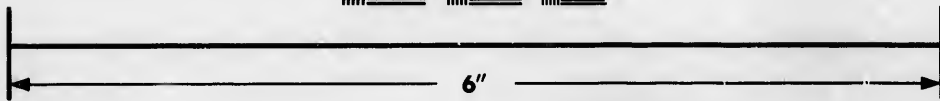
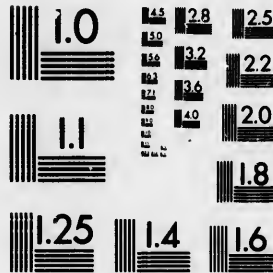


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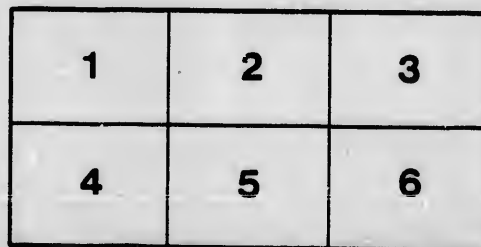
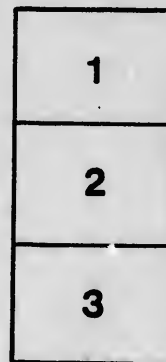
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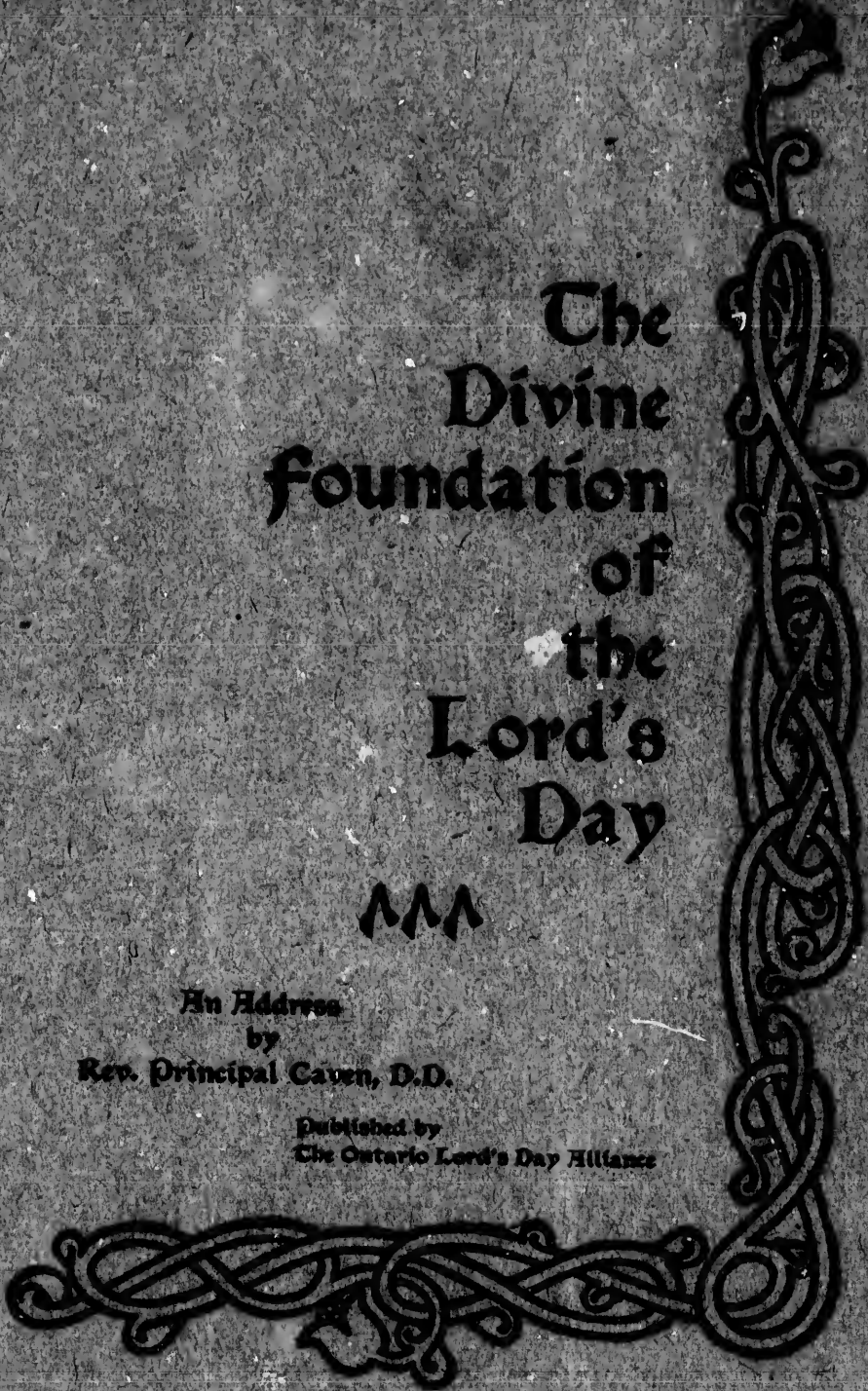
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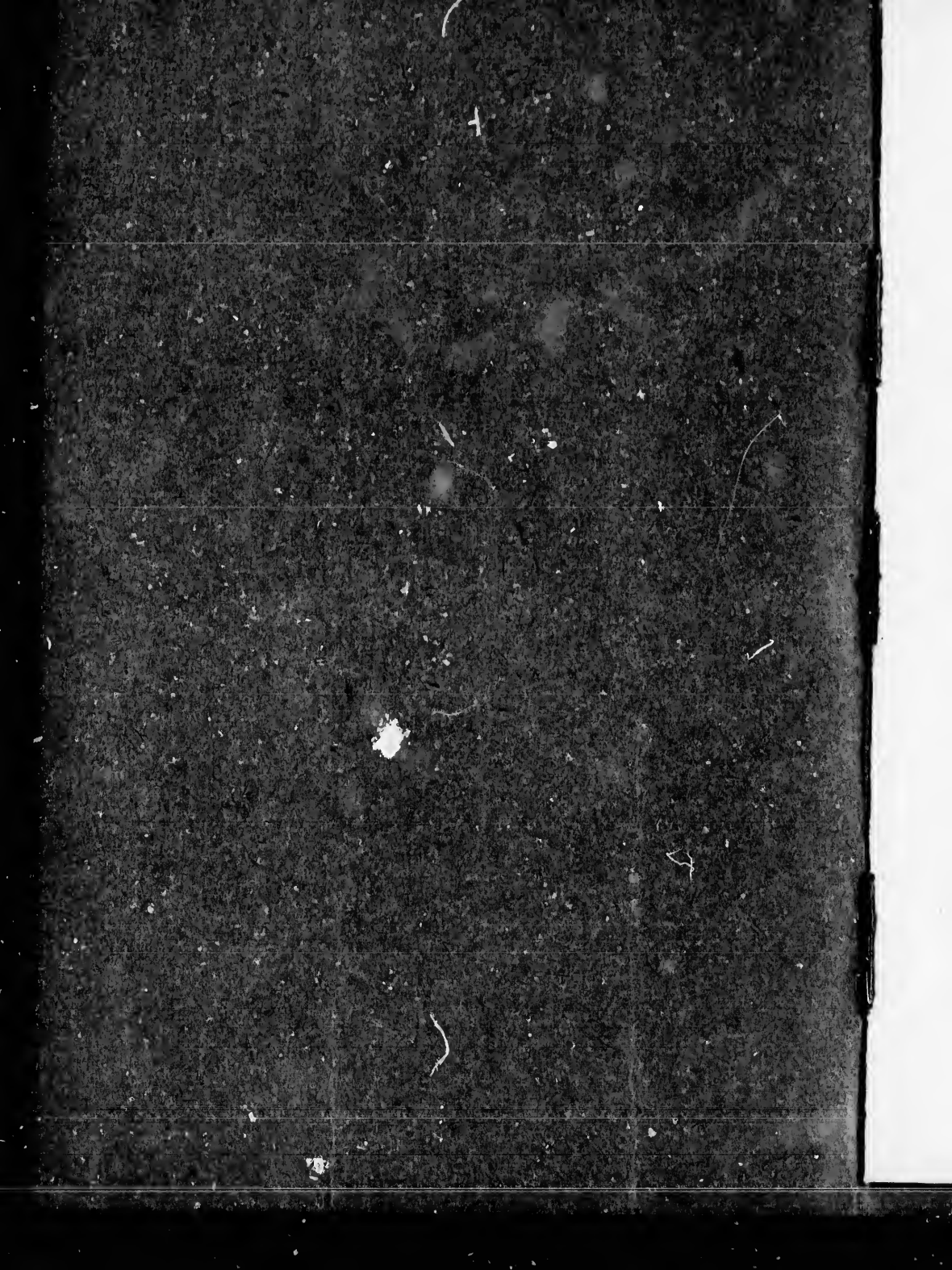
The
Divine
foundation
of
the
Lord's
Day



An Address
by
Rev. Principal Caven, D.D.

Published by
The Ontario Lord's Day Alliance





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ADDRESS
OF THE
REV. WILLIAM CAVEN, D.D.
Principal of Knox College.

DELIVERED AT THE CONVENTION OF THE ONTARIO LORD'S DAY
ALLIANCE HELD IN ASSOCIATION HALL, TORONTO,
ON THE 10TH SEPTEMBER, 1897.

Rev. Principal Caven said : Mr. Chairman and Christian friends, I have been asked to say something upon the Divine Foundation of the Sabbath. I was asked, indeed by our respected secretary to write something upon this subject, but was unable to find time to do so. I consented, however, to say a few words, which I trust the friends present will accept as a slight contribution to the work of the day. In regard to this subject I may say, that legislation in protection of the Sabbath has its own value, and is not to be despised or spoken against. Some maintain that the Sabbath, being a spiritual or moral institution, ought not to be bolstered up by legislation of any kind, but that the observance of it should be left entirely to the religious sentiment of the community. Were I arguing this subject at length, I would seek to shew that the sentiments of a Christian community will necessarily, in many ways, affect

legislation. A community has a common life, and the fundamental convictions of any community must at length necessarily influence and find expression in its laws. I entirely agree with the sentiment that what we should appeal to in this matter of the Sabbath is above all the religious convictions of the people. If these are right, our position is strong; and notwithstanding any temporary advantage that may be gained, or seem to be gained, over us, the contest will at last be decided in our favor.

If we can truly say, "The Lord is on our side," we can add, "We will not fear; what can man do unto us?" It is a great thing to be found upon the Lord's side.

In proceeding to make a few statements upon this subject—The Divine Foundation of the Sabbath—my first point is: That the Sabbath was certainly a part of the Jewish economy. This is a position which I think has not been questioned by anyone, certainly by none of our friends, and so far as I know, by none of our opponents. The Sabbath, I say, was a part of the Jewish economy. It is entrenched in the heart of the decalogue, which is the fundamental law for the Jew, and for all men. It was made in a special sense the sign of the covenant between God and His ancient people. It is so referred to repeatedly in the Pentateuch, and very impressively by Nehemiah, by Isaiah at least twice, viz., in the fifty-sixth and fifty-eighth chapters and by Ezekiel in the twentieth chapter. The prophets, moreover, say a great deal about the importance of Sabbath observance, and their way of speaking about it seems to place it in a different category from those ordinances and institutions which were purely ceremonial. But, inasmuch as this point is not one under dispute, I merely mention it as preliminary to other points that I wish to bring forward. Our first position, then, is, that the Sabbath,

beyond all question, was a part, a most important part, a central part, of the Jewish economy.

But, further, the Sabbath, as revealed to us in the Old Testament Scriptures, is much more than a part of Judaism. The Scripture that has been read this morning decides that point. After the six days of creation, God "rested on the seventh day," and "blessed the seventh day and sanctified it." Now this is, as you are aware, 2,500 years, according to the most limited chronology, before the Jewish institutions were established. This blessing and sanctifying of the Sabbath takes place before nations are formed, when the population of the earth consists of the first man and the first woman. The Sabbath, therefore, was given at the beginning, and it was given—I shall afterwards refer to this more particularly—to commemorate an event, a fact, which has no greater significance for the Jews than it has for other peoples; it was given to commemorate God's creation work. He created the world in six days; He rested upon the Sabbath day. This, then, is the second point.

No person who accepts the Bible as historically true will dispute these two positions that have been laid down—the first, that the Sabbath was a part of Judaism; the second, that it has wider relations and wider scope, as signified in the Old Testament. But we now advance to a third position, as to which issue will be taken with us. Many deny that under the New Testament we have anything to do with the Sabbath in any form. Now, this is a position which it behooves us carefully to examine, and upon which we should have a distinct opinion; because, if there is misgiving here, if there is doubt in our minds about the divine authority of the sacred day—call it the Sabbath day, the Christian Sabbath, or the Lord's Day, call it what you will—if there is any doubt about the distinct divine authority of it, the Sabbath will not be preserved to us simply on account of its

physical benefits. (Hear, hear.) The Sabbath, as we all believe, has immense economic value, immense sanitary importance, and certainly no adequate discussion of this subject would overlook these facts; but we do not know the strength of the forces that are against us—the power of avarice and the power of pleasure—unless we recognize that considerations such as these would be quite overborne, apart from a clear conviction that we have divine authority for keeping holy one day to the Lord. (Hear, hear.) Now, it is this position that I would like very briefly to support. I can, of course, do little more than bring forward heads, so to speak, main propositions, because there is not time within the limits necessarily prescribed to this address for an adequate development of the subject.

There are weighty considerations, then, in support of the position, that the Sabbath was instituted for all nations and for all time. Some of the principal arguments in support of this view I shall now seek to adduce.

The first is: That the weekly Sabbath, as already said, was instituted at the beginning. Now, I am quite aware of what is said by Dr. Paley and other theologians, that the passage read to-day from the second chapter of Genesis does not institute the Sabbath, but simply notices a historical fact which, many centuries after, became the basis of Sabbath legislation. I have to say about this exegesis that it is entirely unnatural. The statement is, that the Lord rested on the seventh day, and that He blessed and sanctified it. And why did He sanctify it? To commemorate His work of creation. Then, pray, why, if the Sabbath commemorates God's work of creation, should the institution of it be held in abeyance until at least twenty-five centuries had passed? Is that probable? It is not in accordance with the plain meaning of the words, and it has every consideration against it. I dis-

miss that view, therefore, as untenable and unnatural. I may notice, further, as showing that the Sabbath was instituted before Sinai, that as recorded in the sixteenth chapter of Exodus, when the manna first came, no manna fell upon the Sabbath day, and Moses instructed the people in regard to that fact, telling them what to do on the day preceding, and forbidding them to go out to seek manna on the Sabbath of the Lord. Now this shews, does it not, that the Sabbath was in existence before Sinai? The decalogue, recorded in the twentieth chapter of Exodus, was not yet spoken from amidst the thunders and lightnings of the Mount.

A second consideration is this: The Sabbath law was enshrined in the very heart of the decalogue. It is the fourth of the ten words or commands. Mark this, that the decalogue, the ten words, is the centre of the whole Jewish legislation, and confessedly every other part of it (should you except the fourth commandment), related to what is moral and of permanent obligation—not judicial, not ceremonial, but distinctly moral. The first, second, third, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth commandments are moral in their nature. Is it probable, then, that the fourth belongs to a different category? Is it a probable thing, I might almost say, a conceivable thing, that an institution which is not moral, which is purely positive and ceremonial, to be abolished when Judaism comes to an end, should find its way into the heart of the decalogue? This is an argument for the perpetuity of the Sabbath that has never been fairly met. Excellent people have said to me, even in Toronto, during our recent street-car contest—people that were with us, that fought with us—“Now, you must be careful how you seek to put the Christian day of rest on the ground of the commandment. That is not very safe. We would advise you to bring to the front

labor arguments and social arguments which are undoubtedly good ; but in regard to this theological argument, this argument from the decalogue, we have very serious doubts about it." I am quite aware that when we come to discuss the question of transference, as I may call it, of this ordinance from the Old Testament to the New Testament, there are difficulties, there are points which require to be carefully stated ; but as to the great, broad, obvious fact of a Sabbath law given to commemorate creation, which has authority for the whole race and for all times, there cannot be reasonable doubt ; and I should decline to accept any interpretation of the decalogue which would degrade the fourth commandment to the place of a mere provincial statute.

The next argument is the great importance which the Old Testament prophets uniformly assign to this day—the great importance in comparison with what is purely ceremonial. Keeping the Sabbath is joined with reverencing the sanctuary, as a fundamental thing in worship. Isaiah, for example, both in the fifty-sixth chapter and in the fifty-eighth, attaches the greatest importance to the Sabbath. Hear his language : “ 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.” “ 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, honorable ; and shalt honor 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 on the high places of the earth.” etc. Again I say, it is extremely improbable that an institution which was purely ceremonial, should be singled out by Isaiah—Isaiah, who, in some passages, seems almost to scorn ritual—to speak of it after this fashion, if it

were a purely ceremonial and temporary institution.

But now we come to notice the main arguments employed against our view of the Sabbath ; and I want to state them fairly, and just as strongly as our opponents, if I may use the word, would wish to state them. These say to us : " All your deductions from the Old Testament—from the Edenic institution of the Sabbath, from the fact that the Sabbath law is in the decalogue, that the prophets speak so highly of it, that it constitutes the bond of the covenant, must not override the plain teaching of the New Testament that the Sabbath is obsolete." Largely, no doubt, by the New Testament, must this question be decided. There is no person associated with us in this movement, who does not defer to the New Testament, who does not accept, I may say, every word of the New Testament as authoritative ; and if the Lord says, or if his apostles say, that the Sabbath is obsolete, and that we have no day to take its place under the New Testament economy, we shall, with entire submission, accept the teaching of our divine Master, or of his inspired servants. I do not think that the New Testament does thus teach. Just for a moment consider the position that our Lord and Master occupied, and you will see that he is for us, not against us. And if the critics, higher or lower, tell me that the Lord's knowledge was limited, that he thought and spoke as a Jew about all ceremonial matters, and that we must not refer to his words when there is any question of strict exegesis to be considered—I must, with great decision, though with great humility, put myself by the side of the Lord rather than by the side of the critics. Yes, I say that when any question respecting the authority of the Old Testament or its institutions comes up, I want to be found upon the Lord's side—(hear, hear)—and I will believe that his knowledge was not simply adequate to the revelation

of spiritual truth, but was infallible in every part of his teaching. What, then, does He say about the Sabbath? We all know that our Lord was severely blamed and censured by the Pharisees for what he did upon the Sabbath day. He cleansed lepers upon the Sabbath day; he healed the sick upon the Sabbath; he restored a withered limb upon the Sabbath; when his disciples were censured because they rubbed ears of corn, and did eat them on the Sabbath day, he vindicated them by reference to the Old Testament itself. But when our Lord was vindicating himself, and vindicating his apostles, he has not said, either directly or inferentially, that the Sabbath was to come to an end, or that the keeping of it was of little importance. Suppose, now, that the view which I am arguing against were the right view. Would it not be most natural for him to have said that this Sabbath institution was about to terminate, that it never had any character but that of a positive institution, and that they were attaching far too much value to it altogether? But our blessed Lord does not say that. He says that the Sabbath was "made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." He means: Don't add to the Sabbath law; don't fence it round about with restrictions, which have no divine authority; take it as it is. And if I, the Son of man, the divine man, free this holy institution from all Pharisaical additions and accretions, I have surely authority to do so. "Therefore, the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath day." These words of our Master, so far from suggesting that the Sabbath was temporary and Jewish, by fair implication, if not by direct statement, are proof that the Sabbath is not Jewish, and that it is permanent. It was "made for man." Our Lord does not say it was made for the Jew; for He is the Son of Man, not the son of the Jew. It was made "for man," proclaimed in the beginning to commemorate an event in which all

are equally interested, and for the benefit of all: "Therefore, the Son of Man," the divine representative of the human race, "is Lord of the Sabbath day." Is there anything here that states the abrogation of the Sabbath, or even looks in that direction? Distinctly the contrary.

But it is the apostle Paul whom those who differ from us chiefly rely upon. There are three passages in the apostle Paul's writings that are held to be proof positive that we have no authority for the observance of a Sabbath under the New Testament dispensation; and so good a man, and so good an expositor as Dean Alford, commenting upon the last of these three passages, says, that it is inconsistent with any form of a Sabbath under the New Testament dispensation. An expositor not less able nor scholarly, the Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol, states that this declaration of Alford cannot be substantiated. I think he has good ground for saying that; but I shall read to you the three passages. The first is Romans xiv. 5: "One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." "If you think you should keep the Sabbath, do it. If I think there is no obligation upon me to keep the Sabbath, I am free." Thus the words are interpreted by many. Now, if any one will just read the context of these words, he will see that what the apostle is speaking about is the general question of observing the Jewish law, as insisted on by the Judaizing party in the church. The reference to meats and drinks, etc., clearly shows that it is so. But our ground is that the Lord's day, of which we are presently to speak, has in reality taken the place of the Sabbath—is, indeed, the Christian Sabbath; and should any one now insist that we should observe not only the Lord's day, but the seventh day Sabbath as well, we should have to assert the Christian's liberty as the apostle does.

Why, if any man in Toronto, Jew or Gentile, should say: "You must rest upon the seventh day, you must keep the Sabbath on the very day on which it was kept before the coming of Christ"—thus refusing to distinguish between what is moral and permanent in the commandment, and what is positive and temporary—the words of the apostle are the charter of our freedom. The Son of Man—the Lord of the Sabbath—has authority to make the first day of the week the day of rest, in place of the seventh, and the question is, whether he has done so or not. It may well be that he has re-established the sacred day on a still broader basis, and with added significance; if so, the Old Testament day is not binding, though the institution remains, and is invested with new glory.

The same explanation is to be given in the other two passages. The next of these is Galatians iv. 10, 11: "Ye observe days, and months, and times and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain." That is, "You are steeped in ceremonialism; you have not yet comprehended the fact that Judaism has matured and passed into Christianity; you wish to place Christians under Jewish restrictions. I am afraid ye have not rightly understood the Gospel." That is what the apostle says, and you cannot legitimately make more than this out of his statement. The Jewish faction or party in the early church insisted that every one should enter the church through the Synagogue, and that Judaism, in all its main parts, should be incorporated with Christianity. That position the apostle fights against, and will by no means allow.

The last of these passages is thought to be the strongest of all against the observance of a Sabbath under the new dispensation. It is Colossians ii. 16. To show the connexion I read from v. 14: "Blotting out the hand-writing of ordinances that

was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; and having spoiled principalities and powers he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Let no man, therefore, judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days; which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ." In the Christian dispensation at large, of which the Lord's day is part, we have the substance of which the Jewish Sabbath and the other things named were a shadow. All that was peculiar to Judaism has passed away, and so far as the Sabbath, incorporated into Judaism, had taken on Jewish characteristics, it had passed away. Judaism visited breaches of the Sabbath with the death penalty; this has passed away. All restrictions imposed by Jewish and Pharisaical custom have passed away. And what is more, the first day of the week has become the holy day in place of the seventh.

But now I must come, and very briefly, to notice the institution of the Lord's day; and the position that I wish to take, the position which I think gives unity to the statements of the Old Testament and the New Testament is: That the Lord's day has become heir to the Sabbath—call it the Jewish Sabbath or the Old Testament Sabbath as you will. In sanctioning the principle of one day in seven consecrated to the Lord, the New Testament continues that ordinance, while it gives it a still higher character, as commemorating not only God's creation work, but His redemption work, and the resurrection of our blessed Saviour from the grave. It cannot be said that under this new dispensation that day of holy rest whose heavenly light first fell upon Eden has passed away, and that we have nothing but toil and unbroken secularity under the new dispensation. Can you believe, my Christian friends, that we

have no day of rest and worship under this better economy? (No.) Can you believe that the muck-rake must be constantly in your hand, the crown that is above you never steadfastly regarded? Has one of the most blessed elements of the old dispensation passed away, while nothing equal or better has taken its place? If the New Testament had said not a word about it I should not have believed that; but the New Testament is not silent. The Lord's day is the heir-at-law to the Old Testament Sabbath, and perpetuates all that is distinctive and most important in the Sabbath of the old dispensation.

Well, what is our proof for the Lord's day? Will you allow me to introduce this by stating that there are three views regarding the foundation of the Lord's day or Christian Sabbath. The first is that the Christian Sabbath is the same institution as the Sabbath of the Old Testament. It has its foundation in the fourth commandment. A second view is that we may not appeal to the Old Testament in support of a Sabbath under the new economy, but we have good authority in the New Testament for observing the Lord's day. And the third view is that the observance of the first day of the week as a sacred day rests merely on ecclesiastical authority. It is a good and valuable institution, helpful to the cultivation of spiritual life, but it cannot plead the direct sanction, either of the Lord or of His apostles. The church, however, has power to decree such a day, and it should be observed. For myself I accept the first view, if it is correctly stated. A large number of Christian scholars, no doubt, prefer the middle position, that the Lord's day, or Christian Sabbath, rests purely upon New Testament ground. I believe that the Lord's day is so related to the Old Testament Sabbath that we are not restricted to the New Testament for proof of the Weekly Rest. If the Old Testament testifies to the universality and

perpetuity of the Sabbath and the New Testament teaches that the observance of the seventh day is no longer binding, the inference is clear that the first day of the week has become heir to the seventh.

Having accomplished the great redemption, the Lord arose upon the first day of the week, and the glorious event becomes the basis of our New Testament sacred day. On the evening of His resurrection day the Lord appears to the assembled disciples and says, "Peace be unto you." And eight days after He again is in their midst with the same salutation. Thus does He mark the day with honor, and not obscurely hint that it had received a special consecration. It is highly probable—though there are some critical considerations to be adjusted here—that Pentecost occurred upon the first day of the week. It depends upon whether the Lord's last passover was observed at the usual time or a day earlier. In the Acts of the Apostles xx. 7, we read that, "Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached to them, ready to depart on the morrow." Then the same apostle thus instructs the Corinthians: "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, that there be no gathering when I come." (1 Cor., xvi. 2.) There is little doubt that the "coming together in the church" to observe the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. xi 18) was on the same day. And lastly, the Apostle John tells us in Revelation i. 10, that he "was in the Spirit on the Lord's day."

Here, then, as a matter of fact, you have, in apostolic times and under apostolic sanction, a day set apart, and a distinctive character given to it for a distinctive purpose; and this day has been observed by the Church of Christ from the Lord's resurrection till the present time. All true disciples love that day. I trust we love it. I trust many in Toronto and Ontario love it and are prepared

to resist with all their might every encroachment on the Lord's day. Toronto has seemed to go against us in our efforts to preserve a quiet Sabbath: though the true voice of Toronto, we think, was smothered. In any case we make our appeal to the whole people of Ontario. I love Toronto, I speak highly of its moral and religious character as compared with other cities; but does not every one know that the elements hostile to the Sabbath and all of sacredness that it represents, are more strongly represented in our cities than in the country at large? (Hear, hear.) It is not for Toronto, Hamilton, St. Catharines, or any city or locality to determine what the Lord's day should be in Canada. Viewing the day as a public institution it is for the people at large to speak upon that subject. That localities and corporations should have special legislation relaxing the character of the day is entirely wrong. The day is of inestimable value to every class, and has the sanction of divine authority. It is of utmost importance that our province and country should appreciate the issue which is at stake. It is not to laws in support of the Sabbath that we chiefly trust for regulating the sentiments of the community. But legislation has its own place and value. We seek no legislation to compel men to worship, or to perform any sacred duty. God cannot be honored by any service except it springs from the heart. But that the rest and quiet of the Lord's day, as a public institution, should be protected by law is surely necessary and right. Is not this the judgment of the people of Ontario? Will Ontario permit avarice and irreligion to rob it of its Sabbath?

