Take heed to yourselves and bear no burden on the Sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem; neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath day, neither do ye any work, but hallow ye the Sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers. But they obeyed not, neither inclined their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear, nor receive instruction. And it shall come to pass, if ye diligently hearken unto me, saith the Lord, to bring in no burden through the gates of this city on the Sabbath day, but hallow the Sabbath day, to do no work therein; then there shall enter into

the gates of this city kings and princes sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they and their princes, the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and this city shall remain for ever, and they shall come from the cities of Judah, and from the places about Jerusalem, and from the land of Benjamin, and from the plain, and from the mountains, and from the South, bringing burnt-offerings and incense, and bringing sacrifices of praise, unto the house of the Lord. But if ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the Sabbath day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched." They did not hearken, and so Jerusalem was taken and burned with fire. The people were led into captivity as we read in 2 Chronicles, the last chapter. "To fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath, to fulfill threescore and ten years." After their return, the same evil returned, and the governor, Nehemiah, was afraid of judgment, and we read in the 13th chapter of the book: "In those days saw I in Judah some treading wine presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day: and I testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals. There dwelt men of Tyre also therein which brought fish and all manner of ware, and sold on the Sabbath unto the children of Judah and in Jerusalem. Then I contended with the nobles of Judah and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath day? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? Yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the Sabbath." Nehemiah

put a stop to this traffic and prayed: "Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy." Natives and foreigners were engaged in this violation of the Fourth Commandment, which forbade this Sabbath work.

There are many explanations of this present world-wide war. Each people has the causes so listed before them, it seems, that they wage war with a "clear conscience." Can any fearer of God omit from the indictment the violation of this law we have been considering? The Continental Sunday has been the dread of evangelical Christians in Britain, in Canada, and in the United States. Back in 1608, when John Robinson and his company reached the Low Countries from England, they met this trial; and among the reasons assigned for quitting and migrating to America, was this one, that the Lord's day was not kept. In 1619, he noted that the difference was "not in judgment, but in practice." How this difference has widened! But the open door has brought into this land multitudes who have set themselves to undermine the Sabbath laws, to make it a day of traffic and of sport. Why should evangelical Christians dread this use of the day, unless they class the Continental Sunday with the other grounds of God's controversy with the States of Europe? What a train of evils accompany it!

What greater blessing could we seek for Europe now, than that peace may come, not a cessation of hostilities to return to their former ways, but to betake themselves to God, in repentance for sins? Not the least of these is robbing the poor of their day of rest, and turning aside a large part of that day which God commanded to be kept holy. Neither side in this awful conflict is guiltless, and God is a righteous Judge.

"Thy will be done in earth, as it is heaven."