

THE
HOME AND FOREIGN RECORD
OF THE
CANADA PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

No. 8.

JUNE, 1866

VOL. V

THE SABBATH.

Our ears are familiarised with the phrases—"Jewish Sabbath"—"Pari-tan Sabbath"—"Scotch Sabbath," spoken in all the tones that can express contempt and dislike. If our notions are right, we need not be ashamed; if not right, the sooner we abandon them the better. It may be as well to look into the matter, and that with candour and care.

The name Sabbath means *rest*, or *cessation from work*. Sabbath keeping seems to be as old as the human race. In the book of Genesis we find four references to something like it. The Creator, having finished his work, "rest-ed on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it," &c. (ii. 2, 3). *Sanctifying* must here mean, making off and reserving this day, as belonging peculiarly to Him; making it, in short, God's day; or, if we prefer the phrase, the Lord's-day. Such a day would become a milestone on the journey of man's life, for the Sabbath was made for *man*; and as it divided into four parts the month which the moon's changes indicated, by it man's time was conveniently meas-ured. Thus it was, as God's day, observed by Cain and Abel (Gen. iv. 3, 4 margin, "at the end of days"); and Noah measured his time by the seven days (Gen. viii. 10, 12); and Lalal also, though far from being an orthodox believer, knew, at least, *the week* (Gen. xxix. 27). Job also, apparently about the same date, on the seventh day worshipped with his household and sacrificed for them (Job i. 5); and it is added, "thus did Job continually." What a blessed family that must have been; so united, so religious, so happy! The idea, too, of a special day for *meeting God* was so natural, that neither the narrator nor his hearers found anything strange in *set days*, on which "the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord" (Job i. 6; ii. 1); just as natural as it was for Job to seek for sympathy in the *congregation* of God's worshippers on earth (xxx. 23), seemed these congregations in heaven.

With Exodus begins a new period of the history: the primæval Sabbath still showing itself (before the law was proclaimed from Sinai) in the incident re-corded, Exodus xvi. 22, and in the simple and plain explanation which Moses thought sufficient for the occasion. We cannot suppose the words of Moses addressed to a people who never heard of a weekly Sabbath before; the week and the weekly Sabbath were known to the Egyptians. Not only the Egypt-ians, but other ancient nations also, recognized the week of seven days as a measure of time. Opinions differ as to the evidence of any idea of sacred-ness attaching to a particular day; but their recognition of the *week* is a finger-post, sorely worm-eaten and tempest-worn, but still reaching out the re-mains of an index to the long-distant past. Our authorities for affirming the Sabbath to have been primæval may seem scanty; but let it be remembered that in the biographical history continued in Genesis and in Exodus i. to xvi., we have our only records of 2,500 years! *Everything* cannot be expected to be noticed in such a history; so from the death of Joshua to the death of