

KNOX COLLEGE.

CLOSE OF SESSION.

The Session for 1873-4 of this institution terminated on Wednesday last, when the closing lecture was delivered by the Rev. Principal Cayen, in the commodious hall of the new School House connected with Knox Church in this city.

The subject which we propose to discuss is the Perpetuity of the Weekly Sabbath. Was the Sabbath a purely Jewish institution, and is it a thing of the past; or have we a Sabbath now, which it is our duty, and the duty of all men to respect and observe?

The question cannot be regarded as one of merely theological interest; for the view taken of it has consequences of the utmost practical importance, whether as regards individuals or nations. The most important human interests are affected by the answer given to this question; and cases are constantly arising which require us to take our ground on one side or another.

I mean to argue the question of the perpetual obligation of a weekly Sabbath, on Scriptural grounds; and to see what support the doctrine of our Church receives from a fair examination of Scripture statements relating to this important subject. For we are ready to admit that if our views cannot be sustained from the Word of God, we are not entitled to claim the acceptance of them by Christian people, nor to complain if individuals and communities refuse to regulate their conduct in accordance therewith.

I. We argue for the Perpetuity of the Sabbath on the ground of its institution at the beginning, and the character of Universality then impressed upon it. "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished and all the host of them, 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 Sabbath then is instituted to commemorate creation; and is a type of the rest into which God entered when the heavens and the earth were finished. The same reason for the appointment of the day and for the remembering of it is afterwards assigned in the fourth commandment. Now if the Sabbath was ordained to commemorate the creation of the world, and ordained at the beginning, it cannot be supposed to have a temporary character. By its appointment for such a purpose and at such a time the stamp of perpetuity is obviously impressed upon it.

coming of Christ as to those who lived before it. The generations of men pass away one after another, but the heavens and the earth and their ordinances are not changed. There is not less reason why we, living six thousand years after the creation of the world, should adore the power, wisdom, and goodness therein manifested, than why this should be done by Adam, or Abraham, or Moses. Other reasons for keeping the Sabbath may be superadded, but the one originally given will not become obsolete. Not till the new heavens and the new earth have come in place of the old, will this reason for keeping holy one day in seven have passed away; and then the redeemed shall enter that rest—shall begin that "Sabbatism" which remains for the people of God. Had the Sabbath commemorated some event of local or temporary significance it might have been otherwise. Were the Sabbath e.g. commemorative merely of the Exodus from Egypt, we might well expect to find it simply a Jewish and Old Testament institution. For whilst the deliverance of the Hebrews from Egypt must ever remain an event of special importance in the history of the Church, we can hardly suppose that it would be regarded as of so transcendent importance as that an institution of an ecumenical and permanent character should be based upon it.

We are not here called upon to maintain that interpretation of the mosaic Cosmogony which regards the days of creation as very lengthened periods. Many eminent interpreters and apologists, as we all know, believe that in no other way can the statements of the sacred narrative be brought into harmony with well-ascertained scientific results. They may be right or they may be wrong, but so far as our present argument is concerned, it is not necessarily affected by the decision of this question about the days. For should these be held to be geological ages, we should still have six periods of work coming before the one period of rest, and the ratio between God's working and resting, and our working and resting, is preserved. But it is enough to have adverted to this matter, because no advocate of the Period Theory, so far as we are aware, has ever dreamed of using it against the Sabbath.

We further observe that as the Sabbath commemorates an event the significance of which can never pass away or be impaired, so it was given to man—to the whole race—in the person of its first father. The race was not yet distributed, but was in that one man, when the Sabbath was "blessed" and "hallowed" for man's observance. Even those who hold a lower theory of representation than we are accustomed to teach, would admit that Adam, in receiving this ordinance, received it for the race. Had the Sabbath been first instituted in the time of Abraham and given to him—or given to the head of any special line or family—it might well have been a law for that line or family alone. Had it been given to the Sethites after these became separated from the Canites, though we might still have argued that it was meant for the whole Church, its characters of universality and perpetuity would not have been so clear. But he who bears in himself the whole race—the root from which the entire tree should grow—receives the ordinance, that the interest of all his children in it may be indisputable. And it may be just as well, at this stage of our argument, to notice (a point of the very greatest importance) that the Sabbath was instituted for man while still unfallen—still sinless. It is, even as marriage, a parallel sacred institution. We see therefore how untenable is the ground of those who say that the necessity of a Sabbath bespeaks a low and carnal state, altogether different from that into which the gospel has now introduced us; and who affirm that in continuing to Sabbathize under the New Testament economy, we show ourselves ignorant of the spiritual advancement of the dispensation under which it is our privilege to live. This sinless pair in the garden of Eden, who had no persistent secularity needing to be repressed—no unwillingness to contemplate the unson and eternal, making it necessary that they should be specially invited and allured to pious meditation,—these our first parents with God's image upon them yet undimmed, have the Sabbath provided for them. Every one must see how greatly the argument for the perpetuity of the Sabbath is strengthened by this consideration, and the last shadow of pretext, almost for regarding it as temporary, taken away. It is not without consideration that reference was just now made to marriage as instituted contemporaneously with the Sabbath. Hear then how the Lord discourses respecting it:—"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 his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh. Therefore they are no more twain but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together let not man put asunder. They say why did Moses then command to give her a writing of document and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. The ordinance of marriage remains in force as ordained 'from the beginning.' It is freed from the accretions which the Mosaic law had gathered around it—from all that is special and temporary; but the ordinance remains even as the race remains. Even so the Sabbath, instituted at the 'beginning,' is a permanent heritage for the race.

But some deny that the Sabbath was given to man at the beginning; and maintain that the language quoted from the second Chapter of Genesis necessarily conveys that meaning. The words they say are preloptical; and while they state the ground of the sabbath law they do not appoint the sabbath nor require Adam and Eve to observe it. The Sabbath was not appointed till the Israelites came to Mount Sinai, or at all events all they left Egypt, but the Sacred Writer having detailed the work of the six days and stated that God rested on the seventh, incidentally refers to this rest as the ground and exemplar of the rest that should afterwards be ordained for man. Thus Keil and Delitzsch, The blessing and sanctifying of the seventh

day had regard to the Sabbath, which was of as the people of God was afterwards to keep; but we are not to suppose that the Mosaic Sabbath was instituted here, or that the institution of the Sabbath was transferred to the history of creation. Now suppose this view correct, it would not touch the argument for the perpetuity of the Sabbath, taken from the ground of general and could not be said to have any special significance for the Jews above the Gentiles; and for whatever reasons the promulgation of the Sabbath, might have been deferred, once promulgated, it should not expect ever to find it pass away. But is the interpretation on which we are now commencing a natural, an allowable one; Did the subsequent narrative render it necessary to hold that the Sabbath was not actually instituted till the Exodus, we should indeed be obliged to understand the words before us in harmony with this view; but no such necessity exists; so far from this, many references and statements in Genesis and Exodus would suggest the promulgation of the Sabbath at the beginning, even were this passage not found. Let the institution in Eden be supposed, and these references become plain and significant; let it not be supposed and they are hard to be explained.

No expositor or reader has failed to notice the allusions to a hebdomadal period frequently found in the book of Genesis. To say nothing of the doubtful expression "the end of days," (Ch. 1, 5.) Noah was finally instructed to enter the ark "seven days" before the flood came. Noah stayed seven days between the times of sending forth the dove from the ark, and, as appears, between the sending forth of the raven and the dove. Twice in the 29th chap. Genesis we read of the "week." The frequency with which the number seven occurs throughout the Scriptures, and the symbolic import of the number, are best explained by supposing a reference to the hebdomadal period and the Sabbath as instituted at the beginning. "Let it be observed" says one, "that it was the Creator Himself in denouncing 'seven-fold' vengeance against the person that should take the life of Cain, that first employed the number as a synonym of completeness or perfection, and that by the same authority it continued to be signified in the arrangement that the animals should be selected by sevens for preservation in the ark; in the allotted periods of plenty and scarcity in Egypt; in the prohibition of leavened bread for seven days in the passover; and in many other intimations of the divine will, down to the time when the Apostle John had in Patmos his vision of the seven golden candlesticks and of one in the midst of them like unto the Son of Man." We have but to add that no reason can be assigned for this employment of the number seven so probable as that which finds in it a reference to the septenary arrangement of days made known to the race at the beginning.

The statement respecting the Sabbath in the 10th chap. of Exodus makes it impossible for any believer in the authenticity of that book to hold that the Sabbath law was first promulgated from Mount Sinai. We thus read:—"It came to pass that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man; and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. And he said unto them this is that which the Lord hath said;—to-morrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord: bake that which ye will bake to-day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning. Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day which is the Sabbath, it shall be more." It is held, however, by those who wish to regard the Sabbath as a purely Jewish institution, (Paley &c.) that the transaction just recited is the first actual institution of the Sabbath. To us, this view, even from the language quoted, seems extremely improbable. We might readily enough suppose that there is here the revival of an ancient institution which had been neglected or forgotten; or an admonition to respect the sacredness of a day which they might be tempted to violate, but the allusive character of the language, and the absence of any reference to the ground of the institution, such as we have both in the second chap. of Genesis and in the fourth commandment, render it very unlikely that the appointment of the day at first should be here recorded. Moreover, if this is the institution of the Sabbath; and if the Sabbath is a merely ceremonial and positive ordinance as the view we are combatting supposes, how can we account for its being so soon afterwards proclaimed from Mount Sinai? Why should not the appointment of it have been deferred till the people came to Sinai? The solemn repetition of a law of this character, within so short an interval, seems quite unaccountable.

We argue then under this head with great confidence that the Sabbath was instituted at the beginning, and that the giving of the Sabbath to man at his creation proclaims it to be for the race; not a Jewish nor a temporary institution, but ecumenical and permanent in its character.

II. The second great argument for the perpetuity of the Sabbath, rests on the fact that the Sabbath-law is one of the commandments spoken from Mount Sinai, it is part of the Decalogue. Many of the laws given to the Israelites are plainly of a temporary character. They were designed for that people only; and for them until the Messiah should come, but not afterwards. They could not, from the nature of them, be incorporated into the Christian dispensation. No one but a Jew maintains that the entire law given to the Hebrews is still in force; and even he will allow that the law must, to some extent, be modified in the observance of it by the circumstances in which his nation now are. Christians are agreed in holding that the entire ceremonial law is now obsolete; it has been fulfilled, and in the fulfilling of it abrogated. We are not now required to offer sacrifices, to keep the feast of unleavened bread, to circumcise our male children. The law of leprosy is not obligatory upon us, nor the many prescriptions respecting the clean and the unclean. All that professed the work and sacrifice of Christ—all that obtained its fullness in His Kingdom, has passed away. To insist now on observing the ceremonial law were to betray total ignorance of the nature, at once, of the Old Dispensation and of the New.

But there is much in the Judicial law, as well, which we must regard as obsolete. Whatever diversity of opinion may exist as to particular enactments in this great division of the Jewish Code, no one regards Christian communities as bound to enforce it all. The Judicial law contemplates the existence of the Jews as a people separate from all the nations of the earth; and it was intended, in many parts of it, to complete and secure that separation. It contains therefore, in any case, a transitory element. So far indeed as the Judicial law is based on moral grounds, we may not represent it as set aside, for morality is not a mutable thing, but like Him from whose nature it is deduced, eternal and unchangeable. But the more circumstance that a law or regulation is found in the Judicial code does not imply that it is still in force. We must examine it and see whether it rests immediately on moral grounds, or whether it merely contemplates the existing form of the theocracy. You must analyse this body of legislation, and—if you can—assign each portion to its own category, and then you shall know the permanent from the temporary. But when we come to the Decalogue we shall find no place for the discrimination between the Jewish and temporary, and the Ecumenical and permanent. The ground which we take is that the ten commandments all of permanent obligation; and apart from all analysis of the commandments as touching their relation to morality—this important fact we take to be signified by the solemn isolation of the Decalogue—by its standing apart from the body of the Mosaic legislation. The ten commandments alone were spoken by God's voice from Mount Sinai. The mountain is fenced round, the people are sanctified, the voice of the trumpet wax exceeding loud, the mountain is altogether on a smoke and then God descends and speaks all these words. With respect to the ceremonial and Judicial law it is otherwise. They are not uttered in with this awful majesty, but are given to Moses when he ascends the Mount, or when he meets with God in the tabernacle. The pre-eminence of the "ten words" is further indicated in their being written by God himself upon two tables of stone; "the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables." These tables or these substituted for them after the great sin of the people were laid up in the ark of the covenant and kept in the most holy place. All these tokens of distinction prepare us to regard the Decalogue as higher than the Mosaic law, and as meant to endure when all that was Jewish should have served its purpose and passed away. It is indeed on all hands acknowledged that nine of the commandments are permanent. But is it possible, we would say, that one of the number should be exceptional, in this regard? Why should the fourth commandment be temporary, when all before it, and all after it, are binding whilst the human race remains? Is it out of its place, being found in the Decalogue, when it should really have been classed with those "beggarly elements" to which the Church is not now in bondage? and observe that it is not the purpose here to raise any general question as to the relation of Christians to the law; such as the Apostle discusses in the Epistles to the Romans and the Galatians, and frequently adverts to in his other Epistles. Our contention here is not with those who hold that sabbath cancels our relations to law entirely, but with those who attribute a character to the fourth commandment inferior to that possessed by the other nine. It seems like breaking through the fence around the mount to deal with the fourth commandment as the view we are opposing makes hold to do.

well insinuate doubt on the subject;—it would certainly leave the way open for denying that the fourth commandment was binding upon Christians. But this view is forced to us most pronouncedly incorrect. The ten commandments are the law, they are complete in themselves, and we conceive rather of the remaining legislation as proceeding on the great principles contained in them, and applying these principles in various directions, according to the circumstances of the Jewish people and the character of the Dispensation under which they were placed. The "ten words" are not therefore to be spoken of as the "kernel" of the law, nor as a brief "resumé" of the law, nor as the "titles" of the several chapters into which the law may be distributed. The Decalogue is a complete moral code, and contains, in principle, every part of our duty to God and our duty to man. Any references to the special circumstances in the history of the Israelites found in the Decalogue; as in the reason annexed to the fifth commandment; or in the fourth commandment as given in Deuteronomy; or in the preface to the commandments, "I am the Lord thy God which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage"—any such references are quite compatible with the view now presented. These special reasons for obedience on the part of the Hebrews, hinder not that the obligation to obey should rest on all men, and be enforced on grounds which have nothing local or temporary in them.

We have by no means exhausted the Old Testament evidence for the perpetuity of the Sabbath, in presenting, as has now been imperfectly done, the arguments deduced from its original institution and from its place in the Decalogue. There are other considerations of the greatest weight which would require to be enforced in any treatment of the Old Testament evidence which assumed to be complete. They are such as the following: (a) The great importance attached to the Sabbath in making it the "sign of the covenant" between God and Israel; "It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever; for six days the Lord made heaven and earth; and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed" Ex. 31-17. (b) The penalty attached to the violation of the Sabbath; "every one that doleth it shall surely be put to death." It is rightly observed that the violation of no law of a ceremonial character was visited by death, (c) We cannot omit to notice the frequent and earnest admonitions to observe the Sabbath, in which it is classified with duties certainly moral; "ye shall fear every man his mother and his father, and keep my Sabbaths; I am the Lord your God: turn ye not to idols, nor make to yourselves molten gods; I am the Lord your God" Lev. 19-34. (d) The last consideration we enumerate is, that Prophecy seems to represent the Sabbath as remaining under the new economy—Isaiah after declaring that God's "salvation is near to come," has the following words—"Blessed is the man that doeth this and the son of man that layeth hold on it; that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil" (Is. 58-2); and again—"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." (Is. 58-13).

III. Were the question of the perpetuity of the weekly Sabbath to be decided on Old Testament evidence alone, there would appear to be little room for diversity of opinion. But the discussion must be removed to New Testament ground,—the latter utterances of inspiration on the subject must be taken into account; and no interpretation of the Old Testament can be valid which proves irreconcilable with the teachings of the New. Those who regard the Sabbath as a Jewish institution and as having passed away are wont very confidently to claim the New Testament as on their side.

The following views have been set forth as in accordance with the doctrine of the New Testament on the Sabbath; (a) That the Sabbath is in every sense abolished under the Christian dispensation, and that no day is more to be observed than another. The new dispensation is all Sabbath, and to think otherwise is to be under a Jewish and servile spirit, and fail of enjoying the liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free. (b) The Sabbath is abolished; and the first day of the week, which we now observe, has an ecclesiastical sanction only; but as the observance of the first day began very early in the history of the Christian Church, and has been found very profitable to religion and is a suitable commemoration of the Lord's resurrection, we may speak of the observance not only as having pre-emption in its favour, but as in some sense obligatory upon Christians. (c) The third view coincides with the second in holding that the Sabbath was a Jewish institution and is now abolished; but it places the Christian Sabbath (so-called) upon higher ground. Whilst we may not speak of the Sabbath as changed from the seventh to the first day of the week, we have yet New Testament authority for observing the latter in commemoration of Christ's rising from the dead, and for purposes of public worship. This authority is found in those passages which record the meeting of the Lord with His disciples on the first day of the week, or make reference to the Christian assemblies on that day with implied approbation or even injunction of them; as also in the fact that the observance of the "Lord's day" grew up and became general under the eyes and doth with the sanction of the Apostles. But we must be careful not to base this Christian ordinance on the fourth commandment or on the Old Testament at all; nor may we go to the Old Testament to learn the meaning of the day or the manner of its observance.

(d) The fourth and last view holds the continuity of the Sabbath under both Dispensations. It holds that the Sabbath was ordained at the beginning, proclaimed from Sinai, and incorporated in the Decalogue

well insinuate doubt on the subject;—it would certainly leave the way open for denying that the fourth commandment was binding upon Christians. But this view is forced to us most pronouncedly incorrect. The ten commandments are the law, they are complete in themselves, and we conceive rather of the remaining legislation as proceeding on the great principles contained in them, and applying these principles in various directions, according to the circumstances of the Jewish people and the character of the Dispensation under which they were placed. The "ten words" are not therefore to be spoken of as the "kernel" of the law, nor as a brief "resumé" of the law, nor as the "titles" of the several chapters into which the law may be distributed. The Decalogue is a complete moral code, and contains, in principle, every part of our duty to God and our duty to man. Any references to the special circumstances in the history of the Israelites found in the Decalogue; as in the reason annexed to the fifth commandment; or in the fourth commandment as given in Deuteronomy; or in the preface to the commandments, "I am the Lord thy God which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage"—any such references are quite compatible with the view now presented. These special reasons for obedience on the part of the Hebrews, hinder not that the obligation to obey should rest on all men, and be enforced on grounds which have nothing local or temporary in them.

We have by no means exhausted the Old Testament evidence for the perpetuity of the Sabbath, in presenting, as has now been imperfectly done, the arguments deduced from its original institution and from its place in the Decalogue. There are other considerations of the greatest weight which would require to be enforced in any treatment of the Old Testament evidence which assumed to be complete. They are such as the following: (a) The great importance attached to the Sabbath in making it the "sign of the covenant" between God and Israel; "It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever; for six days the Lord made heaven and earth; and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed" Ex. 31-17. (b) The penalty attached to the violation of the Sabbath; "every one that doleth it shall surely be put to death." It is rightly observed that the violation of no law of a ceremonial character was visited by death, (c) We cannot omit to notice the frequent and earnest admonitions to observe the Sabbath, in which it is classified with duties certainly moral; "ye shall fear every man his mother and his father, and keep my Sabbaths; I am the Lord your God: turn ye not to idols, nor make to yourselves molten gods; I am the Lord your God" Lev. 19-34. (d) The last consideration we enumerate is, that Prophecy seems to represent the Sabbath as remaining under the new economy—Isaiah after declaring that God's "salvation is near to come," has the following words—"Blessed is the man that doeth this and the son of man that layeth hold on it; that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil" (Is. 58-2); and again—"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." (Is. 58-13).

III. Were the question of the perpetuity of the weekly Sabbath to be decided on Old Testament evidence alone, there would appear to be little room for diversity of opinion. But the discussion must be removed to New Testament ground,—the latter utterances of inspiration on the subject must be taken into account; and no interpretation of the Old Testament can be valid which proves irreconcilable with the teachings of the New. Those who regard the Sabbath as a Jewish institution and as having passed away are wont very confidently to claim the New Testament as on their side.

The following views have been set forth as in accordance with the doctrine of the New Testament on the Sabbath; (a) That the Sabbath is in every sense abolished under the Christian dispensation, and that no day is more to be observed than another. The new dispensation is all Sabbath, and to think otherwise is to be under a Jewish and servile spirit, and fail of enjoying the liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free. (b) The Sabbath is abolished; and the first day of the week, which we now observe, has an ecclesiastical sanction only; but as the observance of the first day began very early in the history of the Christian Church, and has been found very profitable to religion and is a suitable commemoration of the Lord's resurrection, we may speak of the observance not only as having pre-emption in its favour, but as in some sense obligatory upon Christians. (c) The third view coincides with the second in holding that the Sabbath was a Jewish institution and is now abolished; but it places the Christian Sabbath (so-called) upon higher ground. Whilst we may not speak of the Sabbath as changed from the seventh to the first day of the week, we have yet New Testament authority for observing the latter in commemoration of Christ's rising from the dead, and for purposes of public worship. This authority is found in those passages which record the meeting of the Lord with His disciples on the first day of the week, or make reference to the Christian assemblies on that day with implied approbation or even injunction of them; as also in the fact that the observance of the "Lord's day" grew up and became general under the eyes and doth with the sanction of the Apostles. But we must be careful not to base this Christian ordinance on the fourth commandment or on the Old Testament at all; nor may we go to the Old Testament to learn the meaning of the day or the manner of its observance.