

SABBATH CONTROVERSY.
THE TRUE ISSUE.

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ONE of the greatest difficulties which we who observe the seventh day have ever found in the Sabbath controversy, is to make our opponents understand what is the real question at issue. So long have their thoughts, feelings and habits, been molded under one particular view of the subject, that it seems almost a miracle if one is found who can disregard all foreign matter, and look at the precise point in debate long enough to come to any certain and intelligent conclusion about it. But it is evident, that if an opponent is suffered to raise false issues, or to be continually striking off into the discussion of some point which does not affect the final question, we may prolong the controversy *ad infinitum*.

Let us then endeavor to state distinctly what is, and what is not, the issue between us and the observers of the first day of the week.

1. The issue is not whether the first day of the week was observed at a very early period by Christians. We admit that it was. We admit that its observance may be traced up to very near the borders of the apostolic age. What more can a generous, conscientious opponent, who scorns any other aid than what the truth will give him, ask? He knows in his own soul that this is the very utmost that can be produced from any of his histories. Let him ransack his old musty volumes all the way backward, till he fancies he can almost talk to the "beloved disciple" face to face, and what more can he find? Verily, nothing.

But when you have got this admission from us, then we have another question to ask. *How—don't* dodge the question—HOW was the day observed by the early Christians? We admit the observance of it; but that is not the issue. The issue respects the *manner* of observing it. You, if you are consistent, will say that the early Christians observed it not only by public worship, but by, *abstaining from labor*. We, on the other hand, deny that they abstained from labor. We admit that they held public worship; but—we repeat it—we *deny that they abstained from labor*. We deny that they regarded it as a *Sabbath*, "resting according to the commandment." Now with the issue thus fairly stated, we put the laboring oar into your hands, and challenge you to prove your position. Bring proof, if you can, that the early Christians regarded the first day of the week as anything else than a *religious festival*; between which and a *Sabbath* there is a very important difference, the latter requiring abstinence from labor, the former merely requiring public worship in honor of the event commemorated, and allowing the remainder of the day to be spent in labor or amusement.

2. When it is once settled, that in a very early period of the church the first day was observed as a festival; when our opponents have fairly jaded themselves to a "weariness of the flesh," in their "much study" of the old fathers, to find proof of it;—though we never called it in question;—then the issue is, whether this festival was *ordained by Christ?*—*whether* the New Testament furnishes *inspired example* of such festival? Our opponents affirm; we deny. We maintain that in every passage of the New Testament, where the first day of the week is mentioned, the context furnishes a sufficient reason why it is mentioned, without the least necessity of supposing it to have been a festival season. No exception can be made to this, unless in regard to 1 Cor. 16:2. The reason why the Apostle in this place specifies the first, rather than any other day of the week, does not so clearly appear from the context; but the peculiar phraseology employed, "let each one of you lay by him," [himself,] is against the idea of any public meeting; and if no public meeting, of course no festival season. As every allusion to the first day of the week is sufficiently explained by other circumstances noticed in the context, the *inferential* proof of its festival character is thereby destroyed. As for *clear, positive* proof of it, such as express precept or command, no person of modesty pretends it. Still less is there any proof of its *Sabbatic* character.

3. Another point wherein we are necessarily at issue with great numbers of Christians, is whether the *institution* of the Sabbath is separable from the particular *day* to be observed. They affirm; we deny. We maintain that God's blessing and sanctifying a particular day is the very thing in which the institution consists. To render this plain, matter yet more plain, we invite close attention to the wording of the fourth commandment; premising, however, that the word Sabbath is not *translated* from a Hebrew word, but is the Hebrew word itself anglicized, just as baptism is an anglicized Greek word. The proper translation of the word is *Rest*. Now let the word Rest be substituted for Sabbath, and how clear it becomes—

"Remember the Rest day to keep it holy." [Surely some particular day is denoted; for it is THE Rest day, not A Rest day.] *Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Rest of the Lord thy God.* [Is it anywhere historically recorded as a fact that God rested on THE seventh day? It is. Gen. 2:2.

On the seventh day God rested from all his work which he had made.' Who does not see that that day on which God rested, was the *last* of the seven which constituted the first week of time? [In it—[in WHAT? why; in the seventh day, the last day of the week; for the pronoun it can have no other antecedent] —*thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor the stranger that is within thy gates.* [Why must no

work be done on that particular day, the seventh or last day of the week? The reason follows.] *For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and RESTED on the seventh day, [as the record in Gen. 2:2 proves. See also Heb. 4: 4.) Wherefore the Lord blessed the Rest day and sanctified it.*"

The conclusion is irresistible, that the Rest day spoken of is the particular day on which God rested from his work, which, as before shown, was the last day of the week. That very day, and no other, God blessed and sanctified. The only reason assigned *why* he sanctified it, is "because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made." Gen. 2:3. The Rest day, then, which we are required to observe, is "the Rest of the Lord thy God:" which does not mean the rest which the Lord thy God has appointed, though it is true that he has appointed it; nor does it mean *a* rest which becomes the Lord's by reason of our appropriating it to him; but "the rest of the Lord thy God" means THE REST WHICH THE LORD THY GOD OBSERVED.

Now from all this we think it must be evident, that whoever observes any other Rest day than the seventh day of the week, does not observe the Rest—Sabbath—"of the Lord thy God." He may, it is true, appropriate it to the Lord his God, and in that sense call it the Lord's; he may ignorantly suppose that Christ in the Gospel has appointed it, and in that sense also call it the Lord's; but it can by no means be called "the Rest of the Lord thy God" in the sense of that expression in the fourth commandment. Hence, irresistible is our conviction, that he does not obey the commandment. O brother Christian, why will you persist in maintaining that your Sunday keeping is an act of obedience to the law of the Sabbath?

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