

Appendix A

THE ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF THE SABBATH

Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD: whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death (Ex. 31:15).

Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you an holy day, a sabbath of rest to the LORD: whosoever doeth work therein shall be put to death (Ex. 35:2).

One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind (Rom. 14:5).

I see no way to avoid interpreting the Old Testament sabbath in terms of the explanatory case-law provided in Exodus 31:15 and Exodus 35:2. If we take these words at face value—and I see no way not to and still remain faithful to the text—then we must come to grips with the rigorous nature of the Old Testament sabbath. There were almost certainly exceptions to this universal prohibition against work, such as milking cows (in effect, giving rest to them) or serving as a law-enforcement officer, but the universal condemnation of working at one's occupation on the sabbath bore the strongest of all sanctions: the death penalty.

I also see no way to avoid interpreting the New Testament Lord's day in terms of Paul's injunction that every man should make up his own mind concerning the equality of, or special nature of, any particular day. More than this: if Paul's words are not to be interpreted as referring to the sabbath (along with other Hebrew days of celebration or fasting), then the death penalty still has to be imposed by the civil government on anyone who fails to observe the New Testament Lord's day as identical to the Old Testament sabbath.

Our explanation of how the sabbath functioned in Israel, and

how it should (or should not) be observed today, must be governed by the words of Exodus 31:15 and Exodus 35:2. In short, if we argue that the death penalty is no longer to be imposed on people who work on the Lord's day (as I do), then we must present a case that the requirements of the Old Testament sabbath have been fulfilled by Christ and are now annulled, and that God has substituted new rules to govern the Lord's day (which is what I attempt to do in this appendix). On the other hand, if someone denies that there has been a fundamental break between the Old Testament sabbath and the New Testament Lord's day, then he must demonstrate exegetically how it can be that the God-ordained death penalty has been abolished, but the moral and even ecclesiastical requirements concerning the observation of the Lord's day have remained essentially the same.

Why did God regard a violation of His sabbath as a capital crime? We have seen the answer in Chapter 4: *violating the sabbath involves a denial of the mandatory nature of rest for mankind*. Such a violation involves the assertion of *autonomy* on the part of man. Such an assertion brings spiritual and eternal death. But why did God wait until after the Exodus to announce that working on the sabbath is a capital crime? Probably because He wanted Israel first to understand what it meant to live under the domination of a self-proclaimed god-man who did not allow God's people to rest. In the recapitulation of the ten commandments in Deuteronomy, God gave them a different reason for honoring the sabbath: they had been in bondage to Egypt, and God had delivered them from this bondage (Deut. 5:15). He brought death to Egypt's firstborn; He would do the same to them if they failed to honor His covenant with them.

A key question then has to be considered: Why in New Testament times has the church never advocated such a harsh penalty? I hope to answer this question at the end of this appendix. The fundamental answer is that there has been a shift in the locus of sovereignty for sabbath enforcement: from civil government and ecclesiastical government to self-government (the individual conscience).

We have come at last to the really difficult issues, the issues of applied theology. We must consider these preliminary issues:

- I. What was the Old Testament Sabbath?
 - A. What were men supposed to do on the O.T. sabbath?
 - B. What were the economic implications of the Mosaic sabbath, especially with respect to the division of labor?

- II. Is the New Testament Lord's day essentially the same as the O.T. sabbath?
- A. Is there N.T. evidence of a shift: sabbath to Lord's day?
 - B. Is the Lord's day legally enforceable by the State today, as it was in the Old Testament?
 - C. What are the economic implications of the Lord's day — again, especially with respect to the division of labor?

Once we have a general idea of the answers to these questions, we can go on to other issues, such as the Old Testament's rescheduling of the Passover, and the possibility of rescheduling the New Testament Lord's day for people employed in unique occupations; the priestly exemptions from sabbath observance and their relationship to rescheduled worship in New Testament times; sabbath enforcement and the creation of a one-world State; proper leisure activities in New Testament times; and several other topics. But first, we need to understand better both the Old Testament sabbath and the New Testament's doctrine of the Lord's day.

I. Old Testament Sabbath

The Bible gives us almost no information about the activities of faithful Hebrews on the sabbath. We know something about what people did not do, but nothing for certain concerning what they did do, except on special sabbaths like the Passover, the day of atonement, and so forth.

The experience with the manna in the wilderness, before the law was given in a completed form to Moses, indicates that there was to be no cooking in Israel on the sabbath. The cakes made from the manna were to be cooked the day before the sabbath (Ex. 16:23). After they arrived in Canaan, this law may have been relaxed. The Bible does not say.

They were not to engage in commercial activity (Neh. 13:15-18). We know that evil men did not appreciate the sabbath, since they wanted to cheat buyers seven days a week (Amos 8:5). The man who gathered sticks on the sabbath was executed at God's explicit command (Num. 15:32-36). There is certainly the possibility that a stick-gatherer might be gathering sticks as a commercial venture. Jeremiah warned the people:

Thus said the LORD; Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem; Neither carry

forth a burden out of your houses on the sabbath day, neither do ye any work, but hallow ye the sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers. But they obeyed not, neither inclined their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear, nor receive instruction. And it shall come to pass, if ye diligently hearken unto me, saith the Lord, to bring in no burden through the gates of this city on the sabbath day, but hallow the sabbath day, to do no work therein; Then shall there enter into the gates of this city kings and princes sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they, and their princes, the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: and this city shall remain for ever. And they shall come from the cities of Judah, and from the places about Jerusalem, and from the land of Benjamin, and from the plain, and from the mountains, and from the south, bringing burnt offerings and sacrifices, and meat offerings, and incense, and bring sacrifices of praise, unto the house of the Lord. But if ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the sabbath day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath day; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched (Jer. 17:21-27).

Kindling a fire on the sabbath was forbidden (Ex. 35:3). If this law was disobeyed, God promised to kindle a fire in the gates of the city, meaning the seat of judgment. The gates, as the place of entry into the city, would be destroyed. The city would fall to a conqueror. God was serious about their not starting fires on the sabbath. His promised judgment — fire in the gates — reflected His rigorous standards in this regard.

A. What Were They Supposed to Do?

But what, specifically, were men required to do on the sabbath? They may have celebrated together at some form of formal worship service. The “holy convocations” described in Leviticus 23:3 may have constituted weekly sabbath worship services, although it is not absolutely clear that these services were conducted outside the home. “Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day is the sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work therein: it is the sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings” (Lev. 23:3). Israel’s various seasonal feasts (holy convocations) are subsequently described in Leviticus 23, and these were unquestionably public feasts. Thus, it can be argued that the local Levitical priests who resided in each community called the weekly convocations together in some sort of public meeting place. But this is not absolutely clear from the text,

and the specific details of these public worship services are nowhere described in the Old Testament.

A. T. Lincoln has fairly described our present state of knowledge concerning the celebration of the Hebrew sabbath in Old Testament times: "The sabbath was not a day of total inactivity but was meant to provide rest and refreshment from the regular work of the six other days. It is true that this rest provided opportunity for devotion to the worship of God, that the Sabbath was called a 'holy convocation' (Lev. 23:2-3), that an additional burnt offering was required on every Sabbath (Num. 28:9, 10), and that since it was done from obedience to God the resting itself could be considered an act of worship, but cultic worship was not a major focus of the Sabbath institution for Israel as this is reflected in the Old Testament."¹ This is my concern: to discern the *major focus* of the Old Testament sabbath. It was *rest*, not worship.

The Hebrews were supposed to delight themselves in God. In the oft-quoted words of Isaiah: "If thou turn 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 thou 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" (Isa. 58:13-14). They were to acknowledge the God-centered nature of creation.

What did it mean, "doing thy pleasure"? We are not told, except in reference to commercial activities and the common household chores of cooking, gathering sticks, and carrying burdens in and out. Idle talk was forbidden. But what kind of talk, specifically, constituted idle talk, "speaking [thine own] words"? We are not told. As far as the written record indicates, neither were they.

The law said nothing about the legality, or even propriety, of the following activities: napping in the afternoon, walking in a garden (park), listening to music, going for a (non-commercial) swim, floating in a small boat, and having sexual relations with one's spouse. In short, there are no guidelines in the law concerning the

1. A. T. Lincoln, "From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical and Theological Perspective," in D. A. Carson (ed.), *From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Academe, 1982), p. 352.

limits of recreation and the beginning of work or "thy pleasure."

Recreation (Re-Creation)

When we think back to the garden of Eden, we are confronted with the obvious possibility of a walk through the garden, God's gift to man. This is a form of recreation. To forbid recreation in post-Edenic times seems ludicrous, yet certain problems arise as soon as we admit the legitimacy of recreation but deny the legitimacy of commercial activity.

Consider the rich man. He owns a large garden, a lake, and a boat. He chooses to spend his day of rest walking through his garden, going for a swim, and sailing. Has he broken God's law? Then consider the poor man. He owns no garden, but he has access to a nearby profit-seeking park. (In this book, I choose to avoid the question of the morality of tax-supported public parks. It is a relevant question, however.) There is a profit-seeking lake or swimming pool nearby. A firm will rent him a boat on Sunday afternoon. If the ban against profit-seeking activities includes recreation activities, then the poor man is limited. He cannot afford to buy the tools of recreation, yet he is also prohibited from renting them.

We cannot escape this problem. We must ask ourselves at least five questions. First, must we ban recreation on the Lord's day for all people, rich and poor, in order to avoid economic discrimination? Second, must we ban the poor or middle-class citizens from the delights of publicly provided recreation? Third, must we ban rentals of recreation services and implements on the day of rest? Fourth, must we see to it that the State confiscates funds through coercion in order to create "free" recreation services for the poor and middle-class citizens? Or fifth, may we look upon sabbatical recreation capital of the rich man as a legitimate covenantal blessing which poorer men do not enjoy, and should not enjoy until God showers similar economic blessings on them?

There is also a sixth possibility. What if the rich invite the poor in to enjoy their wealth? What if the rich donate money to the church, or some other private charity, in order to create recreation facilities? This could be regarded as a weekly version of the "tithe of celebration" (Deut. 14:26-29). Rich men could celebrate the sabbath by inviting all men in to enjoy the fruits of their labor. Charity-supported agencies might offer access to gardens, lakes, and so forth. Labor is donated: lifeguards, physicians, police protection, lost children

booths, and so forth. Instead of profit-seeking labor, we find works of mercy.

In a predominantly rural society, most people could enjoy the sight of their fields. They could go for a stroll in the "garden." In an urban society, people can go for a stroll to view front lawns. They can visit friends for a chat. But then we are back to another bothersome question: What constitutes idle talk? Talk about families? Talk about sports events? Talk about politics? Talk about the stock market? We are not told. *Conscience* must be our guide. But conscience is difficult to put into concrete legislative proposals. In fact, it is because men have not universally defined "idle talk," that they resort to the language of conscience or circumstance.

If we take the Old Testament legislation seriously, we are faced with a conclusion that tends to alienate the guilt-manipulated and socialism-influenced Christian: the rich were allowed to enjoy recreation activities that were legally prohibited to the poor, who were not allowed to lease or rent such recreation implements or opportunities on the sabbath. It might be argued that the law allowed a man to buy a "seven days a week" ticket to recreation opportunities, but if someone had to collect tickets on the sabbath, or in some way monitor his profit-seeking operation on the sabbath, then any judge who understood basic economics would have shut down the operation as a sham, an attempt to escape the clear-cut prohibition on commercial activities on the sabbath. It paid to be rich on the sabbath. (Of course, it normally pays to be rich on the other six days of the week, too.)

Carrying burdens in and out of doors was illegal (Jer. 17:22). Profit-seeking work was illegal. But leisure is a consumer good. It must be paid for by forfeited income — income not earned during the leisure period. Leisure could be "stored up" in effect. It was legitimate to enjoy leisure on the sabbath, but only that kind which could be "stored up" in the form of capital goods: private gardens, private lakes, and so forth.

"Works of Mercy" in Rural Society

Israel was a rural society. Certain daily chores are works of necessity on a farm, such as milking and caring for the animals. But what was done with the milk? Was it thrown away? Was it saved only for other animals? Was it given to the poor? If it was sold at a profit, then milking constituted profit-seeking activity, i.e., engaging

in trade. Such sabbath violations would have been difficult to detect.

What about the use of such sabbath-produced milk by the family? This is an important question. If personal family use of the economic output of sabbatical "acts of mercy" (to the cows) is legitimate, then the definition of what constitutes profit-seeking must be narrowed. Engaging in commercial trade would be prohibited, but engaging in intra-household trade would not; one family member milks the cow, another cooks the food, another washes the dishes, and so forth. From the point of view of human action—exchanging one set of conditions for another set—the intra-family exchange seems to be equally profit-seeking, but perhaps not from the point of view of Old Testament sabbath legislation. The milk could be sold the next day. Wouldn't this constitute a violation of the sabbath? It certainly appears that way. But to consume the milk directly thereby increases the family's consumption as surely as the income gained from the sale of the milk would increase it. What is the economic difference, in terms of family income? More to the point, what is the biblical difference, in terms of the specific application of the law of the sabbath?

The strict sabbatarian would have to argue that the milk should be given away. Such a person is a defender of what Lewis Bulkeley has called "the marathon sabbath." But is it the sabbath which God required of His Old Testament saints, let alone His New Testament saints? Unquestionably, the Old Testament did not prohibit output of effort as such; cows deserved to be milked, as an act of mercy, an act of *giving rest* (Ex. 23:12). But what about *income* which was the by-product (i.e., unintended product) of such merciful labor? Should it have been given to the poor, or to household animals, but kept away from human family members? Or is giving food to one's own family itself an act of mercy?

If giving milk to one's own family or domestic animals is an act of mercy, then it is an act of mercy which has unintended economic consequences, namely, an increase of consumption which is not paid for by increased output (more milking) or more thrift (reduced consumption) during the days preceding the sabbath. Feeding one's family or animals with milk produced by sabbath milking would then be understood as being fundamentally different from gathering sticks for a fire on the sabbath, for sticks had to be gathered during the workweek and stored up for use on the sabbath. But wouldn't this "anti-stick-gathering" requirement have applied equally to milk-

ing, even though milk in this instance was a by-product of acts of mercy? A strict sabbatarian would clearly have to insist that milk which is produced as a by-product of an act of mercy be given to the poor, or spilled on the ground, in order to make certain that such merciful work remained exclusively merciful and not an excuse for profit-seeking (cost-reducing) sabbath violations.

Then there is the question of full pay for "normal" works of mercy or necessity performed by professionals, including people who are paid by the civil government: police, firemen, military forces, etc. Should those who perform such services on the sabbath be paid for that day's work? Christ defended the right of a man to pull a beast of burden out of a ditch, but does this imply that individuals can legitimately operate "beast-retrieval" companies at a profit on the sabbath? Thomas Gouge, a contemporary of Owen and Baxter in seventeenth-century England, praised as shining examples several Christian physicians who refused payment for Sunday labor.² More than this: Should the civil government make it illegal for people to receive payment for emergency services? And if it does, won't this reduce the number of emergency services offered, and thereby render it more dangerous to suffer an emergency on Sundays? These are questions that strict sabbatarians must eventually deal with.

B. The Division of Labor in Rural Israel

Modern mass production, with its capital-intensive mechanization, is characterized by a high division of labor. Until the late-nineteenth century, agricultural societies were characterized by a comparatively low division of labor. In such societies, production is initially for the family unit. Surplus goods can be traded or sold, but there is not much surplus. Men work primarily for home consumption.

The workweek is scheduled in terms of the needs of the family. Wives can bake extra loaves on the day before the sabbath without disrupting normal production and distribution patterns. Husbands can cut extra wood for the fire on any day of the week. In ancient Israel, people structured their workweek's rhythm in terms of the sabbath. This did not involve a major interruption of supplies of needed goods and services. Where men are not continually serving each other through production for a market, but where they serve

2. On Gouge, see Richard Schlatter, *The Social Ideas of Religious Leaders, 1660-1688* (London: Oxford University Press, 1940), pp. 129, 137.

themselves and their families directly through labor, it is far easier to restructure the workweek to honor special feast days or sabbaths. A rural family can schedule its activities to include a day of rest.

In a rural society, it is also far easier to identify commercial activities, since there are fewer of them than in a modern, mass-production society. It is therefore easier to identify sabbath violations. A face-to-face society which is dominated by family and tribal ties offers men the opportunity to observe the daily affairs of their neighbors. While families might have hidden certain kinds of indoor commercial labor, it would have been difficult in ancient Israel to conceal agricultural labor in the fields.

Another important aspect of rural societies is *the relative absence of 24-hour-a-day capital equipment*, whether public or private. Power generation, telecommunications, repair services, hospitals, and similar services have only been commonplace to rural areas in the twentieth century, and then only in industrial societies, or in urban areas of industrializing societies. The continuing dependence of urban society on such services stands in stark contrast to the traditional rural community, which has a lower division of labor, and which is far more self-sufficient. The interruption of "vital services" in a modern city could bring paralysis and breakdown. In a traditional rural community, such an interruption could not take place, since such "vital services" are not normally available. In other words, services that are vital to a modern urban community are not vital in a traditional rural society. Only in modern rural societies that are fully integrated into urban society through the market and shared public utilities will such services be regarded as vital. The economic rhythm of a traditional rural society is far different from a modern industrial society. Traditional rural societies are not characterized by an extensive, even life-sustaining, division of labor.

The economy of Israel was not highly integrated. In the cities, civil rulers were influenced heavily by the Levites. Profit-seeking activities on the sabbath would have been difficult in cities whose civil rulers were highly influenced by sabbath law-enforcing priests. The cities of ancient Israel did not become dependent on a market order characterized by a high division of labor. I am arguing that God's sabbath requirements necessarily prohibited the creation of such an interdependent society. It is my contention that the annulment of the Old Testament sabbath laws by Jesus Christ was a necessary (though not sufficient) precursor to modern civilization.

If strict sabbatarians believe that I am incorrect in this conclusion, then they have an obligation to show how the authorities today would be able to differentiate between what constitutes an illegitimate sabbath violation and one which is acceptable. It should be clear that the enforcement of strict sabbath legislation in a traditional agricultural society will produce *economic effects* far different from those produced by such enforcement in a modern industrial economy. Similarly, the economic effects of sabbath *violations* are different in the two types of society. Since the *effects* are different, shouldn't the *penalty* be different? But the Old Testament did not offer any alternative penalties. It required execution of all sabbath violators—no “ifs, ands, or buts.”

Did the Mosaic law implicitly allow the authorities to redefine a sabbath violation in terms of regional settings? Did an act of sabbatical defiance in a rural society become acceptable behavior in an urban setting because of its differing economic effects? Is an act which seems to be visibly (physiologically) the same but which produces different consequences in different environments really the same act? Or is it different? And if the act *is* different, should it be redefined, even though physiologically it is the same act?

If the Mosaic law did implicitly allow the authorities to redefine sabbath violations into non-violations according to differing economic effects, then what are the distinguishing criteria that officials, whether ecclesiastical or civil, should adopt in order to determine which acts are legitimate, under which circumstances, and where? On the other hand, if the Mosaic law never did permit such redefinitions of a sabbath violation—and I do not believe that it did—then how could the Old Testament economy (meaning the Old Testament system as well as the Old Testament economic order) ever have progressed into the modern industrial West? (For more detailed arguments along these lines, see below: “Mass Production and Worldwide Trade.”)

II. New Testament Lord's Day

The various New Testament accounts of Christ's activities on the Hebrew sabbath provide us with evidence concerning the true nature of the Old Testament sabbath. Works of healing were basic to that sabbath, not as exceptional acts, but as acts that were integral to sabbath observance. Christ healed the withered hand of one man on the sabbath (Matt. 12:10-13). He also healed the crippled man who

had been waiting for healing near the pool of Bethesda. Again, this was on the sabbath (John 5:1-17). He replied to those Jews who were critical of His action: "My father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17). They were to *give* rest. His general principle was this: "The son of man is Lord even of the sabbath" (Matt. 12:8). Again, "It is lawful to do well on the sabbath days" (Matt. 12:12b). (The King James English conveys the wrong message. The Greek is better translated to "do good," not "do well."³ Salesmen do well; servants do good.)

What is meant by Christ's use of the word "work" in John 5:17? Work as a charitable service is in view, not work in one's profit-seeking vocation. The Old Testament sabbath was a break from the ordinary routine of profit-seeking labor, meaning one's calling. *Those activities associated with a man's income-producing occupation were to be avoided.*

Blameless Profanation

Nevertheless, there were exceptions to this rule. The obvious Old Testament exception was the routine labor of a priest. Christ replied to His critics: "Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless" (Matt. 12:5). We are not told specifically which activities of the priests profaned the sabbath. They had to sacrifice two yearling lambs every sabbath, along with meal and drink offerings. Also, they had to maintain continual burnt offerings (Num. 28:9-10). Jesus said that they actually profaned the sabbath. This is a strong word to use. It could also be translated "desecrate."⁴ They violated the requirements of the sabbath in the temple itself. Nevertheless, they were held blameless before God. The importance of their labor in the sight of God made them blameless. They were following a *higher command*. They were offering the blood sacrifices that were required by God to cover the sins of His people.

The context of Jesus' remarks on the profaning of the sabbath is important. He and His disciples had been criticized for having walked through cornfields on the sabbath, plucking ears to eat. This was not theft, according to Old Testament law; travellers had legal access to

3. Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich (2nd ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 401: "*kalose*, [3]."

4. *Ibid.*, p. 138: "*bebeilao*."

a handful of the fruit of the ground (Deut. 23:23-25). Jesus was not criticized for having taken the corn. He was criticized for having taken the corn *on the sabbath*.

What was Christ's answer? He pointed to David's taking of the showbread from the temple on the sabbath (Matt. 12:3-4). Here was a far more culpable act, for it was not lawful for David or his followers to eat the showbread, since it was reserved for the priests (v. 4). Yet it was necessary that they be fed. They were godly men involved in an important work. The priest himself had suggested that David take the hallowed bread (I Sam. 21:21-24). Yet God commanded that this showbread be set before Him at all times (Ex. 25:30; Num. 4:7). *But the needs of men were more important in this instance*, a fact recognized by the priest. On the one hand, the priest had to offer sacrifices. On the other hand, David had to flee from the wrath of Saul. Both requirements were cases of necessity. But the priest told David to eat the showbread. How, then, could the priests of Jesus' day legitimately criticize Him?

Jesus' healing of the man with the withered hand was a work of mercy. Traditional Christian sabbatarianism has always made exceptions of these two works, *necessity* and *mercy*. But necessity and mercy impose even greater pressures on men's actions than merely offering exceptions to the sabbath requirement against labor. Necessity and mercy require *positive action*. This is acknowledged by the Westminster Confession of Faith (1646), a pro-sabbatarian document, which forbids men to think "about their worldly employments and recreations," and *requires* them to take up "the whole time, in the public and private exercises of His worship, and in the duties of necessity and mercy."⁵

The priests of the Old Testament profaned the sabbath, yet they were blameless. The office of priest, coupled with a mandatory assignment from God, permitted the profaning of the sabbath. Indeed, it *requires* it. Yet David was not a priest, nor were his men. This points to the truth of Christ's words, that the "Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day" (Matt. 12:8). In His incarnation, as the son of man, Christ ruled the sabbath. The account in Mark is even clearer: "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath" (2:27-28). When human life and health are at stake, the sabbath may be profaned without blame. It *must* be profaned. When an

5. Westminster Confession of Faith, XXI: VIII.

assignment by God to a priest is in question, the sabbath may be profaned without blame. Again, it *must* be profaned. But then we face some very difficult questions: How can we tell when human health and life are at stake? Who is the true priest? What is a God-given assignment?

A. Transformation: The Lord's Day

In the New Testament, the first day of the week is called the Lord's day (Rev. 1:10), but it is *never* called the sabbath. Unquestionably, there was a shift from the seventh day of the week to the first. The evidence also points to a shift from sundown-to-sundown celebration to a sunrise-to-sunrise celebration. These are very important changes. They involve a radical break with the Hebrew sabbath. F. N. Lee, in his defense of the New Testament sabbath, argues explicitly that *the entire system of Mosaic sabbaths and holy days was abolished by Christ*. He cites Paul's epistle to the Colossians: "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath [days]" (2:16). (The last word, "days," was added by the King James translators; it should read simply, "sabbaths.") Lee concludes:

Now these ceremonial sabbaths, listed in Leviticus 23 together with the Israelite Sinaitic weekly sabbath, are all called "feasts" of holy convocation or "holy days"; and all involve the keeping of a "sabbath" day or a "day of holy convocation" on which "no servile work is to be done," or a "day of solemn rest." They were all a shadow of the things to come, namely the benefits of the New Testament in Christ; and they were all blotted out and nailed to His cross. . . . So Paul means exactly what he says. It is useless to argue (as S.D. Adventists do) that St. Paul here means the *ceremonial* sabbaths by his words "or the sabbath (days)," for St. Paul has just a few words beforehand (in the very same verse) dealt with such ceremonial sabbaths under the blanket term "*holy day*"—the same term (*heortai*) used in the Septuagint of Lev. 23 to refer to *all* the (Sinaitic) sabbaths—both the ceremonial sabbaths *and* the "weekly" sabbath of Israel, Lev. 23:2-3. . . . If it is argued that Paul means (only) the *ceremonial* sabbaths in Col. 2:16 where he refers to "the sabbath day(s)," then *which* days is he referring to under the blanket term "holy days" just mentioned previously in the very same verse? The two can hardly be synonymous, for Paul would then be repeating himself, saying in effect: "Let no man therefore judge you . . . in respect of a ceremonial sabbath or a new moon or a ceremonial sabbath," when the latter phrase would simply be idle repetition.⁶

6. F. N. Lee, *The Covenantal Sabbath* (London: Lord's Day Observance Society, 1972), pp. 28-29.

Lee argues that the day of rest, or sabbath, is part of God's moral law, and therefore it is still in effect. But the Old Testament sabbath is gone. In other words, *the theological justification for switching to the first day of the week is that the older sabbath is absolutely abolished, and a new one is morally binding*. There was a total break at Calvary with the Mosaic law's sabbath.

There seems to be no exegetical way to escape Lee's treatment of Colossians 2:16. Paul was not speaking of ceremonial sabbaths, but the *Mosaic* sabbath. It is gone forever. The fact that the church celebrates a new day should testify to this theological fact. But then a crucial question has to be answered: How much of the *Mosaic legislation* has been abolished along with the day of the week and the hours of the day? A clean break has been established with respect to the day of the week. On what basis, then, can the church recommend that the Old Testament sabbath law be enforced by the civil government? The testimony of almost 2,000 years of church history provides at least a partial answer: the church has *not* committed itself to a full-scale revival of the Mosaic sabbath legislation.

The principle of interpretation which is supposed to govern Christian orthodoxy is that Christ came to establish, confirm, and declare the Old Testament law (Matt. 5:17-18).⁷ Only if we find an explicit abandonment of an Old Testament law in the New Testament, because of the historic fulfillment of the Old Testament shadow, can we legitimately abandon a detail of the Mosaic law.

In the case of the Mosaic sabbath, Paul provides us with full justification for just this sort of abandonment. We no longer enforce the Mosaic provisions, because the Mosaic sabbath ended at Calvary. We have a new day of rest, and we dare not arbitrarily select some of the Old Testament sabbath definitions, restraints, and legal sanctions *without taking them all*. But we have no exegetical grounds for taking them all, since the very change in the day of celebration, not to mention Paul's explicit teaching regarding the locus of responsibility for enforcement (the conscience), testifies to the break with the past.

The biblical account of what constitutes a week unquestionably establishes as definitive six days of work and a day of rest or feasting. God's originally creative week was a six-one pattern, while Adam's

7. Greg L. Bahnsen, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics* (2nd ed.; Nutley, New Jersey: Craig Press, 1984), ch. 2.

subordinately re-creative week was supposed to be a one-six pattern, with God's pronouncement of judgment against Satan coming at the end of the seventh day, or possibly at the beginning of the next day (evening). Adam's rebellion led to a curse: God's imposition on man of a God-imitating six-one pattern, with rest to come only at the end of man's week.

Jesus Christ, by redeeming His people, annulled the six-one pattern of the cursed week. He did not restore the original (pre-Fall) pattern of one-six, since He changed the day on which the Lord's day is celebrated to the day after the Hebrew sabbath — what Christian commentators for at least 1,800 years have called the eighth day. Therefore, He established a *one-six-one* pattern — rest, work, and judgment. This judgment comes on the day of the Lord, the archetypal Lord's day. This is why the Lord's day is celebrated in New Testament times on the day following the Hebrews' seventh-day sabbath: it points to the *final judgment* and the *inauguration of a new week*, the full manifestation of the New Heaven and the New Earth. The first day of redeemed man's week is now the eighth day after the initiation of God's work, not the seventh day after. It represents a *re-creation*, a new week which re-establishes a one-six pattern, but which also implies the one-six-one pattern as a herald of the total regeneration and re-creation of all things. The shift to the eighth day testifies to Christ's new creation.

Conscience: The New Locus of Enforcement

Paul was concerned with the souls and consciences of his readers. The Colossians passage mentions meat, drink, holy days, and sabbaths. He was doing his best to convince his readers that there had been a definitive break from Old Testament law with respect to these four features of Hebrew life. He knew that Judaizers were criticizing the Christian Hebrews for their abandonment of these external tests of faith, and he did not want his readers to feel guilty. No one could legitimately judge them with respect to these four issues. No one could turn to the Mosaic law and confront them with the Mosaic rules, instructions, and regulations regarding meat, drink, holy days, and sabbaths. This did not mean that the old rules were evil. It meant that the Judaizers had no right to criticize Christians for no longer adhering to the old forms. New applications of the Old Testament's general principles in these four areas are now binding in New Testament times.

Paul repeated this same teaching to the church at Rome. In Romans 14, Paul covers much the same ground. Those who are weak in the faith are not to be distressed by rigid theological criticism. Paul observes that there are debates within the churches concerning the proper foods and the proper holy days. Judgment of each other should not go on in these areas of disputation. Men must *decide for themselves* which foods to eat or which days to celebrate.

For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks. For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living. But why dost thou judge thy brother? Or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way (Rom. 14:2-13).

The Lord's day, the first day of the week, has been set apart by Christ for His church as a day of worship, fellowship, and communion. This, above all, is the church's testimony to the day of rest. Members are required to attend a worship service with their fellow believers. "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is . . ." (Heb. 10:24-25a). We must not forsake other members. We are to help each other.

Some members may view all days the same. So be it. Good men have taken this position historically. Zwingli was one of them.⁸ But Zwingli attended church on Sunday, since he would not forsake the

8. Lee, *Covenantal Sabbath*, p. x.

brethren. The pattern of one day in seven for rest from one's normal labors is formalized in the worship services themselves. We need not badger each other about the specifics of Old Testament law regarding the Lord's day, Paul said, because no one should judge another on this matter. Participation in the required church service or fellowship, which has been on the first day of the week since the day of Christ's resurrection, is sufficient testimony.

Worship: A New Testament Emphasis

Perhaps strict sabbatarians are unwilling to take Paul's words at face value. Yet the ironic aspect of strict sabbatarianism is this: without the definitive break with the Mosaic sabbath, the sabbatarian's emphasis on Sunday *worship* reduces his case's biblical support. How can the sabbatarian consistently argue for full continuity of the Lord's day with the Old Testament sabbath, when the Old Testament sabbath was primarily a day of *rest* rather than a day of *worship*? The New Testament Lord's day focuses on the worship requirements, not the rest requirements.

The Old Testament sabbath was *primarily* a day of rest, of cessation from profit-seeking labor. Sabbath worship, if it is mentioned at all, is only mentioned indirectly (Lev. 23:3). There were no prohibitions against recreation. There were only prohibitions against labor. The modern sabbatarian's emphasis on the Lord's day primarily as a day of worship must be drawn from a handful of references in the New Testament that show that the church met on resurrection day to worship. It is possible to make a case against doing "thy pleasure" on the *sabbath* by appealing to the Old Testament, but it is not possible to make a case for the *Lord's day* as a day primarily devoted to *worship* by appealing to the Old Testament.

To define the sabbath primarily in terms of corporate worship, rather than primarily as a day on which no commercial trade is permitted, raises some exceedingly difficult questions for strict sabbatarians. First, if honoring the first day of the week requires that sabbath violations be prohibited by civil law, then the law is being enforced on all people in a particular society. If this is what the New Testament requires, then any sabbath-enforcing society is thereby admitted to be *covenanted under God*. This is an inescapable relationship: State-enforced sabbath laws and the existence of a covenant. (There are many defenders of various sabbath laws who categorically deny that any New Testament society is ever covenanted under God

as Israel was. This is especially true in the American South, where "blue laws" that prohibit certain businesses from operating on Sunday, or that prohibit certain products from being sold in supermarkets on Sunday, are voted into law time after time by covenant-denying Southern Baptists, Methodists, and Church of Christ members. I cannot explain this; I only report it.)

Second, there is the problem of the Lord's day as primarily a day of worship. If the Old Testament's sabbath-enforcing civil law is still binding in New Testament times, and if the Lord's day is understood as predominantly a day of worship (as the Westminster Confession and most pastors assert), then *the civil magistrate ought to enforce compulsory worship on all members of a (covenanted) society upon threat of death.*

The New England Puritans went at least part of the way down this path. They legislated compulsory worship, and they banished sabbath violators from Massachusetts and Connecticut in the early years. Even this half-hearted attempt to imitate the Old Testament only lasted a few years. There were more and more church absentees, until by the middle of the seventeenth century, the churches of New England could not have held the whole population, had everyone decided to visit on some Sunday morning.⁹ Eventually, "blue laws" replaced the threat of banishment for failure to attend church in New England.

Modern sabbatarians have refused to become consistent. They do not pressure the civil government to establish a death penalty for Lord's day desecrations, and they certainly avoid the obvious conclusion concerning the Lord's day as a day of worship, namely, compulsory church attendance, enforced by the civil government.

The New Testament Church's Celebration

What Paul was asserting should be clear to anyone who reads Romans 14. Not only do those outside the church have varying opinions concerning a day of rest, or special holidays; even those inside the church have varying opinions. We see in the twentieth century

9. Carl Bridenbaugh writes: "A consideration of the number and seating capacities of village meeting houses and churches demonstrates the sheer physical impossibility of crowding the entire village populations into their houses of worship. At no time after 1650 does it seem possible for the churches of Boston to have contained anywhere near a majority of the inhabitants; in 1690 little more than a quarter of them could have attended church simultaneously had they been so disposed." Bridenbaugh, *Cities in the Wilderness: The First Century of Urban Life in America, 1625-1725* (New York: Capricorn, [1938] 1964), p. 106.

that the same situation still exists. The debates went on in the Reformation, too. The Old Testament sabbath laws were *absolute in the sanction* involved—the death penalty—and they were *negative in effect*. They told men what not to do, one day in seven. The New Testament's emphasis shifted on the day of resurrection. The first day of the week is now a day of communion between God and His church. It involves a positive, loving corporate celebration. It involves preaching (Acts 20:7-12), singing (Matt. 26:30; Col. 3:16), praying (I Cor. 14:15), and a communion feast (I Cor. 11).

The testimony of the church is that there is indeed a very special day of celebration, of feasting and sharing the blessings of salvation. If the early church in Israel had wanted rest more than the experience of true communion, it would have met for communion on the Hebrew sabbath, since the Roman authorities acknowledged the right of the priests to require a day of rest. But the early church broke with rest on the first day of the week in order to celebrate communion on the evening of that first day. They rested on the Hebrew sabbath, worked on the Lord's day, and gathered together in the evening. They rested—assuming they did rest, which seems reasonable—on a day different from the day of worship, at least in Israel. In gentile cities in the Empire, they probably could not rest even one day in seven. But they celebrated on Sunday evening after work.¹⁰

The historical circumstances of the early church necessitated compromises with the sabbath principle. Had there been no break from the Old Testament requirement of a full day of rest one day in seven, the church would have been bottled up in Israel, since the Roman Empire did not honor the rest principle. Had the legal obligation of resting on the sabbath been the binding obligation, then the early church, dwelling in Israel, would have had to take two days off: the Hebrews' day (legally binding) and the Lord's day (religiously binding). But this would have violated the more important pattern of one day of rest and six days of labor.¹¹ The church, in short, was forced to break with the Hebrew sabbath. God, in His grace, abolished the Hebrew sabbath on the day of resurrection, so

10. "It is certain that the eucharist was at first an evening meal. The name (*deipnon*) implies this." Wilfrid Stott, in Roger T. Beckwith and Wilfrid Stott, *The Christian Sunday: A Biblical and Historical Study* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1980), p. 89.

11. I am defining "merciful labor" as that activity which *gives rest* to others, both animals and humans. I argue in this appendix that it is morally and legally valid to *sell* merciful labor on the Lord's day.

that members could rest on the seventh day (Saturday) and celebrate on the evening of the first day, which was a working day in Israel. They could do this in good conscience precisely because they knew that God honored their faith. Like the priests who sacrificed on the sabbath, profaning it blamelessly, the early Christians worked on the Lord's day, profaning it, but it was not held against them.

This is not to say that the ideal situation is not the Lord's day as a day of rest *and* worship, universally recognized, universally respected, except in cases of emergency or merciful labor. But Paul was careful to warn the church at Rome that it should not burden its new members with rigorous regulations concerning a special day of the week. Yes, they were to commune together. But whatever they did on the Lord's day—and in Rome, most of them must have worked—they were to do it in faith. The sabbath ideal is to grow out of respect for the principle of resurrection, the basis of man's release from sin and eternal death. The institutional church sets the pattern with its special day of worship, which can be made binding on members (Heb. 10:25). But it cannot legitimately force its members to honor the one-six pattern of rest. That pattern is built into Christ's kingdom, but Paul makes it clear that the *conscience* is to guide men to this conclusion, not compulsion. In fact, he was writing against one man's criticizing another—moral compulsion. If moral compulsion is forbidden, then how much more ecclesiastical compulsion? And how much more than this, compulsion by the civil government?

The Early Church Fathers on Rest vs. Worship

This distinction between Sabbath rest and Lord's day worship was unquestionably made by the early church fathers. Until the fourth century, church fathers generally condemned the "idleness" of the Jewish sabbath, and commanded church members to devote Sunday to worship and acts of mercy. Bauckham comments: "For Tertullian, the meaning of the Sabbath commandment for Christians was 'that we still more ought to observe a sabbath from all servile work always, and not only every seventh day, but through all time.'¹² It is entirely clear that for all these writers the literal commandment to rest one day in seven was a temporary ordinance for Israel alone. The Christian fulfills the commandment by devoting all his time to God. The rationale for this interpretation depended, of

12. Tertullian, *An Answer to the Jews*, ch. IV.

course, on a wholly 'religious' understanding of the commandment; no writer of the period betrays any thought of its being a provision for needed physical rest. The Jewish form of observance was therefore 'idleness.' The commandment was really about devotion to God. . . . This was the basic principle from which the Fathers argued that literal Sabbath observance was not required of Christians."¹³ In short, "It must be stressed that, outside Jewish Christianity, all second-century references to the Sabbath commandment either endorse the metaphorical interpretation or reject the literal interpretation as Judaistic or do both."¹⁴ The church fathers were so adamant about this distinction that they condemned mere abstinence from normal work as idle. "The Fathers could see no value in inactivity and hardly ever recognized in the Sabbath commandment provision for necessary physical relaxation."¹⁵ He cites the Syriac *Didascalia* (c. 250?): "Daily and hourly, whenever you are not in church, devote yourselves to your work."¹⁶

In the fourth century, Christians often began to imitate Jewish customs. Again, citing Bauckham: "This Judaizing tendency was a grass roots tendency that the authorities of the church opposed. The Council of Laodicea (A.D. 380), for example, legislated against a series of Judaizing practices including resting on the Sabbath (canon 29). It seems that while the popular tendency was to imitate the Jewish practice, the authorities often responded by insisting on a specifically Christian kind of Sabbath observance sharply distinguished from the Jewish kind. The Sabbath was not to be observed in 'idleness,' imitating the Jews, but as a day of Christian worship when the *New Testament* Scriptures were read and as a commemoration of God's creation of the world *through Christ*."¹⁷ It was Constantine, in 321, who first legislated Sunday rest. He specified Sunday as "the most honourable day of the Sun." He may have done so to promote sun worship, as well as to placate Christians.¹⁸ As soon as the State got involved in sabbath legislation, there was theological confusion and compromise.

13. Bauckham, "Sabbath and Sunday in the Post-Apostolic Church," in Carson (ed.), *From Sabbath to Lord's Day*, pp. 266-67.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 269.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 282.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 286.

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 261-62.

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 280-81.

B. Civil Government

What is the proper "sabbatarian" role today of the civil government? One very distinct possibility is this: the civil government should declare null and void any labor contract that requires a person to work seven days a week as a condition of employment. This is a contract against conscience, comparable to requiring a woman to commit illicit sexual acts as a condition of employment. Businesses would be compelled to honor the desires of employees to take one day off per week—and that day would probably be the first day of the week. The compulsion here is essentially *negative*: the State may prohibit economic coercion against people's consciences, when their consciences are based on an explicit statement of the word of God.¹⁹ The Bible is quite explicit about resting one day in seven. Nevertheless, Paul acknowledges that some men may not see this, and that apart from required church attendance, they should not be molested or made to feel guilty.

The Bible teaches us about Christian maturity. The Old Testament's death penalty for sabbath violators was stark and entirely negative. Men were not to be governed primarily by conscience in questions regarding the sabbath. They were to be governed by fear. They were told what could *not* be done. They were treated as children. But with the coming of Christ, and the victory He sustained at Calvary, His people have been given *positive requirements concerning worship* on His day. They are to meet corporately to celebrate and worship (as they may have been required to do in the Old Testament: Lev. 23:3). Overnight, the disciples were given a new vision. Overnight, the compulsion of the civil government regarding the Lord's day ended. Overnight, the sabbath became primarily a positive requirement of corporate worship, without the civil penalty of execution for working on the sabbath. Overnight, the question of a day of rest on the Lord's day became a matter of conscience. It had to; the Jewish leaders were not about to make the Christian equivalent of the sabbath compulsory as a day of rest.

As the theological insight of men improves over time, they will come to recognize the implications of God's creation week (six-one)

19. In the summer of 1985, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned state legislation that made it illegal for employers to compel individuals to work on Sunday as a condition of employment. Thus, the Supreme Court has made illegal the one type of Lord's day legislation that the New Testament implicitly sanctions.

and covenant man's re-creative week (one-six). They will recognize the necessity of a day of rest—a moral, physical, and economic necessity. When they do, they will make economic decisions and social decisions that will *indirectly* pressure recalcitrants into honoring the Lord's day. For instance, if Christians refuse to go out to shop on Sunday, there will be no economic incentive to keep stores open on Sunday, except to sell to non-Christians. If most people in a society are eventually converted, or at least honor the Lord's day externally, then there will be almost no economic incentive to remain open on Sunday. But a person's *conscience* is the guide in New Testament times, not civil compulsion.

Because the day of the Lord is now a day of communion, they will try to see to it that they get time off for Sunday worship whenever possible. They will not work as professional football players. They will not pay money to go to professional football games. They will not watch professional football games on television, nor will they buy the products advertised during Sunday sports events—at least, not *because* they are advertised during Sunday sports events. Christians will increasingly honor that day as a day of *worship for almost all*, and therefore of a day of *cessation of income-producing labor for almost all*. The new Christian sabbath—cessation from normal work—is a *by-product* of worship on the Lord's day. Christians will do their best to schedule their jobs to give themselves a day of rest. And as more and more people do this, more and more occupations will find it economically profitable to honor the desires of their maturing Christian employees. Sunday will become most people's day of rest, including professional athletes. Only those occupations that serve the needs of resting people—public utilities, emergency services, and (in my view) restaurants (where wives get a break from the normal work-week)—will still be profitable on Sunday.

The State in New Testament times is to leave men free to act positively; its role is to suppress lawless acts of violence and fraud. It is not to make men positively good; it is to *restrain them* from committing *evil, public acts*. When the God-revealed emphasis of the sabbath changed from a day of no work to a day on which God mandates corporate worship, the State's role also changed.²⁰ Conscience now is to

20. I am not arguing here that there was unquestionably no public, corporate aspect of sabbath-worship in the Old Testament, but only that whatever the nature of this corporate worship may have been, the specifics of such worship services did not receive any attention in the Old Testament. There is no mention of tithes being

lead men in the decision to rest on the first day of the week or another day, or not rest at all. The State is not to force men to decide. The State is not to be trusted to tell men to take positive steps toward righteousness, such as worship. If God tells men to do something positive (such as worship Him publicly on a particular day and in specific ways), the State must remove itself from the arena of human decision. This is not because societies are not covenanted by God, but because they *are*.

Admitted Changes

The church has admitted the following changes in the day of rest: 1) the seventh day to first (eighth) day; 2) the abandonment of sundown-to-sundown timing; and 3) the abolition of the death penalty imposed by the civil government. A fourth change may be involved in the addition of required church attendance (communion and worship) to what was previously primarily a day of rest. (This is not a major change *if* Leviticus 23:3 did involve weekly public worship.) Unquestionably, the church has modified its concept of what constitutes legitimate labor, which we will consider in greater detail in Section C.

These alterations are of monumental importance. They represent a sharp break with the Mosaic law. To maintain that such modifications are theologically valid, the church needs New Testament evidence of an *announced break*. It needs New Testament revelation that specifies that such a discontinuous transformation has been announced by God through His prophets. If the church is unwilling to take seriously the radical break announced by Paul in Colossians and Romans—the abolition of the Mosaic sabbath—then it has only a few scattered references to first-day worship to defend its position. Yet the church has hesitated to use these Pauline teachings to justify the break, since they are so radical in nature. Protestant churches that have clung to at least a watered-down version of the Puritan sabbath—itself a watered-down version of the Mosaic sabbath, since the Puritans did not execute Lord's day violators—have used the

collected on sabbath-day meetings, or psalms being sung, or a communion meal being shared, or lectures from a Levite. Such events may have taken place, but there is no direct evidence. In the New Testament, such events are mentioned as taking place in corporate worship on the Lord's day. Thus, I *am* arguing that there is a change of *emphasis* in the New Testament, and the specifics of biblical revelation testify to this change.

Old Testament passages as guides for modern Lord's day-keeping. They have not wanted to admit that such a sharp break with the Mosaic sabbath has been announced, since the New Testament offers no specific guidelines for rest on the Lord's day. Furthermore, the New Testament spells out the requirement of weekly corporate worship, and it mentions a communion meal, celebrated in the evening.

Churches have refused to admit that the kind of rest we choose for the Lord's day is a matter of *conscience discipline* rather than church discipline. They have not been content to point to the sabbath of Genesis 2:2-3 as a creation sabbath, the one-six pattern for man's week. They have selectively and arbitrarily quoted *some* aspects of the Mosaic sabbath—but always without the death penalty—as if there were exegetical justification for part of the Mosaic law to be brought into the New Testament era, but not the required Mosaic sanction against sabbath desecration. They often call for some kind of sanctions by the civil government—sanctions never mentioned or contemplated in the Mosaic law—but not the death penalty, which is the sanction specifically required by the Mosaic law. To say that the interpretational principles of modern sabbatarian exegetes are muddled is putting it mildly. It is another case of *smorgasbord religion*: taking this or that aspect of biblical revelation, while leaving others alone, all according to personal taste, familiarity, “reasonableness,” and church tradition.

This is not to say that all Mosaic guidelines to what we should not be doing on the day of rest are permanently abolished. The guidelines are there: avoidance of household chores, no profit-seeking commercial ventures, and no idle talk. It is not the guidelines that have been abolished; it is the *locus of the sanctioning agency* which has changed. The *conscience*, not the civil government, is the earthly locus of Lord's day enforcement in New Testament times. It is the individual conscience, not the institutional church, which makes the decision concerning what constitutes idle talk, or a postponable household chore, or the lawful limits of recreation. Pressure can come from sermons, or from patient instruction from the elders. Christians are to be educated concerning the Lord's day principle. They are not to be coerced.

No Compulsion

Paul warns us, in the area of diet and the Lord's day, that different views exist, and that *discussions are not to resort to compulsion, social*

or institutional, in order to settle the issues. Ostracism is not valid. But refusing on Sunday to eat in a restaurant operated by a "Lord's day-violator" is valid, since the potential meal-buyer has decided that such activities as the purchase of a meal on the Lord's day is against his conscience. He is not seeking to punish the "Lord's day violator"; he is seeking to do the Lord's work in his own life.

The church should not be fearful of the weaknesses of human conscience in the areas of the *Lord's day* and *diet*. (Actually, the church is quite willing to allow personal choice in the case of diet, but it resists the authority of conscience in the question of the Lord's day.) If the church is to avoid bothering people in these two areas of life, how much more the civil government! Furthermore, it is incorrect to argue that since the State can legitimately establish pure food and drug standards, it (or the church) can therefore legitimately establish sabbath restrictions. Commentators should not make the mistake of equating restrictions against *eating* certain ritually prohibited foods with the question of restrictions against *the sale* of chemically or biologically adulterated food. The State is empowered to restrict the sale of adulterated, dangerous products, not on the basis of the dietary laws, but on the basis of the *quarantine* (Lev. 13, 14): a *negative sanction against violence*—namely, the violence of microbes or poisons against unsuspecting buyers. The State may not tell people what they must eat, but only what they must not *sell*, because of injuries that such adulterated food can produce in the victims—injuries that can be proven in a court of law to have resulted from the product in question.

The New Testament does mark off certain areas of life and calls them, in effect, either things indifferent or things that are not a matter of compulsion. A thing indifferent, for example, is circumcision. "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God" (I Cor. 7:19). Yet it is possible to make a case against circumcision, since the resurrection of Christ has made unnecessary the flow of blood in New Testament times: the sacrifices, the firstborn offerings (eighth-day separation from the dams), and circumcisions (the eighth-day marring of male infants). But Paul does not ask us to make an issue of circumcision or noncircumcision. He wants us to avoid confrontations in this area. The confrontations are divisive in this area, and not worth the trouble they cause. If a medical case were straightforward in favoring cir-

cumcision (which it is not in the late twentieth century²¹), the question of circumcision could become important again, but not for narrowly theological reasons. The same is true of diet. Most Christians understand this in the case of circumcision and diet. They do not understand it in the case of the Lord's day. They refuse to take Paul's words literally in Romans 14:5.

It must also be pointed out that we are dealing here with *specific injunctions* in the New Testament. The proper exegetical principle is this: *Mosaic law is still to be enforced, by the church or the State or both, unless there is a specific injunction to the contrary in the New Testament.* To place the locus of enforcement concerning Lord's day violations in the human conscience is not a general New Testament principle of social, political, or legal action with respect to Old Testament laws and sanctions. The Bible does not call for a society operated in terms of man-invented sanctions. The reign of conscience is not to become the reign of anarchy. The Bible does not establish antinomianism as a New Testament principle. But in *certain specified instances*, New Testament writers have removed the locus of enforcement from the church and State, placing it in the conscience. There are not many of these instances, either, but the Lord's day appears to be one of them.

C. Economic Implications of the Lord's Day

We know that the man caught gathering sticks on the sabbath was tried by God and executed at God's direct command (Num. 15:32-36). This was what was required by Exodus 35:3. The death penalty was *indissolubly* integral to the Mosaic laws governing the sabbath. The fact that the church historically has acted as though the death penalty has been officially removed by God from His law testifies to the church's confusion concerning biblical exegesis and

21. "The Committee on Fetus and Newborn of the American Academy of Pediatrics stated in 1971 that there are no valid medical indications for circumcision in the neonatal period. . . . There is no absolute medical indication for routine circumcision of the newborn. . . . A program of education leading to continuing good personal hygiene would offer all of the advantages of routine circumcision without the attendant surgical risk. Therefore, circumcision of the male neonate cannot be considered an essential component of adequate total health care." Ad Hoc Task Force on Circumcision, reporting its findings in *Pediatrics*, Vol. 56 (October 1975), pp. 610-11. Cf. Editorial, *British Medical Journal* (May 5, 1979), pp. 1163-64. For a summary of many medical arguments against circumcision, as well as bibliographical references, see Paul Zimmer, "Modern Ritualistic Surgery: A Laymen's View of Nonritual Neonatal Circumcision," *Clinical Pediatrics* (June 1977), pp. 503-6.

the rule of God's law. Those who proclaim their allegiance to the Mosaic view of the sabbath have to come to grips with the Numbers 15 passage. They must integrate this passage into their understanding of society and economics. I am limiting my enquiry to the question of economics, although the Mosaic sabbath affected far more than just the realm of economics. I here reproduce (with some minor modifications) a section from my essay on the sabbath which was first published in R. J. Rushdoony's *Institutes of Biblical Law* (pp. 831-36).

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The gathering of sticks is a fine example of Hebrew case law as applied in the light of a general requirement of the Decalogue. It shows, perhaps, better than any other instance, the economic implications of the fourth commandment for the Hebrew nation. Consider the economic implications. What was involved in the gathering of sticks? Sticks could be used for at least four purposes:

1. *Heating* the home
2. *Lighting* the home
3. *Cooking* the meals
4. *Selling* the sticks for uses 1-3

As far as actual use of sticks was concerned, the case-law application in Numbers 15 applied more to the daily life of Hebrew women than it did to the men of the family. It is more often the man and his work which are the focus of modern sabbatarian concern, but this was not necessarily the case in a rural, pre-industrial community. The gathering of sticks was more likely to be the task of children; women were to use the sticks for household tasks, once gathered. Men were to reap the benefits of both the gathering and actual use of the sticks, but in general they would not have much to do with the actual handling of sticks. There could be a few exceptions, of course, but one exception seems to be far more likely, namely, that of the *professional stick-gatherer*. His work would be most in demand on the sabbath, precisely the day on which the prohibition against work was enforced. A woman who failed to gather sticks earlier in the week could buy some from a professional.

We are not told that the man in Numbers 15 was such a profes-

sional, but the severity of the punishment clearly would have made it far more dangerous for such a class of professionals to have come into existence. There was a need for a harsh penalty, men and women being what they are. There is always a delight in violating God's commandments if one is a sinner; if that violation also brings with it certain superficial benefits above and beyond the mere pleasure of defiance, so much the better. Sabbath prohibitions involved heavy costs for the obedient; enforcement of the sabbath required stiff penalties, thus burdening violators with high costs in the form of high risk.

What were the costs of the sabbath? For the man, it was the forfeiture of all income—monetary (less likely in a rural society), psychological, or physical property—for that day. But women also paid. They had to gather all sticks earlier in the week. This meant more work during the week, either in longer days, or by increasing the intensity of the working day, or both. Had the working day not been lengthened or intensified, then other tasks which it was desirable to accomplish would have to have been foregone, and that, as any wife knows, also involves costs (especially if a husband or a mother-in-law notices the failure in question). There would always be a temptation to forgo the gathering of sticks during the week, especially if a professional would come by with a load of wood on the sabbath for a reasonably cheap price. If his price was less than the woman's estimation of the costs involved in gathering the wood earlier in the week, she would set aside funds for a sabbath transaction.

By imposing a rigorous and permanent form of punishment on the violator—death by stoning—the community was able to force up the price of the sticks; risks would be so high that few professionals could survive. How many women could or would pay the costs? It would be cheaper to buy them earlier or to gather them earlier in the week. Stick-gathering was made an unlikely source of profitable employment on the sabbath. Since the market for sticks on the sabbath was restricted because of the high prices for the sticks (due to the risks involved), the opportunities for temptation were thereby reduced to a minimum. It did not pay many people, net after deduction of risk expenses, to violate the sabbath, and it was very expensive to hire someone to violate it.

To the degree that the penalties are weakened in a case like this, to that degree it becomes a *matter of conscience* as to whether or not someone violates the sabbath or pays someone else to do it. Con-

science then stands without the protection of higher economic costs to keep a man acting in a holy fashion. In the mid-twentieth century, rest on Sunday is based primarily on Christian tradition and labor union negotiations; where these restraints are absent, conscience is the only barrier against the violation of the Old Testament application of the sabbath principle. Men who value leisure less than other forms of income will tend to seek out employment on the sabbath.

Hiring Others to Sin for Us

If we accept the principle that it is wrong for us to hire another person to commit a crime for our benefit and his profit, then certain implications follow. Sabbath violations were capital crimes. If strict sabbatarians regard Old Testament provisions as binding on Christians, then it is as wrong to hire a man to violate the sabbath as it is to hire someone from Murder, Inc. to kill a neighbor. The execution of the crime and the guilt of the hiring party are in both cases equal. Capital crimes are major ones. *If the Hebrew sabbath is legally binding today, then its implications and applications are equally binding.*

I have heard Christian people charge their fellow Christians with a violation of the "sabbath" (Lord's day) because the latter have gone out to a restaurant to eat after church services are over. This violation supposedly also holds for those who purchase food in a supermarket on Sunday. Why should this be a violation? Clearly, only on the grounds that it is a violation of the Lord's day to encourage another's violation of the Lord's day by paying him to remain open for business. *If the standards of the Hebrew sabbath are still morally binding today, then entering a place of business on the Lord's day is morally a capital crime, and an abomination in the sight of God.* Therefore, pastors and elders must tell their flock to refrain from entering into trade of any sort on the Lord's day.²²

If a man wishes to take seriously the standards even of the Westminster Confession of Faith (a pre-industrial document, it

22. I have worshipped in churches that sold books to worshippers on Sunday, but refused to accept payment until later in the week. To have taken money for the books, the pastors believed, would have violated the sabbath. But the book buyer incurred a debt. He had to pay off this debt later on. What is the difference between this transaction and the purchase of gasoline by means of a credit card? Sabbatharians recognize that credit card purchases are economic transactions, as surely as cash payment purchases are. They would prohibit credit card gasoline purchases on Sunday just as firmly as they would prohibit cash payment purchases. Again, sabbatarians have not thought through the economic implications of the sabbath.

should be pointed out) in all of its pre-industrial rigor, then he should encourage his elders to enforce the provisions. Of course, the provisions of the Confession do not even approach the requirements of Numbers 15, Exodus 31:15, and Exodus 35:2-3, i.e., the true biblical standards in the eyes of a consistent sabbatarian, but at least they are something. If the creeds are valid in their 1646 interpretation, then 1646 standards of enforcement ought to be applied. If such standards are not applied, then it is a clear admission that *the church no longer recognizes as valid the 1646 definition of the sabbath.*

Buying Fuel

Let us pursue the charge against the “restauranters” with rigor. Those same people who make the charge pride themselves on their Lord’s day observance because *they* do not go out to restaurants on the Lord’s day. *They* do not shop in supermarkets. *They* have stored up provisions to eat at home. Prior shopping is quite proper, if one is a sabbatarian, for it is of the very essence of Lord’s day-keeping that one store up provisions in advance of the Lord’s day. But the Old Testament required more than the mere storing up of food. The passage we have referred to, Numbers 15, makes it explicit that not only food but the *fuel* was to be stored up in advance; fuel for heating the home, cooking the meals, and lighting the room had to be procured in advance. It was a capital offense in the eyes of a righteous and holy God to gather sticks—fuel—on His sabbath.

The modern Puritan-Scottish sabbatarian thinks that his is the way of the holy covenant of God simply because he buys his food early, and cooks it on Sunday, while he regards his brother in Christ as sinning because the latter eats at a restaurant on Sunday. But under the provisions of Numbers 15, both crimes appear to be equally subject to death, for both the restaurant-goer and the meal-cooker have paid *specialized fuel producers* to work on the Lord’s day. There is this difference, however: the man who enters the restaurant is not self-righteous about his supposed keeping of the Lord’s day, and he has made no charges against his fellow Christians. He would seem to have violated the sabbath provisions of Numbers 15, but that is the extent of his guilt. The modern sabbatarians I have met too often violate the Lord’s day and the commandment against gossip, or at least they indulge in the “judgment of the raised eyebrow and clicking tongue.” They neglect Christ’s warning: “Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what ye judge, ye shall be judged . . .”

(Matt. 7:1, 2a).

The very architecture of our churches is a standing testimony to the unwillingness of contemporary Christians to accept the economic implications of the Lord's day. We fill our buildings with all sorts of electrical appliances; we heat and cool the rooms to a comfortable 75 degrees, winter and summer. We often pride ourselves on the efficiency of modern technology, forgetting that people must go to work and operate the machines that provide the power—the fuel—for our gadgets. These workers are committing sabbatarian capital crimes each Sunday, and every Christian sabbatarian who uses these gadgets, apart from some legitimate emergency, implicitly sends people to hell every Sunday, morning and evening, as he sits in the comfort of his air-conditioned church. If the sabbatarian creeds are correct, then sabbatarians are weekly condemning others to the flames of eternal torment, just so that they can sit in 75-degree comfort.

Naturally, sabbatarians can always defend a 75-degree temperature in the name of "works of necessity." Freezing churches would drive away unbelievers in winter; stifling churches would do so in the summer. Possibly this argument is legitimate, if this *really* is the reason we heat our churches. Or perhaps our bodies really could not stand what our Puritan forefathers went through to establish Reformed worship in America; perhaps we could not bear churches so cold that communion bread would sometimes freeze solid. Possibly we would die if our present technological comforts were to be taken away from us (as pessimists have asserted may be a prospect in the near future). But if mere comfort is our defense of our power-consuming central heating systems, then we are not giving much thought to our sabbatarian creeds. It has become altogether too fashionable to adapt the interpretation of the Lord's day to each new technological breakthrough; sabbatarians cling religiously to standards written centuries ago, while violating the terms of those creeds regularly. It is schizophrenic. The wording of the creeds should be altered, or else sabbatarians should alter their easy acceptance of a radically non-sabbatarian technology.²³

23. The development of a cost-effective program of solar power, with each household supplied with electrical power generated from the home's roof, is quite likely. It is technologically feasible today, though not yet economical. There are some indications, as of 1985, that several firms have designed what could in the future become cost-effective home power systems. This will make it possible for homes, and possibly even churches, to "unplug" from the public utilities, thereby escaping condem-

McCheyne's Accusations

This plea should not be regarded as something new. It was made by one of the strictest and most consistent sabbatarians in the history of the post-Reformation Protestant church, the Scotsman, Robert Murray McCheyne. He minced no words in his condemnation of his fellow Christians: "Do you not know, and all the sophistry of hell cannot disprove it, that the same God who said, 'Thou shalt not kill,' said also, 'Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy'? The murderer who is dragged to the gibbet, and the polished Sabbath-breaker are one in the sight of God."²⁴

Andrew Bonar has preserved McCheyne's teachings on the sabbath question in his *Memoirs of McCheyne*, and any self-proclaimed strict sabbatarian would do well to ponder what McCheyne wrote. If the standards of Numbers 15 made no provision for exemptions of specific professions,²⁵ and if these standards are still morally and legally binding in New Testament times, how can a man who proclaims the sabbath escape the thrust of McCheyne's words? McCheyne saw clearly what the industrial revolution would mean. In 1841, he challenged the right of the railways to run on Sunday, but he was not followed by most of his sabbatarian countrymen in Scotland. They chose, as sabbatarians ever since have chosen, to turn their backs on the implications of their creed, while vainly proclaiming the moral validity of that creed. McCheyne has a word for those who today enjoy having others work on the Lord's day to provide them with fuel at reasonable prices: "Guilty men who, under Satan, are leading on the deep, dark phalanx of Sabbath-breakers, yours is a solemn position. You are *robbers*. You rob God of His holy day. You are *murderers*. You murder the souls of your servants. God said,

nation. But this still does not answer the ethical question: What kind of sabbath-defying technologies were instrumental in the coming of solar power? Without the industrial age, could such a sabbath-honoring technology have come into production? Another problem: the homes will probably remain "plugged in" to the local electrical utility company. The power generated during the day will be sold to the power company, to serve as at least a partial credit for the power purchased that night. In effect, sabbatarians will be tempted to become sellers of sabbath-gathered "sticks." The moral and economic questions will still be with the solar-powered age of the future.

24. R. M. McCheyne, "I Love the Lord's Day" (1841), in Andrew Bonar (ed.), *Memoirs and Remains of Robert Murray McCheyne* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, [1844] 1973), p. 599. This is a reprint of the 1892 edition.

25. I argue later in this appendix that there were probably exemptions in specific cases: "Rescheduling Worship."

'Thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy servant;' but you compel your servants to break God's law, and to sell their souls for gain. You are *sinner against the light*. . . . You are *traitors to your country*. . . . Was it not Sabbath-breaking that made God cast away Israel? . . . And yet you would bring the same curse on Scotland now. You are *moral suicides*, stabbing your own souls, proclaiming to the world that you are not the Lord's people, and hurrying on your souls to meet the Sabbath-breaker's doom."²⁶

Sabbatarians should heed McCheyne's warning. Those who stand in pride because of their sabbatarian position ought to consider the implications of that position. God will not be mocked! When the provisions of the Westminster Confession of Faith are rigorously enforced, then the sabbath debate can take on some meaning other than the playing of theological games. Then, and only then, will the issues be drawn clearly and honestly.

Enforcement Should Begin at the Top

When the elders of the church *begin at home* to follow the sabbatarian standards of the Old Testament, and when they impose such standards on their recalcitrant wives who enjoy their stoves, their hot running water, and their air-conditioning systems, then non-sabbatarians will be impressed. Let them turn off their electrical appliances, or purchase 24-hour power generators (no "lighting fires," please), or install solar-powered cells on their roofs, in order to provide the power. Let them turn off the natural gas, or else purchase butane in advance. Let them cease phoning their friends for "Christian fellowship," so that the lines might be kept open for truly emergency calls. Let them stop using the public mails on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, so that mail carriers and sorters will not have to miss their observance of the Lord's day. Let them, in short, shut their eyes to the offenses of others until the church, as a disciplinary force, begins to enforce more rigorous requirements on all the membership, *starting at the top of the hierarchy* and working down from there. Let all self-righteousness be abandoned until the full implications of the economics of sabbath-keeping are faced squarely by the church's leadership. Until then, the debate over the sabbath will remain an embarrassment to Christ's church.

Rethinking the sabbath question will involve a rethinking of the

26. *Ibid.*, p. 600. See also his "Letter on Sabbath Railways," (1841), pp. 602-5.

whole of Western industrial civilization. It will certainly involve the questioning of the last two centuries of rapid economic growth. Strict sabbatarians should at least be aware of the possible effects of their proposals. If the world should be conformed to Christian standards of biblical law, and if the standards of the Hebrew sabbath practice are, in fact, still the rule for the Christian dispensation, how would these standards be imposed on the population at large? Would it not make impossible our modern version of industrial, specialized society? In other words, if such standards had been enforced for the past two centuries, could this civilization, which most modern Christians accept as far as its technological conveniences are concerned, have come into existence? How much of our economically profitable, efficient, "sabbath-desecrating" technology would we have been forced to prohibit by civil law? The costs, I suspect, would be considerable. It is time for strict sabbatarians to count those costs.

* * * * *

Fire has served as man's major technical tool of dominion, and has been challenged as a primary tool only in the twentieth century, first by electricity and then by the electronic computer.²⁷ Lewis Mumford has discussed the three-fold uses of fire: light, power, and heat. His essentially evolutionistic interpretation could easily be reworked to conform to biblical imagery. "The first artificially overcame the dark, in an environment filled with nocturnal predators; the second enabled man to change the face of nature, for the first time in a decisive way, by burning over the forest; while the third maintained his internal body temperature and transformed animal flesh and starchy plants into easily digestible food. *Let there be light!* With these words, the story of man properly begins."²⁸ Thus, fire has been basic to the dominion covenant from the beginning. That the kindling of a sabbath fire was prohibited in the Old Testament is understandable; it is the very essence of work. To kindle a fire, or to gather sticks for a fire, would have symbolized man's autonomy in the dominion process, the essence of lawlessness. Furthermore, as symbolic of God's glory cloud, fire unquestionably served the Hebrews as a reminder of God's power, in addition to being a pri-

27. Jeremy Rifkin, *Algeny* (New York: Viking, 1983), ch. 1.

28. Lewis Mumford, *Interpretations and Forecasts: 1922-1972* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973), p. 425.

mary economic tool. Kindling a fire on the sabbath therefore was illegal for more than one reason.

"Strange Fire"

There was a fifth use of sticks on the sabbath: lighting a fire, or expanding the intensity of a fire, as a religious testimony. Exodus 35:3 prohibits the kindling of a fire on the sabbath. This seems to mean *starting* a fire.

The priests of Israel kept a fire burning constantly on the altar (Ex. 29:25; Lev. 1:7). When Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, offered strange fire on the altar, God sent a fire and consumed them (Lev. 10:1-2). It is possible, therefore, to regard the kindling of a fire on the sabbath as an assertion of sacramental rebellion. For this reason, it has been argued, there was a death penalty for kindling any new fire on the sabbath—an assertion of autonomy from the sacrificial system of Israel.²⁹ This line of argumentation was pursued by at least one sabbatarian Puritan scholar in the seventeenth century, George Walker.³⁰

One possible piece of evidence for this position is that the Hebrews were not sure what to do with the stick-gatherer in Numbers 15. The law was clear: violators must be executed. Why didn't they know what to do with him? Why did they seek God's specific pronouncement (Num. 15:34-36)? Doesn't this indicate that they were not sure what to do with him because they had not actually caught him *kindling* a fire, meaning indulging in a ritual trespass of starting a strange fire? He was working, but he had not kindled a fire. Why didn't they execute him, if merely working on the sabbath was a capital crime? Wasn't their hesitation based on their confusion concerning an *unstated* warning against strange fire, a confusion which would not have been present if Exodus 35:2 referred to all labor? Gathering sticks was labor, but they nevertheless enquired of the Lord. Doesn't this imply that they did not suppose that God required the death penalty for working in general—the mere *gathering* of sticks—but that He required it for lighting a fire, something they

29. This is the approach to the sabbath question taken by James B. Jordan: *Sabbath Breaking and the Death Penalty: An Alternate View* (forthcoming).

30. George Walker, *The Doctrine of the Holy Weekly Sabbath* (London, 1641), pp. 121-22; cited by James T. Dennison, Jr., *The Market Day of the Soul: The Puritan Doctrine of the Sabbath in England, 1532-1700* (Lanham, New York: University Press of America, 1983), p. 111.

had not seen him do?

My answer is *no*, it was not any confusion associated with an unstated but implied warning against false ritual which led them to enquire of God. It was a much more basic problem: confusion over the specific transgression. But before I present my reasoning, I first need to point out the obvious: *Exodus 35:3 does not speak of strange fire*. It speaks only of fire. The "strange fire" interpretation is roundabout and hypothetical, although biblically possible. It relies on an *exclusively symbolic interpretation of otherwise plain words*. I prefer to interpret the passage as *primarily economic* but with implicit symbolic overtones.

It should be clear why a few interpreters have appealed to strange fire as the frame of reference for the imposition of the death penalty for sabbath violations: it gets them out of an embarrassing exegetical problem. With the permanent extinguishing of the temple's fire by the Romans in 70 A.D., the biblical law against kindling a fire on the sabbath ceased to be symbolically relevant. Thus, if the altar's fire was the sole reference point in the discussion of the death penalty for sabbath-breaking—that is, if the death penalty which is required by Exodus 35:2 is to be interpreted exclusively in terms of 35:3, the prohibition against starting fires—then the death penalty cannot sensibly be imposed in New Testament times. This enables the commentators to escape from a highly embarrassing problem, namely, the requirement of the death penalty for working on the sabbath in New Testament times. But this line of reasoning immediately backfires on any "strict sabbatarian."

If "strange fire" was the sole reference point for the death penalty for sabbath breakers, then what penalty is to be applied today? Excommunication alone? Are we to interpret Exodus 31:14—the cutting off of the sabbath-breaker from the people—as excommunication rather than execution? If this "cutting off" is not the execution demanded by Exodus 31:15—and I argue that it did mean execution for sabbath violators—then an inescapable conclusion results: *the civil government has no legitimate sanctions to apply against sabbath-breakers in New Testament times*. The only civil sanction specified is execution (35:2), but if this was only for a ritualistic trespass, then there was nothing for the civil government of Israel to do about non-ritual violations. Certainly there is nothing specified for the civil government to do about a now meaningless practice in New Testament times. First, the fires of the temple are long extinguished. Second, hardly anyone in industrial societies gathers sticks to light fires. This

highly anti-sabbatarian conclusion concerning civil sanctions is not likely to appeal to modern sabbatarians. Yet so far, this line of reasoning is the only one which any scholar has used in response to my arguments regarding the termination of institutional sanctions against sabbath violators.³¹

Let us return to the problem of why the Hebrews enquired of God about what to do with the stick-gatherer. Why were they unable to decide what to do with him? The text says that it was not declared to them what should be done (Num. 15:34). I interpret this to mean that *as a case-law application* under *either* interpretive scheme—either as a work transgression or as a sacramental transgression—it was not clear to them whether stick-gathering constituted a capital crime. God then said that it did. But the text does not tell us which interpretation governed. Either type of violation constituted a capital crime: false worship or sabbath work. If stick-gathering was the latter type of violation (and I think it was), we then need to ask: What constituted unlawful labor on the sabbath? My answer: 1) commercial labor was prohibited on the sabbath (Ex. 31:15; 35:2), and 2) no household labor that could be done beforehand—e.g., kindling a new fire—was permitted (35:3).

Nehemiah 13

What about Nehemiah 13? Here we find a specific case of sabbath-breaking by foreign merchants from Tyre who came into Jerusalem to buy and sell on the sabbath (v. 16). Nehemiah locked the doors of the city on the evening of the sabbath to keep them out (v. 19), but they clustered around the wall. "Then I testified against them, and said unto them, Why lodge ye about the wall? If ye do so again, I will lay hands on you. From that time forth came they no more on the sabbath" (v. 21).

He could have had them executed, in terms of biblical law, but he warned them first. As foreigners, they may not have understood the specifics of the law, and because biblical law had not been enforced in the land for so long, the general public may not have understood the nature of the penalty. In this respect, modern strict sabbatarians are not much different from the people of Nehemiah's day; they proclaim the continuing application of the Old Testament's sabbatarian

31. I have submitted this appendix and Chapter 4 to four Reformed scholars so far, and James Jordan is the only one who was willing to comment on it. I trust that the "silent three" will remain equally silent when the book is published, even if they disagree with my arguments. When men are asked for counsel and refuse to provide it, they should remain decently silent after the damage is done.

standards, but they have forgotten about the death penalty. By threatening to lay hands on them, Nehemiah warned them that the full rigor of God's sanctions would be imposed. For good reason, they ceased their violation of the sabbath. This does not testify to a reduced penalty; on the contrary, it shows how great a threat was involved. Once they understood that the civil government was serious about adhering to Exodus 31:15 and 35:2, they ceased selling goods in the city.

The question of strange fire was not raised by Nehemiah. The issue was buying and selling on the sabbath. While stick-gathering could have involved some aspect of outright sacramental rebellion, it didn't need to in order to call down the death penalty on violators. As far as the Hebrews were informed by God, either working on the sabbath or the kindling of a fire could result in execution. The subtleties of biblical theology or symbolism were of no real concern to them. They simply had to avoid working and also avoid kindling a fire.

Mass Production and International Trade

Consider the modern metallurgy industry and its consumption of "sticks." It takes enormous quantities of power to produce steel or aluminum. Power is expensive, and grew more expensive in the 1970's. The cost of shutting down a steel mill for one day and then starting it up again the next day would make the production of steel economically prohibitive. It could be done technically, of course, at some astronomical cost. It would be like the proverbial textbook example of growing bananas at the North Pole. Technically, it can be done; economically, it would involve massive losses—waste of scarce economic resources. Such waste is not tolerated by a free market. Steel could not be manufactured under such conditions. The cost of power which is required to reheat a steel plant, not to mention the man-hours wasted in supervising such a wasteful operation, would force steel manufacturers out of business.

If the civil government enforced the Puritan-Scottish interpretation of the Mosaic law against Lord's day violations on the steel industry, there would soon be almost no domestic steel being manufactured. At that point, buyers of steel would begin to pay foreign manufacturers for their steel—manufacturers who do not honor the Mosaic sabbath. This would place the Lord's day-honoring nation at the mercy of foreign manufacturers. The "Lord's day-desecrating"

foreign firms would be rewarded for their violation; the Lord's day-honoring domestic manufacturers would risk going bankrupt. Furthermore, since the supply of steel would be reduced worldwide, as a result of the bankruptcy of the domestic firms, the cost of steel would rise, thereby penalizing marginal purchasers and users of steel who could no longer afford to buy.

The only way to make steel available domestically apart from rewarding the foreign Lord's day violators would be to erect tariffs against foreign steel. This would force up the national price of steel to levels that would permit the production of six-day-per-week steel, meaning very expensive and specialized steel. The middle class and lower class would be effectively cut off from the enjoyment of many products made of steel. In a modern economy, this could produce a breakdown of the division of labor. It could produce an economic collapse, a return to low-productivity subsistence agriculture.

There is no way that steel can be produced that would not involve profits from Lord's day production. If the civil government required all profits (let alone total revenues) from the seventh day of production to be paid as a fine, or paid to the poor, then the price of steel would rise. The income from the other six days would have to cover the losses of the seventh day. The six-day-per-week revenue limitation would make the nation's steel mills uncompetitive in world markets. Again, tariff barriers would have to be placed on imported steel, and the nation in question would find its foreign markets for steel wiped out. The world consumers of steel would turn to the steel produced by "Lord's day-desecrators."

The International Division of Labor

The modern economy involves the whole world in the international division of labor. Manufacturers of literally thousands of products have been drawn into a worldwide market. Transportation costs have dropped steadily in the modern world, so those products which once satisfied only local needs are now facing competition from similar products produced abroad. Also, products that once stayed in a local district can now be sold abroad. The pressures of world competition force all manufacturers to respect world market prices.

In Israel in Moses' day, a predominantly agricultural and tribal society did not involve itself in extensive world trade. There was trade, or course, but this trade was centered on the major cities and port cities. Consider an undeveloped rural economy. Transportation

costs effectively insulate interior rural communities from the benefits and competition of world markets. Trade is overwhelmingly aimed at high-value, low-volume products bought and used by the rich, the powerful, and the well-connected. The division of labor is minimal, and output-per-unit-of-resource-input is low. Per capita productivity is low, and therefore per capita income is low.

The Puritan-Scottish interpretation of the Mosaic sabbath laws could be enforced in ancient Israel without wiping out whole segments of the economy only because per capita income was low, economic expectations were low, and the international market for goods did not affect most of the products in use in rural areas. More than this: if the Puritan-Scottish view of the Mosaic sabbath laws had remained in force, the sabbath-honoring economies of the world would probably still be predominantly rural, characterized by a minimal division of labor. The rhythm of the one-six week is suitable only for rural societies, *if* that rhythm is mandatory on *all* citizens on the *same* day.

Do we want to argue that God has determined that the low division of labor of rural life is a moral requirement forever? Do we want to argue that God has created limits on the development of world trade in the form of a rigid sabbath code which forces all men within a covenantally faithful society into an identical one-six weekly pattern?

As far as I am able to determine, questions like these have not been dealt with by defenders of a New Testament version of the Mosaic sabbath. Only because those who defend such a view of the Lord's day have seldom been in positions of formulating or enforcing national economic policy, have they been able to avoid the hard reality of sabbatarianism. They have not thought through the economic implications of their position.

When I raised some of these questions in the appendix that appeared in *Institutes of Biblical Law* in 1973, I expected to see strict sabbatarians respond, to propose answers, or at least modifications in their position that would enable them to avoid the obvious implications of their position. So far, I have waited twelve years to receive a single letter or see a single refutation in print. Rushdoony's book has been read by many influential theologians and Christian leaders,³²

32. What is rather amazing is how few copies *Institutes of Biblical Law* has sold, in comparison to its influence. It has unquestionably begun to reshape the thinking of numerous conservative Christian leaders, yet as of early 1985, it had sold under 18,000 copies in twelve years. Its press runs have always been small—sometimes as

and critics have attacked its overall thesis concerning the New Testament applicability of Old Testament laws, but sabbatarians have systematically, conscientiously avoided going into print with objections to my appendix on the Lord's day. The debate has not yet begun.

The Puritan Sabbath

The sabbatarian heritage is unquestionably a legacy of the Puritans. It is just about the only theological legacy of the Puritans which still exercises widespread intellectual influence within the Protestant community. It does not exert widespread practical influence, because few people honor the Puritan vision of the sabbath, even though they may honor it verbally.

The Westminster Confession of Faith, a uniquely Puritan document, states that "This Sabbath is then kept holy unto the Lord, when men, after a due preparing of their hearts, and ordering of their common affairs before-hand, do not only observe an holy rest, all the day, from their own works, words, and thoughts about their worldly employments and recreations, but also are taken up, the whole time, in the public and private exercises of His worship, and in the duties of necessity and mercy" (Chap. XXI:VIII). The Larger Catechism amplifies these words: "The Sabbath or Lord's day is to be sanctified by an holy resting all the day, not only from such works as are at all times sinful, but even from such worldly employments and recreations as are on other days lawful . . ." (A. 117).

We lack a detailed historical study of the Puritan view of recreation. I have never seen even a scholarly article on the topic. I would never advise a doctoral student to adopt such a dissertation topic. The reason should be clear: *The Puritans had no doctrine of recreation*. It was a topic utterly foreign to them. It is exceedingly difficult to take seriously their view of holy rest when they had no doctrine of worldly rest.

The Puritan Obsession

There is a popular picture of the Puritans which says that they were a dour bunch, that they never laughed, or wrote poetry, or wrote plays, or created great works of art, or in any way delighted in

few as 1,000 copies. Any historian who looks back at its sales figures, and who then tries to evaluate its influence in relation to these figures, will have a difficult time explaining its impact.

the recreations of life. It has become popular in recent years to dismiss this picture of the Puritans as a myth. It is not a myth. It is rooted in reality—at least the reality of the documentary record.

I spent several years working with the primary sources of the colonial American Puritans, especially their sermons and legislative records. If someone were to tell me that the Puritans were a fun-loving lot because of their fondness for taverns, I would reply: "How do you know they enjoyed taverns?" There is only one reasonable reply: "Because I read all the laws they passed regulating them." In every town and in the records of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, a recurring legislative concern was the control of taverns: hours they could be open, the kinds of games that could be played in them (they were obsessed with the evils of shuffleboard, and the laws repeatedly took notice of this notorious deviant behavior), restricting access to taverns by apprentices, and so forth. The legislators did their best to minimize the operations of these dens of iniquity.

What about Puritan poetry? There was Milton, whose reputation as a Puritan is somewhat questionable (though I think on the whole he was in the Puritan camp). There was no one else of comparable reputation. Anne Bradstreet, the poetess of North Andover, Massachusetts, had a collection of her poems published without her knowledge in England in 1650, and twenty-eight years later, a larger collection was published in Boston. By this time, she had been dead for six years.³³ The other great colonial Puritan poet was Edward Taylor, who forbade his heirs to publish any of his poems, and which did not see publication until 1939. His manuscript book was not even discovered in the Yale University Library until 1937.³⁴ Not until 1968 was a full-length edition of seventeenth-century American poetry published. Meserole's comments are appropriate: "In New England particularly, there were strictures against too consummate an attention to poetry. 'A little recreation,' asserted Cotton Mather, was a good thing, and one should not contemplate an unpoetical life. But to turn one's mind and energies wholly to the composition of verse was to prostitute one's calling, to risk opprobrium, and most important, to lose sight of the proper balance God envisioned for man on earth. The sheer quantity of verse that has come down to us proves that these strictures were not completely heeded. It is similarly clear

33. Hudson T. Meserole, "Anne Bradstreet," in Meserole (ed.), *Seventeenth-Century American Poetry* (Garden City, New York: Anchor, 1968), p. 3.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 119.

that these strictures had their effect not only in the nature and intent of much of the surviving verse but also in the sparse numbers of poems printed in America before 1725.”³⁵

There were the two poems by Michael Wigglesworth, *The Day of Doom* (1662) and *God's Controversy With New-England* (1662). No copy of the first printing of 1,800 copies of *Day of Doom* survives; Meserole says that they were literally read to pieces. These two heavy dirges were obsessed with death and judgment. They were wildly popular in New England, and probably had a great deal to do with the shift in perspective in New England sermons from a more optimistic post-millennialism to a new pessimistic sermon form called the Jeremiad by Perry Miller.³⁶ These were formula sermons of imminent judgment that were as predictable as they were ineffective in achieving their goal: repentance and the “affirming of the covenant” by the second and third generations.³⁷

There were no Puritan playwrights, no Puritan sculptors, no Puritan painters, no Puritan composers of merit. They were, from start to finish, *craftsmen*, not artists. They were the theologians of artisanship, of diligence in the calling, of self-discipline and lifelong exertions to achieve middle-class output. They achieved their economic goals as no similar group in man's history ever has. They subdued a howling wilderness in New England, a land of insects, rocky soil, fierce winters, and no minerals of value, a land of which it could truly be said it was devoid of milk and honey. As a substitute, its trees had sap for maple syrup, but New England was a “promised land” of *freedom* rather than raw materials. They swapped their way into wealth. “From Puritan to yankee” is a constant theme in history books, for good reason: it was a real transformation.

From beginning to end, they were obsessed with one sin. It was not sexual debauchery, it was not drunkenness, it was not theft or murder or any of the other ten commandments. It was the sin of

35. *Ibid.*, p. xviii.

36. Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1953), ch. 2.

37. I can remember staggering out of the microfilm reading room in graduate school, after having suffered half a dozen of these forty- to eighty-page exercises in congregational flagellation. There is no doubt in my mind: young Ben Franklin was right when he fled Boston to the lighter climate of Philadelphia in the 1720's; anyone with any sense would have fled after 1662. It is one thing to admire the Puritans' ability to work all week and suffer five or six hours of these sermons on Sunday. It would be something else again to have to put up with what they suffered.

idleness which obsessed them. In their sermons, their laws, and their pious diaries, they were obsessed with the fear that they were not working hard enough to please God. They did not believe that they could work their way into heaven, but they took seriously the dominion covenant—took it more seriously than any Christian group before or since. It was through work and thrift that they believed they could turn the wilderness into a paradise. Their efforts helped to prepare the religious soil for the industrial revolution a century later, long after Christians had abandoned their Calvinist theology. The Methodists of the late eighteenth century were the true spiritual heirs of the Puritans, for they too adopted a theology of work and thrift. The legacy of Puritanism even bears their name: the Puritan work ethic.

One thing they never learned to do gracefully was to rest. They did not understand how they could rest and please God. They had no developed theology of lawful recreation. They worked from sunrise to sunset six days a week. The men sneaked out to a tavern occasionally, and felt so guilty about it that for decades they elected and re-elected magistrates who kept writing unenforced laws regulating their beloved taverns. They had no systematic theology of leisure. They could not deal with the prosperity which their great efforts produced.³⁸ They remind me of the medieval Benedictine monasteries that also could not deal with the wealth they produced, and so suffered periods of recurring internal reform every few centuries.

The Marathon Sabbath

This obsession with work colored their view of the sabbath. The Directory for the Publick Worship of God published by the Westminster Assembly specifies concerning Sunday activities: "That what time is vacant, between or after the solemn meetings of the congregation in publick, be spent in reading, meditation, repetition of sermons; especially by calling their families to an account of what they have heard, and catechising of them, holy conferences, prayer for a blessing upon the public ordinances, singing of psalms, visiting the sick, relieving the poor, and such like duties of piety, charity, and mercy,

38. Miller writes: "... the Jeremiad could make sense out of existence as long as adversity was to be overcome, but in the moment of victory it was confused. . . . It flourished in dread of success; were reality ever to come up to its expectations, a new convention would be required, and this would presuppose a revolution in mind and society." Miller, *From Colony to Province*, p. 33.

accounting the sabbath a delight." To which the modern reader replies: "You've got to be kidding! A delight? An ordeal beyond measure after the pressures of a Puritan workweek."

James T. Dennison's polemical defense of the Puritan sabbath (published in the guise of a master's thesis in history) is a detailed account of the debates concerning the sabbath of this period. Summarizing William Gouge's tract, *The Sabbaths Sanctification* (1641), Dennison writes: "Duties of mercy consist in those which concern man's soul and those which concern man's body. Ministering to the soul includes: instructing the ignorant; establishing those who are weak in the faith; resolving doubts of the downcast; comforting the troubled; informing those in error; reproving the sinner; and building one another up in the Lord. Ministering to the body includes: visiting the sick and imprisoned; relieving the need; rescuing those in danger; and giving all other succor necessary."³⁹ This is in addition to works of necessity: preparing food, washing the body, putting on clothing, putting out fires in houses, closing up flood breaches, fighting in wars, releasing animals in danger. He admits that not all sabbatarians took the following strict sabbatarian positions (though some did): no baking or cooking, walking, any kind of work, or gathering sticks for a fire.⁴⁰ Thus, we can appreciate Dennison's summary statement: "It is apparent that the Puritan Sabbath was not a day of idleness. There was as much activity, if not more, on the Lord's day as on any other day of the week."⁴¹

The question arises: When did these people rest? The answer: they seldom did. When they did, they had no developed theology to tell them when they had rested too much. So out of desperation, they avoided rest like the plague.

By the early eighteenth century, Puritanism was fading. Newer religious movements arose that were capable of dealing with success — success that came from the Puritan work ethic. The second and third generations of Puritan heirs failed to affirm the covenant, join the church, and take up the "redeemed man's burden" of endless labor. Puritanism literally worked itself to death.

Nevertheless, the forms of the Jeremiad were retained. In the 1730's, ministers were still using its outline, even though it was even less relevant as a formal exercise than it had been eight decades

39. Dennison, *Market Day of the Soul*, p. 113.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 110.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 113.

earlier.⁴² Social and literary forms sometimes survive long after the cultural environment which gave birth to them has disappeared. Even longer lived has been the Puritan rhetoric of sabbath-keeping, a rhetoric which is still maintained by a handful of Calvinist churches whose members have never observed the detailed positive requirements for *hard, merciful work* that Puritan sabbatarian doctrine established, and who would transfer membership from any church which would actually enforce these requirements, and vote out of office any politician who might attempt to legislate them.

The Puritan view of the sabbath (though not its practice) has been maintained unbroken only by the more rigorous Presbyterians in the Scottish tradition. This tradition goes back to the seventeenth century. In Aberdeen, Scotland, in the 1640's, shops were shut on Thursdays, Saturday afternoons, and of course all day Sunday. On Sundays, the highways were watched to identify absentees. In April of 1646, at the height of critical negotiations between Charles I, the Scots, and English representatives of Parliament, Balmerino, who was travelling to Newark with an urgent message from London, stopped when he was 13 miles from his destination in order not to travel on the sabbath.⁴³ The Scottish-Puritan doctrine of the sabbath unquestionably had powerful effects on its adherents—effects that would today be regarded as near-pathological by those who claim that they are still faithfully upholding that very sabbatarian view.

General Preaching Creates Specific Guilt

In *Presbyterian*, a journal published by Covenant Theological Seminary, Robert G. Rayburn offers a standard essay on the sabbath. He defends the idea of a day of rest, and his familiar line of argumentation is that of the Presbyterian elder in the Scottish tradition. There is nothing unique about the essay, and nothing uniquely wrong with it. It is traditionally wrong, familiarly wrong, but not uniquely wrong. It is no different from a thousand other essays on the topic over the last three centuries.

What needs to be pointed out is that in a 15-page essay, he devotes less than two pages to the section: "Practical Questions Concerning Sabbath Observance." This, too, is typical. It is traditionally the practical questions that the sabbatarians have avoided dealing

42. Miller, *Colony*, p. 484.

43. Christopher Hill, *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England* (2nd ed.; New York: Schoecken, 1967), p. 183.

with for the last century. From the day the Scots faced the question of Sunday railroads, the commentators (McCheyne excepted) have mumbled. When it comes to public utilities—water, gas, electricity—they do not even mumble. They are stony silent.

Rayburn offers several reasons for the sabbath, all of which are traditional and correct: the dependence of man on God; the glorification of God through worship, especially corporate worship; the biological need for rest in the weekly rhythm. He says that Christ observed the sabbath, and He used it for works of mercy. Equally predictably and equally traditionally, he rejects the clear meaning of Paul's words in Colossians 2:16-17 concerning new moons and sabbaths, arguing that Paul was really concerned about a "teaching which was a mixture of Jewish ritualism and an Oriental Gnostic-type philosophy." He therefore concludes: "So this passage, as well as two others which do not use the word 'sabbath' but speak of observing days (Rom 14:5 and Gal 4:11), obviously do not refer to the observance of the first day of the week as the Lord's Day, the Christian's sabbath, for Paul observed the first day himself and directed others to observe it by setting aside their offerings to the Lord (I Cor 16:2). He was instructing believers not to attach special significance and sacredness to Jewish religious festivals and thus to pass judgment on those who failed to observe them, but rather to rejoice in their wonderful new-found liberty in Christ. As for the observance of the first day as the Lord's Day or Christian Sabbath, all Christians, Jew and Gentile, kept it."⁴⁴

Where should I begin? If this is the meaning of these passages, then why do churches refuse to insist that the civil government execute sabbath-breakers, as required by Exodus 31:15 and 35:2? If the locus of sovereignty of enforcement has not shifted to the individual conscience, then on what basis do New Testament commentators assert (implicitly or explicitly) that the civil government is no longer the responsible agent of enforcement? Why has the church remained silent about the death penalty for two millennia? After two thousand years, the silence has become deafening. Second, it is not true, as Bacchiocchi's dissertation (p. 79, note 4, above) makes clear, that all Christians, Jew and gentile alike, worshipped on the first day of the week in Paul's day. Third, just because Paul insisted on corporate worship does not explain why the day of the Lord is to be a day of rest. It only shows that

44. Robert G. Rayburn, "Should Christians Celebrate the Sabbath Day?" *Presbyterian*, X (Spring-Fall 1984) pp. 83, 84.

corporate weekly worship is required by New Testament law. Paul emphasized this because there was no *equally clear-cut* requirement for sabbath worship in the Old Testament.

What does Rayburn say is required? We must glorify Him by not making Sunday a day of doing our own personal desires and pleasures. No definitions, no examples, no study of what is restful or fun, what is allowed and prohibited. In short, he burdens his readers (should they take him seriously) with a *mountain of guilt*. They are told to be faithful to God, but they are not told *how*. This, too, is traditional.

We must make the day a day of rest, he says. But rest really doesn't mean rest; it means . . . ? (Marathon sabbath? What?) "Resting on the Sabbath does not mean staying in bed all day or even most of the day, although some rest for the body is certainly appropriate." But, we should be moved to inquire: *What amount of time in bed is appropriate?* He does not say. In short, here is another pile of guilt for the reader. How about a one-hour nap? A two-hour nap? Why all this babble about staying in bed all day? Who on earth ever recommended staying in bed all day? This is a serious article and a serious topic, yet what we are given is exaggeration and hyperbole rather than specific, God-required guidelines. *This is all that we ever get from sabbatarian commentators*. This is all we have been given for 400 years. We grow tired. *We want rest from guilt*. We want specifics. When will they give us rest?

Then comes the usual refrain: *evil restaurants*. "Since the obedient believer is to observe the Sabbath as a holy day of rest, he must *be careful not to interfere with others having the same privilege*. He must not keep others working that he might not need to work. The waitress or cook at the restaurant and the attendant at the filling station have the right to rest also."⁴⁵ Restaurants on Sunday: the modern Calvinist's equivalent of taverns in seventeenth-century New England.

This essay is neither better nor worse than a century of similar essays, which stream endlessly from the pens and typewriters and word processors of those who simply will not take seriously the problems of economics and their relationship to the Bible. They just hammer away at the helpless readers, who, if they have adopted "strict sabbatarianism, twentieth-century style," desperately need specific, God-required guidelines. Neither do the commentators confront Exodus 31:15 and 35:2. They refuse to deal with the prob-

45. *Ibid.*, p. 86.

lems of public utilities, yet they criticize those who attend restaurants. It is clear why: *they* do not attend restaurants on Sunday, and *their wives* unquestionably do use the services of public utilities on Sunday. It is exegesis based on personal convenience and tradition. Such exegesis is productive of nothing except guilt, and perhaps a late reaction against sabbatarian precepts because of the lack of guidelines. The exegesis never progresses, because it never gets sufficiently *explicit* in its applications. It still sounds as though it was written in 1825 — and even then, such exegesis was running into difficulties with respect to the industrial revolution.

Preliminary Conclusion

The New Testament Lord's day is not the same as the Old Testament sabbath. The shift in the day of the week, from Seventhday (Saturday) to Firstday (Sunday), which is in fact the Eighthday, indicates that there are fundamentally new aspects of the Lord's day. This shift enables us to understand better Paul's warning of a shift in the locus of enforcement of the "day of rest" principle: from the ecclesiastical and civil governments to the conscience of the individual, meaning the head of the household.

By attempting to impose the workweek rhythms of the sabbath-honoring Old Testament rural society onto a modern industrial economy, the civil government would destroy modern civilization. This fact has been "honored in the breach" by most magistrates and church officials for several centuries, but sabbatarian theologians have yet to present a coherent biblical case that would morally justify this "aversion of the eyes" of civil and ecclesiastical governments. Church leaders see what is going on, yet they remain silent.

Another question needs to be dealt with. It is one thing to say that the conscience governs the selection and enforcement of the day of rest. It is something else to say that the church may not enforce the day of church attendance. The New Testament's emphasis on the Lord's day as a day of worship may have eliminated the role of the civil government in enforcing public rest, but what about the institutional church's unquestioned right to name the day of public worship for its members, and to establish times for worship? Does the church have an obligation to provide alternative times of worship for members who, because of specialized occupations, decide to honor the rest principle by resting on a day other than the first day of the week?

Rescheduling Worship

It is not normal in a Christian nation to find that most occupations of necessity involve labor on seven consecutive days. In fact, most of them are five-day occupations, leaving time for goofing off Saturday (that terrible Roman word for Seventhday), to watch televised sporting events all day in violation of God's one-six pattern for the workweek. But a few members are called to occupations that require Sunday work at least occasionally. And, by the grace of God, most pastors say nothing if the practice does not get out of hand.

Rescheduling Passover

We find a parallel in the case of the Israelite who was not able to celebrate the Passover in the specified month, the first month of the year.

Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If any man of you or of your posterity shall be unclean by reason of a dead body, or be in a journey afar off, yet he shall keep the passover unto the LORD. The fourteenth day of the second month at even[ing] they shall keep it, and eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs (Num. 9:10-11).

Why would any man be on a journey? What would a Hebrew be doing outside the nation? He might be on some sort of a foreign policy mission, serving as an ambassador of the king. He might have been an evangelist. More likely, he would have been a merchant. His occupation kept him away from Jerusalem in this important month. For those who had a legitimate excuse, the Passover could be celebrated in the second month of the year. Not many people would have had a legitimate excuse. This was no license for missing the Passover feast. "But the man that is clean, and is not in a journey, and forbeareth to keep the passover, even the same soul shall be cut off from among his people: because he brought not the offering of the LORD in the appointed season, that man shall bear his sin" (Num. 9:13). The penalty was excommunication from the congregation. The first-month Passover was normally binding, but those on journeys were exempted.

The law of God provided a means of satisfying the requirement of the Passover in certain instances when, through no fault of the individual, it was impossible or unlawful for him to enter into the celebration. The Old Testament law was not perfectionist in nature. It

acknowledged the problems men face in complying with its terms. The law was neither perfectionist nor antinomian. Within the framework of the law, there is no temptation facing man which is insurmountable; God offers a way of escape (I Cor. 10:13).

The normal requirement was that each family should celebrate the Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month of the year. There was an *institutional arrangement* which enabled each man to fulfill the terms of the covenantal celebration. This should convince us that the celebration of the New Testament version of the Passover, namely, the weekly communion feast, normally takes place on the day of rest, but this should not be absolute in every instance.

Worldwide Trade: Passover vs. Dominion?

The question then arises: What if the Hebrew were on a distant journey? What if he couldn't return to Jerusalem even for the second Passover? If the journey were limited to the Middle East, there could be time available to return. But what if the Hebrew were visiting North America on a trading mission? They did journey this far in the days of Solomon, although conventional historians refuse to face the evidence.⁴⁶ A remarkable piece of evidence for just such a journey is the Los Lunas stone near Los Lunas,⁴⁷ New Mexico. The alphabet used was a North Canaanite script which was in use as early as 1200 B.C., and would have been no later than 800 B.C.⁴⁸ Here is what the inscription says:

I am Yahweh your God that brought you out of the lands of Egypt.

You shall not have any other gods beside me.

You shall not make for yourself any graven image.

You shall not take the name of Yahweh in vain.

Remember the day of the Sabbath, to keep it holy.

Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long on the land which Yahweh your God is giving to you.

46. Barry Fell, *Bronze Age America* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1982).

47. This is the correct name, despite the normal Spanish usage of the article "los" as masculine and "as" suffixes as feminine.

48. This estimation was made by someone who was not familiar with, or who chose to ignore, Velikovsky's reconstructed chronology. But it needs to be understood that after 750 B.C., Velikovsky's dating corresponds closely with the conventional dating of the ancient world. Thus, the late conventional date of 800 B.C. would be placed by Velikovsky's dating in roughly the same era. In short, the inscription was made no later than the era of the prophet Isaiah.

You shall not murder.

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal.

You shall not testify against your neighbor as a false witness.

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor anything of your neighbor's.⁴⁹

Here we have evidence of a worldwide trading system. Barry Fell's revolutionary books demonstrate how early this trading system existed, especially his book, *Bronze Age America* (1982). There is no doubt that the Hebrews were involved in this trade. What could a distant Hebrew trader have done about Passover? The Bible does not say, but it seems clear that he would occasionally have missed a Passover celebration. There is no specific release provided in the law, but to have required Passover for every Hebrew, regardless of circumstances, would have restricted the spread of Hebrew culture and trade. The ten commandments would have been far less likely to have wound up on a rock in New Mexico. Thus, we have to speculate about the rule of God's law as applied by the priests. Was the "dominion mandate" or dominion covenant to be sacrificed on the altar of formal adherence to ritual requirements? Was the celebration of the Passover more important than the subduing of the earth? Should we not conclude that the laws associated with Passover were flexibly applied in cases where Hebrews had legitimate, world-subduing reasons to be absent from the festival?

The same problem faces modern keepers of the sabbath or Lord's day. What should the pastor do in cases where a church member must work on the traditional day of rest to keep his job, because of the nature of that job? Wouldn't the best approach be to go to the member and see whether he is taking another day for his rest? After all, the early church took Seventhday off in Israel, since it was the law of the land. Would it not be proper for the member to do the same? The priests of the Mosaic era must have taken other days off, family by family. Should we not regard modern laborers as priests? "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a

49. Jay Stonebreaker, "A Decipherment of the Los Lunas Decalogue Inscription," *The Epigraphic Society Occasional Publications*, Vol. 10, Pt. 1 (1982), pp. 80-81. Several of the papers in this issue deal with Los Lunas. Address: 6625 Bamburgh Dr., San Diego, CA 92117. For a photograph of the stone, see Barry Fell, *Saga America* (New York: Times Books, 1980), p. 167.

peculiar people . . .” (I Pet. 2:9a). No doubt, most priests rested on the national sabbath day in Israel. No doubt, most Christians rest on the Lord’s day. Would it not be proper to acknowledge the legitimate exceptions—profanations of the Lord’s day that are blameless?

Rural Life Forever?

We have to ask ourselves this fundamental question: *Did God establish the self-sufficient rural society as His perpetual societal standard?* Is this standard still morally binding on Christian cultures? The Mosaic sabbath was specifically created as a means of preserving an economy that adhered to a six-one rhythm of the workweek. Even the most seemingly trivial violation of the pattern, namely, stick-gathering, was to be punished by death. It is difficult for us to imagine the smooth operation of a modern industrial economy within the stated framework of Numbers 15. But the law was not perfectionist. It did allow exceptions with respect to Passover. It is likely that similar exemptions existed for other celebrations for Hebrews with unique occupations. But there is no list of exceptional occupations in the Old Testament which proves that such exceptions did exist, other than for the priesthood itself. It should be clear that anyone appealing to the elders for an exemption would have had to prove his case, namely, that his occupation unquestionably required seven-day operations.

It is true that automation is steadily reducing the number of people who must be employed on any given day, but engineers and emergency servicemen must be there to keep the equipment running. The moral issue of using services that require only a few men to violate the Lord’s day, simply because there has been a change in technology, is still a question of right and wrong. In any case, could such a technology ever have developed, had Sunday workers been prohibited from the very beginning in the light and power industry?

What the strict sabbatarian is calling for is a drastically reduced material standard of living one day per week, an alteration of modern life styles so radical that its consequences for the economy can barely be contemplated. The Puritan-Scottish interpretation of the Mosaic standard is undeniably rigorous: no cooked meals, no restaurants, no television, no radio, no newspapers delivered on Sunday or Monday morning (Sunday production),⁵⁰ no hot water

50. In Athens, Georgia, a university town, the Sunday newspaper in the 1950’s was delivered on Saturday night, and there was no Monday morning newspaper, James Jordan informs me.

for showers or shaving (unless produced by wood heat, solar power, or bottled gas), no commercial recreation centers, no air conditioning (unless powered by home diesel electrical generators or solar cells), no gasoline stations open (except one or two stations on a rotating basis, and only for servicing emergency vehicles or aiding legitimate travellers in an emergency—state-certified legitimate travellers), no supermarkets open for business, and endless forms to fill out in any commercial operation in order to justify the emergency nature of the sale, with fines and warnings for buyers and sellers for first violations, and death for repeated violations.

It should be understood that these conclusions are *minimal* ones; a strict sabbatarian civilization, if it is to remain true to its professed faith, would have to impose these restrictions, and it might very well find other wide-ranging applications of the sabbath principle. That contemporary sabbatarians, or even most of the sabbatarians since 1825, have refused to discuss the comprehensive specific proposals that follow from their position, has led to confusion on the part of church members. That anything so minimal as not going to a restaurant on Sunday has become the "litmus test" of strict sabbatarianism indicates just how misleading modern sabbatarianism has become. Closing all restaurants on Sunday would be the mere beginning, not the end, of civil legislation in a sabbatarian commonwealth.

A Proposal for Lord's Day Reform

What I am proposing is a consideration of the possibility that the Old Testament did make provisions for *an alternate sabbath observance schedule for people whose professions, by their very economic nature, require seven-day operations*. If so, then the New Testament Lord's day should also make provision for an alternate day of rest-worship for certain individuals. When some employees must work on the day of normal worship, the church could make another day of the week available for rest and worship. In our era, it would probably be Saturday, when the whole family is at home. If several churches with similar theological views made a single service available for their Lord's day workers, the fact that few members per congregation are in need of the alternative day would not be a pressing institutional problem. A few members from several congregations could meet to partake of the Lord's supper in the evening. In short, *the churches should make institutional provisions for those who are required from time to time to work on the day of rest*.

Certain professionals, such as policemen and firemen, are already granted a kind of unofficial "Lord's day-desecration voucher." They are not brought before the elders for working on Sundays. They are also paid by the civil government for their Lord's day-desecration activities. But this is an unofficial exemption. Sabbatarian churches (as far as I have been able to determine) make no official institutional alterations for these members to celebrate communion. These members are simply ignored. Elders "shrug off" the whole problem. Why not face the problem, and rethink the whole question of legitimate employment on the Lord's day, and legitimate communion meals on other days of the week?

Admittedly, corporations and small firms should see to it that no one employee is stuck permanently with Sunday (Firstday) assignments. This assignment should be rotated, so as not to disrupt men's worship on a permanent basis. But labor on the Lord's day is not automatically to be regarded as Lord's day desecration.

Priestly Exemptions

There is always the standard solution to the general problem posed by the steel industry example: the "works of necessity" argument. Perhaps this really is the right approach. The sabbatarian argues that steel is vital to the economy. Such an argument certainly seems reasonable. Then, since there appears to be no way to produce steel on any basis except seven days per week, the steel industry should receive a special dispensation from the church and the State which allows it to go on producing. While the Lord's day is profaned, the profaners are held guiltless. The owners (share-holding investors), managers, and laborers are treated as Christ said that God treated the priests in the temple. They are held innocent. Those associated with steel production have become "honorary priests." They are laboring in a vital industry, so this constitutes an assignment from God, comparable to God's assignment to his priests in Moses' day. They become exempt from the Lord's day prohibitions.

The church or State which takes this position has decided to become involved in endless appeals from industries that want to be reclassified as "priestly" in nature: vital to the economy *and* also innately seven-day operations because of the nature of the markets they face. What predictable, legal criteria would the State use to determine such questions? What constitutes a vital industry? Which industries, now just starting out, will (and should) be *allowed* by the

civil magistrates to *become* vital? Which industries used to be vital, but are no longer vital? Public utilities? (What about cable television service?) The healing professions? (What about cosmetic plastic surgery?) Should they be allowed to charge a fee for "emergency service"? What is an emergency service?

Having somehow solved the problem of providing legal definitions of vital services and products, the State's authorities would then have to decide what market pressures really face these industries. Are they really required to operate seven days a week? They may say that they are, but are they? What criteria should be used by civil magistrates to determine the true state of affairs? Which factors determine the economics of any particular profession or industry and its market? Foreign competitors (including competitors across the county line, or state line)? Consumers' buying habits (including consumers across the county line or state line)?

The One-World State

Perhaps most important, how can we grant such a decision-making authority to the civil government without seeing the creation of a vast, arbitrary, powerful bureaucracy? These questions concerning "works of necessity and mercy" and "true state of market competition" are enormously complex. They cannot even be decided on a local basis, given the worldwide division of labor. They cannot even be decided nationally. They have to be decided by a one-world State—a State that has the power to enforce its decisions.

The Mosaic sabbath was to be enforced in Israel, whatever its exemptions for specific occupations, despite tribal practices or preferences. With the breaking of the old wineskins of Israel's economy (taken in the broader sense of "economy"), the church that would impose the Mosaic sabbath laws now faces an enormously more difficult and complex task. How can it define the problem areas? How can it enforce its decisions internationally? And if solutions can be found to these questions, there is always the critical one remaining: How can a one-world State enforce the Mosaic sabbath without becoming top-heavy, imperial in nature, and a threat to the very idea of decentralized Christian institutions? How can the Mosaic sabbath be enforced in international markets without destroying the legal basis of freedom, namely, predictable law enforced by an impartial civil government?

Will sabbatarians now argue that nations have to come to an

agreement on the nature of the semi-priestly offices (e.g., steel workers, physicians, public utility workers) and the nature of the markets facing them? But what if one or more nations will not agree? If there is no enforcement mechanism internationally, will sabbatarians then argue that each nation must decide for itself, in terms of a hypothetical "national conscience"? And once they admit this exception, what is to prevent further extensions of this "conscience" exemption: to the states or provinces, to the counties, to the cities? What about to the churches? And finally, we find ourselves right back where the Apostle Paul began in Romans 14:5, namely, with the conscience of the individual Christian.

If sabbatarians refuse to allow conscience to decide, then the exegetical war will be carried right back up the chain of appeal: to denominational authorities, to the cities, counties, states or provinces, nations, and finally to the one-world State. Each level of government attempts to impose its view of the Lord's day on those below it. But the Mosaic law does not tell men what to *do* on the sabbath, and the New Testament does not tell men *how* to rest. Will we need a world State to enforce laws against idle talk (Isa. 58:13)? What will constitute, or should constitute, lawful recreation? Is walking through a garden lawful? How about running through a garden? How about running after a ball in a meadow in front of paying spectators? On worldwide television? And if some nation's rulers decide that playing football (soccer) on worldwide television is immoral, then watching it is equally immoral. Will they set up jamming stations to keep out the satellite broadcasts? (Operating State-owned or State-licensed jamming stations will unquestionably be classified as a sabbatical work of necessity.)

Leisure

We do not know for certain how Adam and Eve spent their first sabbath, although it seems likely that they ate of the forbidden fruit on this day. We do not know how they spent their second sabbath, though it probably was outside the garden. We do not know how the sabbath operated from Adam and Eve until the Hebrews experienced the manna that would not come on the seventh day. We do not know how the Hebrews spent their sabbaths. We know a little about what they were not to do, but nothing for certain about what they did.

We know what the early Christians did on the Lord's day: they worked for a living. At the end of the day, they went to a meeting

and ate the Lord's Supper.

We have sufficient revelation to know that the *normal* pattern of the week is to rest one day and work for six. Must we always work six days? The Mosaic law said yes, in general, but it also established other feast days and days off. There are problems of applying God's word to specific cases.

These were precisely the problems faced by new Christians in Romans 14:5. They are our problems, too. Which days off are legitimate? Which day should men take off during the week? None? One (Sunday or Saturday)? Two (Saturday and Sunday)? Three (Saturday, Sunday, and Monday, given the trade unions' pressure to create three-day holidays whenever an American national holiday rolls around)? What is the answer? What is the incontrovertible, conscience-binding answer that all Christians must respect, since it is so clear exegetically and historically? Which is the morally and legally binding day for rest?

The answer is not so easy to produce. Sunday (the Roman name for Firstday) is the common day of worship and therefore *preferable*, although the early church could not always adhere to it as the day of rest. But some members will have to work on Sunday, at least part of the day. In practice, the churches tend to acknowledge this economic reality, so long as the individual shows up one Sunday out of three or four. Why make exceptions at all? Why not get every member to quit his job if it requires Sunday labor? Because the church officials are more realistic when they count the tithes than when they write their sabbatarian tracts. They do not want trouble. They acknowledge in practice what their tracts deny: men do have legitimate callings that appear to be seven-day operations by economic necessity. Cows need milking, and churches need their tithes.

This raises the question of legitimate leisure. What should men do for leisure? Also — a question virtually never discussed by sabbatarians — what kinds of leisure are legitimate on the other six days of the week? God's law gives no indication that the six days of labor in a normal week were to involve leisure activities. With the exception of national (nonweekly) sabbaths, and the various feast periods (Deut. 14:23-29), men were told to work six days a week. Yet it is obvious that people cannot long sustain a life of zero leisure six days a week — not if they are to maintain their productivity. They sleep, they eat, and they chat. They teach their children (Deut. 6:7). Presumably, families enjoy some hours of leisure during the day. But the Bible

says nothing about such leisure, or when it is legitimate to enjoy it during the week or during the day. It leaves this decision to the individual conscience, within the framework of family schedules and occupational requirements. If idle talk—"speaking thine own words" (Isa. 58:13)—is prohibited on the Lord's day, then is it legitimate on the other six days? If doing "thy pleasure" is prohibited on the Lord's day, then is it legitimate on other days? Or are these things prohibited generally, but *especially* on the Lord's day?

Should we cancel all Sunday-delivered and Monday morning newspapers? Sunday papers are read on Sunday. If delivered before sunrise, perhaps they could be set aside for reading on Monday, but Monday morning papers are produced on Sunday. Should Christians subscribe only to afternoon papers to avoid this problem?

Bishop J. C. Ryle had answers, or at least strong opinions, in regard to lawful and unlawful leisure on the Lord's day. "When I speak of *private Sabbath desecration*, I mean that reckless, thoughtless, secular way of spending Sunday, which every one who looks around him must know is common. How many make the Lord's Day a day for giving dinner parties—a day for looking over their accounts and making up their books—a day for reading newspapers or novels—a day for talking politics and idle gossip—a day, in short, for anything rather than the things of God. . . . When I speak of *public desecration of the Sabbath*, I mean these many open, unblushing practices, which meet the eye on Sundays in the neighbourhood of large towns. I refer to the practice of keeping shops open, and buying and selling on Sundays. I refer especially to Sunday trains, Sunday steamboats, and excursions to sea and country, and the opening of places of public amusement; and to the daring efforts which many are making in the present day, to desecrate the Lord's Day, regardless of its Divine authority."⁵¹ (Sabbatarians have always had problems with large towns.)

This is quite a list of desecrations. But let us add some more. What about watching television on the Lord's day? Not allowed? Then what if we could make videotape recordings on the Lord's day with our electronically controlled videotape tape machines (with automatic timers)? Not even then, by the consistent logic of sabbatarianism, for men and women must labor at power-generating sta-

51. John Charles Ryle, *Lord's Day or the Christian Sabbath* (London: Lord's Day Observance Society, n. d.), pp. 17-18. He wrote in the late nineteenth century.

tions and television stations in order to deliver the programs to our lifeless videotape machines.

What about listening to music? With a church choir, it is obviously legitimate. What about classical music? At the park? Aren't the performers working? What if they are offering their services voluntarily? What if they are amateurs? Possibly legitimate. What if they are professionals who are paid on other days of the week to practice, but who then play on Sunday? Who pays them? The city? This is socialism. A private corporation? This is business (advertising). A charitable organization? Possibly valid.

What about listening to a radio broadcast of classical music? Not if you use public power or public airwaves. Then again, is classical music really valid? Should we regard it as Christian? Would we allow listening to folk music as a Lord's day activity? After all, is folk music or popular music any less secular than Wagner or Beethoven? Choirs sing words, and words are a form of preaching. Choir music is therefore valid on Sunday—music performed “in his sanctuary” (Ps. 150:1); all other music, delivered anywhere but in church, is either suspect or outright illegal, given the Mosaic law.

How do we settle these issues by means of legislation? How do we create an enforcing bureaucracy to police such activities without jeopardizing freedom? How can sabbatarian expositors go on writing tracts without providing plausible biblical answers to these practical, inevitable legal questions? How, in short, can we legitimately remove these questions from the area of human conscience and transfer their enforcing to an agency of institutional government, other than the family, where the father's conscience *may possibly* be given legitimate authority over other people? If men must struggle intellectually and morally to discover concrete answers to Lord's day questions for their own lives, businesses, and families, then how can we expect the institutional church or the civil government to come to recognizably valid, freedom-protecting conclusions? In short, *how will we design institutional restraints on the bureaucrats?*

Additional Questions

There are other questions that need practical answers. A corporation or business may permit people employed by it to take a day off each week, yet the firm remains open seven days a week. The example of a restaurant is useful here. The restaurant may remain open on Sunday, helping to make a day of rest available to housewives.

Some of the employees must work on Sunday, but their labor makes it easier for families to enjoy a meal together without putting burdens on the wives. Most of the employees are given another day off. They take a day of rest on a day other than Sunday, just as members of the early church did.

Is a Business a Person?

Here are some fundamental questions. If the firm splits working schedules for Sunday laborers, allowing them to attend morning or evening worship services, has it profaned the Lord's day blamefully or blamelessly? If workers take another day off, has the firm forced its employees to violate the Lord's day? If so, then everyone who spends money in that restaurant on Sunday is as guilty as the proprietor and the employees. Second, is the firm to be treated as a person? Must a firm remain closed one day each week, even when employees are given alternate days of rest?

The problem exists, especially in an urban, industrial society, because of the high division of labor and high specialization of production. Companies serve the needs of large numbers of people. The rhythm of rural, subsistence farming can be more easily geared to a six-day workweek than the rhythm of an industrial society. *The workweek's rhythm in an industrial society is necessarily flatter*, since its members are far more dependent upon the availability, moment by moment, of services of other citizens than is the case in a low division of labor rural society. Urban dwellers do not produce many goods for their own personal use; they produce specialized services or goods for sale. If we can legitimately buy natural gas or electricity from a public utility in order to cook our Sunday meal, then why is it illegitimate to buy a meal at a restaurant? Either both acts are blameful violations of the Lord's day, or neither, assuming that the selling firm does not require seven days of consecutive labor from individual employees.

Cooking on the Lord's Day

The Mosaic sabbath in the wilderness seems to have required the baking of manna on the sixth day; they ate cold cakes on the sabbath. Will strict sabbatarians call for the death penalty of anyone cooking on the Lord's day? If not, why not?

The issue of cooking on the Lord's day is a difficult one. The Hebrew women probably cooked their manna cakes on the sixth day

during the period they spent in the wilderness. We are not told specifically in the Mosaic law that cooking was permanently abolished on the seventh day. At the same time, the experience in the wilderness was to have given them indications concerning the cooking schedule preferred by God, and that schedule involved storing up cooked food the day before the sabbath, just as it involved storing up extra firewood.

When we come to the New Testament, we face a more difficult problem. The Lord's day should be timed from dawn to dawn. The communion meal in the first-century church was an evening meal. Must we conclude that this communion meal, the central weekly event in the life of the corporate church, prohibited the eating of freshly cooked food? Does the Sunday evening meal have to be cooked on Saturday night or even earlier on Saturday? Would we not expect the wives in the early church to have prepared their best meal of the week for this night? On the other hand, is the Lord's day to become a day of cooking competition? In modern churches, the existence of Sunday evening church suppers stands as a testimony to sabbatarian confusion.

Meals, whether cooked or leftovers, leave messes behind. What are wives to do, leave the crumbs lying on the table for the benefit of rodents and insects? But if they clean up the table and kitchen in their households, haven't they violated the Lord's day? If so, is this a case of Lord's day desecration comparable to the desecration of the priests, that is, blameless? May they use hot water to wash dishes? Can they legitimately (blamelessly) draw such hot water out of the tap? If so, someone is on duty at the local public utility company, serving the needs of the Lord's day-desecrating wives. It takes power to heat water. It also takes a water company to deliver water that is to be heated.

The modern church has given no systematic thought to these issues. The Protestant churches have their Sunday evening covered dish suppers, and no one goes away feeling guilty about having cooked on the Lord's day or having eaten cooked food on the Lord's day. But the ethical question still remains: Is cooking on the Lord's day a sin?

Evading the Problems

These are relevant issues. The fact that they are not discussed seriously by modern defenders of the Puritan-Scottish sabbath is an indication of the political impotence of those who defend it. They

write their booklets, preach their sermons, and occasionally force a nonsabbatarian pastor or elder out of the denomination, but they do not address their tracts to those who make decisions, or who might possibly make decisions in the future, in the world of business and government. Their tracts and booklets fail to speak to these issues. They are written as if we were still in the deserts of Palestine, as if paper and ink were not produced for international markets, as if the steel in printing presses could be produced in a six-day workweek. These men are rather like the ecologists of the late 1960's who decried pollution and then climbed into their automobiles to be driven to airports, where they flew on mass-polluting jet planes in order to give their emotion-laden speeches — at a profit, of course.

The writers of sabbatarian tracts would better spend their time in dealing with the real questions, *the questions of conscience*. What are the guidelines that pastors should use in counselling guilt-ridden congregation members who realize that they have ignored the one-six pattern of covenant man's week? How should pastors and elders teach the Lord's day, in order not to pressure excessively those who have not fully understood the implications in their own lives of the Lord's day, but who still need instruction? *How can leaders deal with ignorance without violating consciences?* This is the focus of Romans 14:5. Here is where we need tracts, books, and seminars.

Sabbatarian Debates in England

After this appendix was typeset, I went on vacation. In a Church of England book store in London, I discovered a copy of John Wigley's *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Sunday*, published by Manchester University Press in 1980. This book is a scholarly survey of the debate over sabbatarianism from Puritan days until this century, but with its focus on the nineteenth century. I decided to add a summary of this little-known history to this appendix.

What I learned from the book is that many of the issues that I had raised in this appendix had been discussed at length throughout the period, 1550-1900, and in many cases, the debates had been taken to Parliament for reconciliation. Parliament never seemed to be able to reconcile them. Thus, the seemingly hypothetical arguments found in my theoretical discussion of various sabbath issues were far from hypothetical in English history.

Wigley's book presents evidence that the most decisive changes in English attitudes and manners took place between 1780 and 1830,

the period of the early industrial revolution. Wigley cites several authorities, including Charles Dickens, to this effect (p. 1). Each social group had different values and manners, and all were subject to changes in the nineteenth century (p. 2). He argues that English sabbatarianism was the primary influence on the Victorian sabbath, and that it was an integral aspect of English life and history.

The sabbath debates began long before 1780. Sunday amusements were prohibited by law by the Sunday Observance Act of 1677, which was passed not in the Cromwell era but over a decade and a half into the Restoration era of Charles II. A century later, in 1780, Anglican evangelicals were able to pressure Parliament to pass an Act which made it illegal on Sunday to charge admission to places of entertainment (p. 3). They wrote in a loophole for themselves, however, which was to be taken advantage of by their opponents a century later: religious organizations were allowed to charge a fee.

Elizabethan and Puritan England

In the mid-sixteenth century, the Church of England had no clear-cut teaching with respect to the sabbath. In 1569, Queen Elizabeth authorized certain sports on Sunday: archery, leaping, running, wrestling, and oddest of all, hammer throwing. In 1574, she authorized other sports, but forbade them during church services. Bear-baiting and bull-baiting were prohibited (p. 14). A 1580 law against Sunday plays in London pushed plays into Southwark (p. 15), an early indication of the problem faced by all strictly local sabbatarian legislation: geographical escape. Then, in 1595, Nicholas Bownde published his strongly sabbatarian book, *The True Doctrine of the Sabbath*: no saints days during the week, and no recreations on Sunday. Controversy increased from that time until the Puritan Revolution of the 1640's.

In 1618, James I issued his *Book of Sports*, in which he reaffirmed the legality of Elizabethan Sunday sports. His recommended Sunday was recreation-oriented. The English Calvinists, following Bownde rather than Calvin, were outraged. Many non-Calvinists in the Church of England shared their views. Restrictions on Sunday travel were passed in 1625 and 1627 (p. 19). The debate accelerated after 1633, when Arminian Archbishop Laud promulgated Charles I's rewrite of his father's *Book of Sports*, and required it to be read in the churches. Essentially, the debate was between the "marathon sabbath" Puritans and the "recreation sabbath" traditionalists.

During the Puritan era, 1642-1660, the Parliament abolished all remaining saints' days and holy days, along with Christmas and Easter, and substituted the second Tuesday every month as a holiday for apprentices. Why there was a legitimate exception to "six days shalt thou labor" was not explained. This was the Act of 1647.

The problem of technology arose in this era. What about occupations that seem to be seven-day operations? "In 1657 two Acts forbade between them milling, cloth-making, tallow-melting, baking, brewing, soap-boiling and distilling—trades in which natural contingencies, market pressures and technical considerations made it difficult to avoid Sunday work" (p. 23). But as the author says, Parliament met on Sundays during emergencies. Furthermore, Cromwell was no sabbatarian.

The debates continued. The rival opinions concerning the proper administration of the sabbath proved to be irreconcilable. Many of the same disagreements persist today. "Even before the Civil War disputes about the commandment's meaning had raised disconcerting issues of principle. If the Fourth Commandment no longer applied in its full and original force, did the other nine? If it applied to all men, was a servant right to disobey his master's order to work on the Sabbath? Who should judge in such cases? Now extremists claimed that the Sabbath should be kept from sunset on Friday till sunset on Saturday, mystics believed that Sabbath-keeping destroyed true spiritual religion, the Quakers taught that there should be no distinction of days and the Diggers began to cultivate St George's Hill on a Sunday. No less a person than Milton thought that the only true guide and authority in such matters was the individual's conscience" (p. 24). The question arises: How can society find rest from these interminable disagreements? How can church and State be governed by God and be blessed by God if God-fearing people have discovered no way, at least so far, to come to an agreement about these issues?

The Traditional Sabbath

The Puritan era and its legislation lapsed in 1660, when Charles II came to the throne, but sabbatarian pressures continued. The Sunday Observance Act of 1677 was the king's attempt to forestall a more rigorous bill being considered by the House of Commons. It prohibited all Sunday labor except for emergencies and charity, and prohibited all retail trade, except for the general sale of milk and

meat for inns and other restaurants. It severely restricted Sunday travel (p. 25). Opposition began almost immediately, for sabbatarian ideas were beginning to lose their popularity. The Act was more closely enforced in rural areas; in the cities, retail sales were overlooked where custom allowed, except during worship services.

What about honoring the sabbath in the home? Would it be a feast day or a fast day? Different groups took differing positions. Some upper class members ate uncooked meals, banished secular reading, newspapers, horseback riding, needlework, and painting on Sunday. Others used the day for huge feasts, toured the kennels and gardens, and ate a light supper, thereby allowing servants to attend the evening meeting (p. 83). For most Englishmen, it became traditional to have the best meal of the week on Sunday. The middle classes followed this tradition, but generally avoided recreation. There the matter rested—with regional tradition as the primary guide—for a hundred years.

In the 1780's, sabbatarianism had a revival (p. 26). In the 1790's, sabbatarianism was set in contrast to the anti-sabbath 10-day week of the French Revolution. Loyalty to Britain and sabbatarianism became linked (p. 27). William Wilberforce, who was later to take up the cause of abolitionism, in the late 1780's became a moderate sabbatarian. Parliament reacted negatively to these views in the 1790's, loosening some of the old requirements of the 1677 law, legalizing bakers' work from 9 A.M. to 1 P.M. Sundays, when they could sell puddings and meat pies (the poor man's Sunday dinner). In a very real sense, the home sabbath made itself felt in the marketplace; the law was revised in order to favor an easier celebration of the home feast. Parliament rejected several attempts over the next 30 years to outlaw Sunday newspapers (p. 27).

In the 1820's, the sabbatarians emerged as a determined group with a strong sense of mission (p. 30). Rev. Daniel Wilson preached a series of sabbatarian sermons in 1827. In 1831, he helped found the Lord's Day Observance Society (LDOS), which still exists. (It published F. N. Lee's dissertation, *The Covenantal Sabbath*, in 1972.) In the 1830's, Sir Andrew Agnew, a one-issue member of Parliament, introduced a sabbatarian bill four times, and it was defeated each time. It is interesting that the bill exempted the labor of servants in households. The fourth commandment, he argued, gave masters complete religious and civil authority over their servants (p. 38). Wigley comments: "The Sabbatarians' distinction between 'private' and 'public'

behaviour enabled them to avoid a fundamental challenge to the rights of property. They defended the right of the private property owner to use his servants, his horses and his grounds without any interference; but claimed the right to regulate that which was corporately or nationally owned, such as railways and the Post Office" (p. 46). This represents a continuing compromise, or at least confusion, among sabbatarians. Is the civil government the enforcer inside the family? If not, then the sabbath principle is not primary but secondary to the rights of private property, at least in this one area. But if the State can impose no sanctions here, why is it allowed to in "public" property, meaning private property outside the household?

By the 1840's, the 1677 law was close to a dead letter. Fines were small, the authorities preferred not to enforce it, and prosecutions brought by individual citizens did not often lead to convictions (p. 53).

Urban, Industrial Society

The 1830's and 1840's were years of rapid development of railroads. The sabbatarians organized politically to keep trains from running on Sundays. Some rail companies tried to honor their wishes. The Liverpool & Manchester restricted Sunday operations and actually inaugurated a scheme whereby sabbatarian shareholders could donate to charity that portion of corporate profits that were generated by Sunday traffic. The North Eastern adopted a similar practice. Most companies restricted traffic during worship hours. Demand was small, so this was reasonable. All refused total closure, however (p. 54). This did not satisfy the sabbatarians.

The Post Office Act of 1838 enabled the Postmaster General to compel trains to operate a Sunday mail train, and firms added passenger cars in order to gain some revenues. In 1846, the final attempt to prohibit Sunday rail traffic was introduced into Parliament. It failed (p. 57).

The Post Office in 1847 announced its intention to send mail through London on Sundays. The Lord's Day Observance Society began a campaign to reverse this decision, and also to cease Sunday collecting and delivering of the mail. Eventually, Sunday mail delivery ceased, as a result of trade union pressures, long after the sabbatarians had ceased to be a political factor, but the movement of the mail went on. Some Post Office employees, then as now, had to work on Sundays.

Other sabbatarian societies were formed in this period: the Evangelical Alliance and the Wesleyan Methodists. John Henderson, a Glasgow merchant, began a national essay contest on the benefits of sabbath observance. Other groups followed his lead, and a tradition of annual prizes was begun. Wigley says that these contests and the publication of the essays transformed the controversy. What had been primarily a debate over religion became a debate over practical benefits of the sabbath. The essays did not ask for legislative action; they advocated total abstention from Sunday amusements (p. 65). These essays were generally non-theological in nature; they were practical. Understandably, the LDOS took no part in promoting them.

In 1851, the Great Exhibition opened. This monumental exhibition of the wonders of mid-century technology transformed the thinking of a generation. In 1852, a private company took it over as a business venture, and the firm announced its intention to open it on Sunday afternoons. This created a huge wave of protest. Tracts aimed at every sector of society poured off the presses, with different arguments for each class. The government inserted into the firm's charter the language of the 1780 Act, that no money payment could be collected. This was a victory for the sabbatarians.

There was a loophole in the 1780 Act which was exploited in the late 1860's. The Act exempted religious organizations from restrictions on taking in money. One anti-sabbatarian, Baxter Langley, organized his followers into a "free unsectarian church," registered it under the Toleration Act of 1688, and began selling reserved seats to Sunday evening lectures. The government could not prosecute the group successfully (p. 125).

In 1855, working men protested a Sunday trading bill which would have permitted open shops. A crowd of 150,000 turned out on Sunday, June 24, to protest the support that Chartist radicals were giving to the bill. The shops remained closed.

The next crisis was provoked by a radical M.P., Sir Joshua Walmsley, who in 1855 and 1856 introduced legislation to allow the British Museum to open on Sundays. It was supposed to be an alternative to Sunday drinking. Sabbatarians were outraged. The bills did not pass. Then Sir Benjamin Hall, Commissioner of Works, began promoting military band concerts in the parks. The sabbatarians were again outraged. This was national desecration. Prime Minister Palmerston later stopped the concerts (p. 70). So the theo-

retical question I have raised concerning music in the park is not hypothetical; it became a serious political issue.

The Middle Classes

Wigley argues that the appeal of sabbatarian ideals to middle class people gave it great strength. A new appeal, based on practical benefits rather than an appeal to the Bible, became increasingly prominent within sabbatarian circles. He calls this *social sabbatarianism*. "Social Sabbatarianism was of enormous importance. It moulded and enlivened the controversy for almost fifty years. It allowed the Sabbatarians to avoid authoritarianism and to champion the working classes. It allowed Nonconformists to assuage their consciences and to defend the civil observance of the Sabbath. It allowed M.P.'s to reconcile their *laissez-faire* principles with their religious values, for no legislation was called for, merely the defense of the *status quo*" (p. 72). But it was a departure from the earlier sabbatarianism, and on many occasions, defenders of a religious sabbath refused to join with social sabbatarians in "the great cause." As the pragmatic arguments weakened, especially as the century wore on and more leisure time was made available to workers, the religious sabbatarians recognized the epistemological weakness of social sabbatarianism. "Six days shalt thou labor" became five and a half, and in this century, five; Sunday amusements also appeared to be beneficial, so the pragmatic arguments no longer carried as much weight. But the religious sabbatarians had been pre-empted by 1900, and few people listened to them any longer.

The leisure of the high-capital late nineteenth century was not characteristic of the low-capital era of the late eighteenth. There is no doubt that the industrial revolution increased the number of working days in the late eighteenth century. For example, the Bank of England (the private central bank) steadily reduced the number of holidays from 46 in 1761 to 4 in 1836 (p. 74). The 12-hour, 6-day industrial workweek became the norm as the industrial revolution gathered strength. Sabbatarians could appeal to overwork as one reason for a legislated sabbath. But they steadfastly refused to promote a law which would prohibit masters from working servants on Sundays. The theological justification: acts of mercy and necessity (p. 78). This was an exemption for rural lords at the competitive expense of the industrial managers.

Wigley presents the interesting case of W. H. Smith, the Chris-

tian founder of the giant book store chain. Smith invoked the "acts of necessity and mercy" exemption when he decided to publish the names of the dead and wounded during the Crimean War in 1855. On the other hand, he refrained from walking outdoors on a visit to Canada, to avoid giving the impression of being a sightseer. On the other hand, he complained when his Sunday evening bath was late, blaming the assertive attitudes of Canadian hotel workers (p. 78). Convenience, predictably, triumphed over theology.

What about the Sunday operation of profit-seeking public utilities? This is not a hypothetical example. In the 1840's, some private water companies had left parts of London without water on Sundays (p. 82).

In the 1870's, numerous secular organizations formed lecture societies. Libraries began to remain open on Sundays. So did free art galleries (p. 131). The sabbatarians opposed all such violations. In 1884, Herbert Spencer, the evolutionist and defender of pure *laissez-faire*, remarked that a dispute over the opening of a reading room on Sunday could split a mechanics' institute (p. 1).

By the late 1880's, sabbatarians had generally lost public support. In 1896, the government finally voted to allow the opening of the British museums and national galleries on Sundays (p. 147). There was no opposition from the churches or the denominational newspapers. The twentieth century, especially after World War I, saw the end of most relics of the 1677 and 1780 laws.

Wigley's summary of the problem is remarkably similar to my own discussion of the economic questions raised by the sabbath in an industrial civilization, especially with respect to the differing rhythms of the workweek. "Sabbatarianism was an inappropriate way to provide rest, for it applied a simple, essentially pre-industrial, religious prescription to a complex, essentially urban, social problem. Sabbatarians avoided the difficulties which a complete cessation of labour would have produced for themselves by requiring servants to work and applying the formula 'acts of necessity and mercy,' but failed to appreciate that society at large similarly needed the work of some railwaymen, shopkeepers and the like, whose work rhythm ran counter to that of the rest of the community. Sabbatarianism thus justified some Sunday work, but regarded the unjustified as sin for condemnation, rather than as a problem suitable for social reform" (p. 79).

Self-Imposed Irrelevance

It is also revealing that the LDOS refused in 1855 to enter into the political question of the half-Saturday movement, which would have required employers to provide the afternoon off. It merely established a committee to look into the subject, and they were not required to report back. One Presbyterian minister argued that anything less than six full days of work was generosity on the part of employers which went beyond God's justice (p. 80). So the sabbatarian commitment to one day off seemed to imply no rest for the other six days. When, then, would men receive time for recreation, which was banned on Sunday? The sabbatarians have never faced this issue. Their concern as sabbatarians is not with rest, and their concern as neo-Puritans is with work.

Frederick Peake, the LDOS's secretary, made the society's position clear in a statement in 1895, one which summarized three centuries of sabbatarianism. The issue is not rest. The issue is enforced religious behavior. "Anything [on Sundays] that is not distinctly religious is wrong. . . . We should hardly make it purely a question of 'rest.' We . . . seek the religious observance of the Lord's day as the primary thing, and the question of human rest . . . as a secondary matter arising out of that" (p. 153).

The Sunday school movement had been developed in the late eighteenth century in order to provide religious education for the children of the poor. But some sabbatarians objected when Sunday schools began teaching newly literate children to write, "arguing that it was not necessary to be able to write to understand the Bible, and writing was thus a secular employment, unfit for the Lord's day" (p. 81). The controversy gathered force in the early years of the nineteenth century. The Wesleyan Methodist Conference passed such an anti-writing measure in 1808. This controversy divided sabbatarians. In the 1840's, the sabbatarians had succeeded in most independent congregations in stamping out the practice (p. 82).

The LDOS became progressively more consistent and progressively out of touch with reality. It criticized Charles Spurgeon's allowing his sermons to be telegraphed to Cincinnati on Sunday mornings. It criticized book sales in church. (At least it did not have to deal with the issue of book deliveries on Sunday with payment coming on a work day; churches were not likely to extend credit in this era.) In 1892, the *Quarterly Paper* of the LDOS said that Salvation

Army bands "have done untold harm" (p. 141). The LDOS thereby forfeited the support of Nonconformist leaders. It also opposed the use of automatic vending machines in the 1880's, despite the fact that no labor was involved (p. 153). In short, the issue was not rest; the issue was the marathon sabbath—self-denial for God, not external convenience and rest. As the Society announced in response to a 1909 attempt to pass a pro-sabbatarian law that had been drafted by the National Hygienic League, "This determination to settle the whole matter on the basis not of Divine Law but of personal convenience, with a flavouring of humanitarian sentimentality . . . a most threatening danger" (p. 165).

What the LDOS and strict sabbatarians had accomplished in over a half century of non-cooperation with other "less rigorous" brethren and allies was to demonstrate the political irrelevance of their position. They had taken the "moral high ground"—so high that they were in the heavens and of little earthly use to the cause of restful Sundays. They had adopted the marathon sabbath position of certain segments the non-industrial seventeenth-century English Puritans, and had suffered the consequences.

Conclusion

Several questions should be raised. Did the failure of the Lord's Day Observance Society come because of their political intransigence? If so, was this intransigence biblically valid? Were the leaders correct in refusing to compromise with anything that was not "pure marathon sabbath"? Was the LDOS doomed at the end because of an increasingly secular society? Or was it doomed from the beginning because the "marathon sabbath" is neither biblical nor suitable in an urban civilization?

There really were public debates over the timing of the sabbath, the locus of sovereignty of enforcement (Milton's locus: conscience), travel on Sunday, feast day vs. fast day, "seven-day-per-week" technologies, railways, public utilities, defining "mercy and necessity," servants' labor on Sundays ("mercy and necessity" . . . for the masters), mail delivery and shipping, newspapers, museums, bakeries, and the appropriateness of cooking on Sunday. There were debates, but there were no definitive answers. Eventually, people grew tired of debates that could not be resolved, and the honoring of the sabbath became a matter of conscience. Milton's suggestion became a social reality.

The summary provided by Wigley is accurate, but it indicates the extent to which sabbatarianism brought Christians little credit in English history, even though a day of rest was universally acknowledged at least in principle to be a blessing. The marathon sabbath did not survive, and it is understandable why it didn't.

In the depression-stricken countryside of the 1880's no harvest work was done on Sundays, but the migrant Irish labourers were thought to be heathens because they sang and danced after returning from Mass. Protestant English farmers' children were taught to 'remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day.' Of course the manservant and the maid-servant had to milk the cows, that was necessary work [but]'. . . Nobody ever read a newspaper or whistled a tune except hymns . . . on Sundays.' [Allison Uttley, *The Country Child* (Penguin ed., 1970), pp. 222, 206.] No wonder the Sabbatarians quoted the Fourth Commandment as given in Exodus and ignored the version in Deuteronomy (5: 14) 'that thy man servant and thy maid servant may rest as well as thou.'

The most characteristic feature of Sabbatarianism and of the Victorian Sunday which it produced was the attempt to proscribe Sunday amusement and recreation, and over the course of the century this had had different effects on each class. By encouraging church and Sunday school attendance, and drawing a picture of domestic comfort, the Sabbatarians had given the lower classes a standard at which to aim. But by doing so they had undermined the festal Sunday tradition in accordance with which the lower classes already cleaned and dressed themselves on Sundays. They wanted a day of abstinence, whereas the workers kept a holiday, a feast not a fast.

The abstemious Sunday was better suited to those who spent their week in easy circumstances than to those who labored for their bread. The Sabbatarian standard and the Victorian Sunday were essentially middle class phenomena. They produced a day which had a funeral character, notorious for its symbols—the hushed voice, the half-drawn blind and the best clothes. When adopted by the lower classes these symbols produced the respectable poor. Neville Cardus, the (Manchester) *Guardian's* cricket correspondent, remembered William Attewell, in 1912 cricket professional at Shrewsbury School: 'Each Sabbath, after our mid-day meal, he put on a hard stiff collar. I recollect his struggles with it. "Cuss it," he would protest, "but ah mun do it; it's the Lord's day." ' (p. 185)

Conclusion

Questions concerning the proper form of Lord's day observance, not to mention the proper role of the institutional church and civil government in enforcing Lord's day observance, are extremely com-

plex. This is one reason why Paul assigned to the individual conscience the task of sorting out these problems. They are too complex, and too disputed, for the institutions of government to apply sanctions. This was not the case in rural Israel, when the sabbath was primarily negative—refraining from normal, profit-seeking labor one day per week—and the civil government's role was also negative, namely, prohibiting commercial trade and restricting most of a family's daily routine. When the Lord's day became both a day of rest and a day of corporate worship, its emphasis changed, and the State's role in protecting the Lord's day was radically altered. When the sabbath day, or the Lord's day, became a day which *emphasizes* positive worship, the State ceased being a reliable agency of enforcement.

The Lord's day is essentially a day in which the normal routine of work is broken—a ritual testimony of a man's reliance upon God's grace rather than his own labor. It is a day of inactivity one day in seven with respect to one's source of income and to one's area of daily responsibility for labor. It is an admission that man is not sovereign, that man rests on God's creative work, that man cannot bring his work to completion apart from God, that man's efforts are limited, and that autonomous man cannot, even with a seven-day workweek, expect to prosper. It is a symbolic announcement that *man must rest in the grace of God*, and that he can rest one day per week in confidence that God honors His covenant with His people. It takes faith to honor the Lord's day—faith in the terms of the covenant, and faith in the ability of God to fulfill His part of the compact.

The Lord's day of rest-worship forces men to schedule their lives more efficiently, to take time for rest. It forces them to order their workweek carefully, buying in advance, storing up goods in preparation for the Lord's day. It forces wives to get their homes cleaned before the day of rest. It forces people, in short, to establish *budgets*, rather like the budgets necessitated by the requirement of the tithe. In this case, however, what is budgeted primarily is *time*, not money. A family's week is to have a God-honoring one-six rhythm.

The break from the normal work routine was required of the priests of Israel, but other responsibilities forced the priesthood as a whole to maintain seven-day operations. What was required of individual priests was not required of the priesthood as a whole. The corporate body of priests had to offer sacrifices daily; each individual priest could reschedule his workweek to permit him to rest on another day, if it was his day to offer sacrifices on the sabbath. *God*

distinguishes between organizations and the individuals who make up the organizations. A six-day workweek was required of individual priests and their families, but not the priesthood as a unit.

Modern Christians are priests. They are sometimes assigned tasks on the Lord's day that are vital to the economic survival of the firm. The decision as to whether the seven-day workweek is really crucial to the economic survival of the firm is made in terms of several criteria: the decision of the owners; the decisions of employees and potential employees whether they are violating their consciences in working on the Lord's day; and the decisions of customers who decide whether they are violating the sabbath principle in spending their money on the products or services of the Lord's day-profaning company. We are not told how the priests of the Old Testament worked out the mid-week day of rest for those who had to offer sacrifices on the sabbath. We are not told exactly how the sorting out of the Lord's day issue would be done in modern, industrial, post-resurrection societies. Some men regard all days the same. Others regard one or more days as special. Each man should be convinced in his own mind (Rom. 14:5).

What we must understand is this: the fact that Paul now assigns to the individual human conscience the task of making the decisions concerning rest, leisure, and employment on the Lord's day does not mean that all days are the same during the week. Man's conscience must make the decision for man, but this does not mean that God's revelation is not clear regarding the special nature of the Lord's day. It does not mean that the one-six pattern is invalid in New Testament times. It means only that from an *institutional* standpoint, Paul removed the civil government and the church courts from the position of decision-makers. With respect to the day of rest-worship, the external sanction of the Old Testament economy, the death penalty, has been abolished. It has been abolished along with the duty of the civil government to impose sanctions on individuals or firms that choose to work on the Lord's day.

The fact that individual conscience is assigned the task of decoding the limits of the Lord's day activities has not subjectivised the reality of the sabbath principle of rest-worship. The sabbath principle of rest-worship is still intact. But God has determined that the complexity of Lord's day observance is too great for the church or State to enforce. The requirement of honoring one day in seven is still with us, but not all people see this, and hardly any group agrees

concerning the exact ways in which any profit-seeking firm or individual must honor the sabbath principle. God will be the final judge, not the earthly institutions of government. There are objective standards, but they must be interpreted subjectively, person by person, in the New Testament era. We have been given specific revelation to this effect with respect to the sabbath, and we must honor this revelation.

It solves few if any concrete sabbatarian problems to read into Leviticus 23:3 an Old Testament sabbath version of the New Testament's requirement of positive worship on the Lord's day. The testimony of the Old Testament is clear: Seventhday was generally (and possibly even exclusively) a day of *rest*, except for a few priests in the temple. It is equally futile to read into Exodus 35:3 a highly symbolic and hypothetical interpretation concerning "strange fire." Clear texts should be used to interpret obscure texts. Even more to the point, clear texts should not be turned into obscure texts. Exodus 35:2 is clear: death for working on the sabbath. Exodus 35:3 is also clear: no kindling of fires. An apologetic for a hypothetical "less rigorously enforced Old Testament sabbath" which is then said to be in continuity with a church government-enforced and State government-enforced New Testament Lord's day—an apologetic based on "strange fire"—is clear to practically nobody, which is why we find no similar line of argumentation in the historic creeds. It also fails to explain the sharp discontinuity which was announced by Paul in Romans 14:5 and Colossians 3:16.

In short, if Paul's words are not taken at face value, a whole series of problems arises. Few churches have been willing to face these problems squarely over the last two hundred years, and none has been willing so far to deal forthrightly with the question of the death penalty in Exodus 35:2. There is no way, biblically speaking, to escape the necessity of imposing the death penalty on persistent sabbath violators, unless we interpret Romans 14 as having changed the locus of enforcement from the civil government to the individual conscience. If Paul was not speaking about the Old Testament sabbath in that passage, then Exodus 31:15 and 35:2 are still morally and legally binding, and Christians must forthrightly call for the civil government to abide by God's sabbatical standards, and to begin executing sabbath breakers.