

ages, uniformly observed over all the eastern world. The Israelites, Assyrians, Egyptians, Indians, Arabians, and Persians, have always made use of a week, consisting of seven days. Many vain attempts have been made to account for this uniformity; but a practice so general and prevalent could never have taken place, had not the septenary division of time been instituted from the beginning, and handed down by tradition. It has been supposed by some, that the heathens borrowed the notion of the *sacredness* of the seventh day from the Jews. But this opinion will not readily be admitted, when it is considered that the Jews were held in the greatest contempt by the surrounding nations, who derided them no less for their Sabbaths than for their circumcision. All sorts of writers ridiculed them on this account.*

On the whole, therefore, there is satisfactory evidence that the law of the Sabbath was, with other moral laws, revealed to our first parents at their creation in innocence; that it was observed by them even in Paradise, as well as after their fall; that the patriarchal church regarded it, and partook of its inestimable benefits; that it was inserted, with a clear specification of its requirements and prohibitions, in the moral code which was delivered to the Israelites at Sinai; and to show its high rank in the scale of moral obligation, as well as for its better preservation, it was, with three other precepts of a similar character, inscribed by the finger of God on the first table of moral duties: and if this be so, it puts to rest the question in regard to its being a part of the Jewish ritual. Being in its origin no part of that ritual, but an institution appointed by the Creator from the beginning of the world, and of an inherently moral kind, its observance is obligatory at all times, and among all people.

The answer of the Catechism under consideration also states, that "from the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, God appointed the seventh day of the week to be the weekly Sabbath." There have been those, however, who have maintained with much ingenuity, learning and plausibility, that the first day of the week was the day of sacred rest originally appointed by God; that this appointment continued till the time of the Mosaic dispensation; and that the seventh day of the week was then appointed to be observed as the Sabbath by the Israelites, for two powerful reasons, in addition to that which was given at the beginning—first, that their sacred day might be different from that of the idolatrous heathens, who had learned by tradition that the first day of the week was to be set apart for religious worship, and who observed it for the worship of the sun, and the other heavenly luminaries—and secondly, in commemoration of the deliverance from the Egyptian bondage, which

is particularly mentioned by Moses in the fifth chapter of Deuteronomy, as a special reason why the Hebrews should remember the Sabbath and keep it holy. It would follow from this hypothesis, that the day which Christians now regard as the Sabbath, is that which was originally appointed by God; and that the Jewish Sabbath was a part of their ritual, and a departure from the primitive order, which was restored when the work of our redemption was completed by the resurrection of Christ. The learned and distinguished Selden is the principal advocate of this system; but as he was a member of the Assembly of Divines that framed our Catechism, he either did not lay his reasonings and opinions on this topic before that Assembly, or, if he did, the answer before us shows that they were not adopted.

The question, you will observe, relates merely to a *circumstance*, in no wise affecting the great doctrine that a seventh part of our time is to be regularly and exclusively devoted to religious duties. This was required of the patriarchs and the Jews, and this is what is still obligatory on Christians. Dr. Doddridge has well observed, that as morning, noon and night, vary in different parts of our globe, this of necessity makes a variation in the reckoning of time, as to the beginning and ending of a day; and that of course the Sabbath does not begin in one place till some hours after it has begun in another. Yet it is one whole day in seven, in regular succession, which all the inhabitants of the earth, according to their own reckoning of days, are required to keep holy. In this consists the essence of the duty; and it has been justly remarked, that the benediction of the fourth commandment is not pronounced on the *seventh day* from the creation, but on the *Sabbath day*, wheresoever, and whensoever, it is properly observed. The opinion which has led to these remarks was adopted by the learned Dr. Kennicott. I shall lay before you his short statement, to which you will yield or withhold your assent, as you may think proper.*

The concluding part of the answer before us states, that ever since the resurrection of Christ till the end of the world, the first day of the week is to be observed as the Christian Sabbath. This position is denied by a sect of Christians denominated *Sabbatarians*, on the ground that there is no explicit command in the New Testament for the observance of the Sabbath on the first day of the week; and therefore that the seventh day, or the Jewish Sabbath, is still to be held sacred. But we believe that no principle is more obviously reasonable and just than that which is recognized in our Confession of Faith, that which is "deduced from Scripture by good and necessary consequence," is of the same validity as that which is "expressa-

* Encyclopædia—article *Sabbath*

* See note at the end of the Lecture.