

JOHN OWEN’S EXERCITATIONS CONCERNING THE NAME, ORIGINAL, NATURE, USE, AND CONTINUANCE, OF A DAY OF SACRED REST¹

I. INTRODUCTION

John Owen’s “Exercitations Concerning the Name, Original, Nature, Use, and Continuance, of a Day of Sacred Rest,” presents a proof and refinement and adjustment of the doctrine which may arguably be called the English Puritan doctrine of the Sabbath.²

“English Puritan Sabatarianism” had its origins in the ancient and medieval church and the writings of the Reformers, but really germinated and sprouted among participants of the Elizabethan Puritan “prophesyings,” of East Anglia.³ These were local preaching conferences where Reform minded pastors would mutually sharpen their theological and homiletical skills while feeding the flocks of towns like Cambridge, Dedham, Norwich, and Bury St. Edmunds. One of their participants, Nicholas Bownd, first published his exposition as *The True Doctrine of the Sabbath* in 1595. Particular aspects of Bownd’s doctrine were variously developed and debated, but it would become standard in Presbyterian, Congregationalist and Baptist confessional statements and in Puritan expositions in

¹ John Owen, *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, ed. W. H. Goold, vol. 19, *Works of John Owen* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1862), 265. Henceforth, quotations from this work will be cited only by page numbers in parentheses.

² For an extensive overview of the subject see James Augustus Hesse, *Sunday, its origin, history, and present obligation: considered in eight lectures preached before the University of Oxford in the year MDCCCLX on the foundation of the late Rev. John Bampton, M.A., Canon of Salisbury*. London: J. Murray, 1860. For a careful analysis of the historical development of the doctrine in the Puritan era, see James T. Dennison, Jr., *The Market Day of the Soul: The Puritan Doctrine of the Sabbath in England, 1532-1700* (Landham, Md., University Press of America) 1983.

³ Bownd, Nicholas, *Sabbatum Veteris Et Novi Testamenti: or The True Doctrine of the Sabbath, A Critical Edition with Introduction And Analysis*, by Chris Coldwell (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books) 2015.

England and America through and beyond the seventeenth century even to the present.⁴

What are these main tenets of this Puritan doctrine? First, that the observation of the Sabbath is a perpetual and universal moral law, a creation ordinance and not ceremonial. Second, the *seventh day* aspect of its divine institution is *positive law*, like other associated ceremonies of the law of Moses which may be altered according to the will of God. Third, under the New Testament, consequent to Christ entering His rest after His work of “new creation,” the day is changed from the seventh to the first day of the week, not by ecclesiastical authority or tradition, but by God. Fourth, this New “Sabbath Day” or “Lord’s Day,” ought now to be sanctified by being wholly devoted to God in public and private works of piety, mercy and with the avoidance of secular works and cares.

Owen’s work on the Sabbath comprises 198 pages of his second introductory volume of his 7 volume Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews, delivered in 5 “Exercitations” which, after the introductory one, loosely correspond to the 4 basic premises of our doctrine as presented by Bownd and in Westminster and Savoy. If one compares it with the seminal work of Bownd he may notice a significant difference of emphasis. Even though quite

⁴ Some of the many works assuming and defending this view of the Sabbath are Henry Burton, *A Brief Answer to a Late Treatise of the Sabbath Day Digested Dialogue-Wise between Two Divines, A. and B.*, Early English Books Online (hereafter EEBO) (Amsterdam: J.F. Stam, 1635); George Walker, *The Doctrine of the Sabbath Wherein the First Institution of the Weekly Sabbath, with the Time Thereof, the Nature of the Law Binding Man to Keep It, the True Ground, and Necessity of the First Institution, and of the Observation of It, on the Severall Day in the Old Testament, and Also of the Moving of It to the First Day under the Gospel, Are Laid Open and Proved out of the Holy Scriptures. Also besides the Speciall Duties Necessarily Required for the Due Sanctification Thereof ... Deliverd in Divers Sermons by George Walker B. of Divinity and Pastor of St. John Evangelists Church in London.*, EEBO (Amsterdam: By Richt Right press, 1638); George Abbot, *Vindiciæ Sabbathi, Or, An Answer to Two Treatises of Master Broads the One, Concerning the Sabbath or Seaventh Day, the Other, Concerning the Lord’s-Day or First of the Weeke: With a Survey of All the Rest Which of Late Have Written upon That Subject / by George Abbot*, EEBO (London: Printed for I.D. for Henry Overton and are to be sold at his shop ..., 1641); Hamon L’Estrange, *God’s Sabbath Before, under the Law and under the Gospel Briefly Vindicated from Novell and Heterodox Assertions / by Hamon L’Estrange*, EEBO (Cambridge Cambridgeshire: Roger Daniel ..., 1641); William Gouge, *The Sabbaths Sanctification ... by W.G.*, EEBO (London: G.M. for Joshua Kirton and Thomas Warren ..., 1641); Thomas Shepard, *Theses Sabbaticæ, Or, The Doctrine of the Sabbath Wherein the Sabbaths I. Morality, II. Change, III. Beginning, IV. Sanctification, Are Clearly Discussed, Which Were First Handled More Largely in Sundry Sermons in Cambridge in New-England in Opening of the Fourth Commandment: In Unfolding Whereof Many Scriptures Are Cleared, Divers Cases of Conscience Resolved, and the Morall Law as a Rule of Life to a Believer, Occasionally and Distinctly Handled.* EEBO (London: T.R. and E.M. for John Rothwell ..., 1650); Isaac Penington, *The New-Covenant of the Gospel Distinguishd [sic] from the Old Covenant of the Law and the Rest or Sabbath of Believers, from the Rest or Sabbath of the Jews, Which Differ as Much from Each Other, as the Sign and Shadow Doth from the Thing Signified and Shadowed out: In Answer to Some Queries of W. Salters, Tending to Enforce upon Christians the Observation of the Jewish Sabbath ... Whereto Are Added Some Considerations Propounded to the Jews, Tending towards Their Conversion to That Which Is the Life and Spirit of the Law / by Isaac Penington*, EEBO (London: Printed for Robert Wilson, and are to be sold at his shop ..., 1660). John Bunyan, *Questions about the Nature and Perpetuity of the Seventh-Day Sabbath and Proof That the First Day of the Week Is the True Christian-Sabbath.* EEBO (London: Printed for Nath. Ponder ..., 1685); *A Defense of the Christian Sabbath in Answer to a Treatise of Mr. Tho. Bampffield Pleading for Saturday-Sabbath / by John Wallis*, EEBO (Oxford: L. Litchfield and are to be sold by Chr. Coningsby, 1692); Benjamin Keach, *The Jewish Sabbath Abrogated, Or, The Saturday Sabbatarians Confuted in Two Parts: First, Proving the Abrogation of the Old Seventh-Day Sabbath: Secondly, That the Lord’s-Day Is of Divine Appointment: Containing Several Sermons Newly Preach’d upon a Special Occasion, Wherein Are Many New Arguments Not Found in Former Authors / by Benjamin Keach*, EEBO (London: Printed and sold by John Marshall ..., 1700). See also the bibliographies in Dennison Jr., (1983) and Coldwell (2015), *supra*.

controversial, Bownd devotes less than 30 % to proving the doctrine and 70 % to its practical application, while Owen, writing after seven decades, devotes nearly 88 % of his work to proof and only 18 % to practical application. By 1670 it was clear that there was need for an even stronger case, a comprehensive and *definitive* proof of the Lord's Day Sabbath against even greater opposition. 2) Owen felt that many of the expositions of the *practice* of the Lord's Day were, as he put it, too "Mosaical," and lacking in the liberty of the Gospel. What was needed was not further instructions on practice, but correction of principle.

Though they have much to offer to us for the topic of this conference, time permits only a brief introduction. So, let us take advantage of the hour to get better acquainted with this great work.

II. EXERCITATION I: DIFFERENCES CONCERNING A DAY OF SACRED REST

In this first introductory exercitation Owen makes an earnest plea for our careful examination of the subject.

A. The Importance of the Issue for Owen and Us

He begins by calling our attention to the two-fold importance of the issue for all Christians: we must believe what is true, and we must practice accordingly--

Whatever, therefore, doth contribute help and assistance unto us in either of these [i.e. faith and practice], according to the mind of God, is to be highly prized and valued. Especially it is so in such a season as this, wherein the former of them is greatly questioned, and the latter greatly neglected, if not despised. But if there be any thing which doth equally confirm and strengthen them both, it is certainly of great necessity in and unto religion, and will be so esteemed by them who place their principal concerns in these things. ...

"Christian religion," he says, "may be considered two ways:"

—first, as it is publicly and solemnly professed in the world, whereon the glory of God and the honour of Jesus Christ do greatly depend; and, secondly, as it prevails and rules in the minds and lives of private men,—neither of them can be maintained without a due observance of a stated day of sacred rest. Take this away, neglect and confusion will quickly cast out all regard unto solemn worship (263).

So, the understanding and practice of *true religion* are dependent on the right understanding and practice of the *day of sacred rest*.

Underlining the necessity of the study is the multitude of controversies which have arisen over *every aspect* of the doctrine: Is there a time devoted to worship? Is that moral

or by positive command? If moral, can it have arbitrary parts? Is positive law ceremonial positive or moral positive? Was it from creation or first appointed in the wilderness? If moral, can it have additions to it that give it a distinct new state, though the same day? Is there a foundation in the 4th commandment for a particular day which foundation may be removed and give reason for a change of day? Is the obligation to keep the day bound to the Mosaic law such that the removal of that law carries with it the removal of the day? Does this mean that all religious observation of days is so taken away as to prevent the observation of even any Sabbath? On the other hand, if it is a creation ordinance to be observed by virtue of the fourth commandment, does this mean that it is to be observed *precisely* by virtue of the 4th commandment, or is there some reason to believe it has a new foundation giving its practice a new character? On what ground is a day for observation changed? Is there some reason to restrict it to precisely one day in seven? Upon what authority (Christ, apostles, or church) is the day changed from the last to the first day of the week? By what method is this change, by express institution or directive example? If by the church, is it binding upon later times? Is the first day binding today, or may it be changed? How is it to be observed practically? What hours of day shall be observed? Owen addresses all of these issues. (268-71)

Finally, resolving these things is important on account of *the evil consequences of the way these issues have been handled*. “It has come to pass,” he says, “that although God made man upright, and gave him the Sabbath, or day of rest, as a token of that condition, and pledge of a future eternal rest with himself, yet, through his finding out many inventions, that very day is become amongst us an occasion and means of much disquietment and many contentions. . .” (272). Some have disputed against the sanctity of any particular day, resulting in “an open, visible neglect in the most of any conscientious care in the observance of it,” while others, in reaction to this, have gone into the opposite error of a “Judaical Sabbath, both as to its institution and manner of its observation.” Its neglect has, consequently, “been a great, if not a principal, occasion of that sad degeneracy from the power, purity, and glory of Christian religion. . .” (272).

Conscious of the deceitfulness of sin, and its destructive influence when men are engaged in theological dispute, Owen calls us to humility coupled with jealous care over ourselves: “so ought the consideration of it to affect us with tenderness and forbearance towards those who dissent from us, and whom we therefore judge to err and be mistaken” (272).

B. Theological Principles for Determining the Answer

At the beginning of his treatise, Owen describes the fundamental principles of his method, principles which are still often neglected in the contemporary debate. The first, he says, is “express testimonies of Scripture.”

Where this light doth not go before us, our best course is to sit still; and where the word of God doth not speak in the things of God, it is our wisdom to be silent. Nothing, I confess, is more nauseous to me than magisterial dictates in

sacred things, without an evident deduction and confirmation of assertions from Scripture testimonies (273).

Secondly, these many scriptures must be handled according to the “analogy of faith.” This is much more than the mere listing of supporting proof-texts. It requires the right use of reason in the handling of those texts. In opposition to those who deny the use of reason in theology, he makes the following astute remark:

To understand aright the sense and importance of the words in Scripture testimonies, the nature of the propositions and assertions contained in them, the lawful deduction of inferences from them, to judge and determine aright of what is proposed or deduced by just consequence from direct propositions, to compare what in one place seems to be affirmed with what in others seems to be asserted to the same purpose or denied, with other instances innumerable of the exercise of our minds about the interpretation of Scripture, are all of them acts of our reason, and as such are managed by us. But I must not here further divert unto the consideration of these things. Only I fear that some men write books about them because they read none. This I know, that they miserably mistake what is in controversy, and set up to themselves men of straw as their adversaries, and then cast stones at them (274).

Owen exemplifies this in his carefully thought out, exegetical, redemptive-historical, logical examination of scriptural testimony on the subject

Owen’s third principle for coming to a conviction regarding the day of sacred rest is not so familiar to us and may be met with some hesitation. He says, “The dictates of general and uncorrupted reason, suitable unto and explained by Scripture light, is another principle that we shall in our progress have a due regard unto.” Here he has in mind not the reasoned interpretation of scripture *per se*, but the scripture’s stamp of approval upon what is evident from “the light of nature” (if we were not under the dominion of sinful prejudice). In particular, since

the separation of some portion of time to the worship of God is a part of the law of our creation, the light of nature doth and must still, on that supposition, continue to give testimony unto our duty therein. And although this light is exceedingly weakened and impaired by sin in the things of the greatest importance, and as to many things truly belonging unto it in our original constitution so overwhelmed with prejudices and contrary usages that of itself it owns them not at all, *yet let it be excited, quickened, rectified, by Scripture light*, it will return to perform its office of testifying unto that duty, a sense whereof and a direction whereunto were concreated with (275, emphasis mine).

His fourth point is to have respect to “the custom and practice of the church of God in all ages,” including the Old Testament, since “great weight may certainly be laid upon

its harmonious consent in any practice relating to the worship of God.” A practice confirmed in all ages of the church must “have an everlasting obligation in it, on all that worship God, as such never to be altered or dispensed withal” (275).

Fifth, “A due consideration of the spirit and liberty of the gospel, with the nature of its worship, the reasons of it, and the manner of its performance, is to be had in this matter.” This is actually a crucial matter. Sabbath observance, like all Christian worship, *must* reflect the “nature, genius, and reason” of the gospel. Consequently, “*If, therefore, such a sabbatical rest, or such an observation of it, be urged, as is inconsistent with the principles and reasons of evangelical worship, as is built upon motives not taken from the gospel, and in the manner of its observance interferes with the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, it discovers itself not to belong unto the present state of the worshippers of God in Christ.*” (276, emphasis mine.) Owen’s Christocentricity is demonstrated right here: present observance of the Sabbath, like all observation of all spiritual and moral precepts since the coming of Christ, must be evangelical, which is to say it must be Christocentric, or it is without foundation in scripture and consequently positively anti-Christian. This is nothing beyond what one would expect a student of the book of Hebrews to conclude.

Sixth, there is what we might call the test of practice. As he put it,

The tendency of principles, doctrines, and practices, to the promotion or hinderance of piety, godliness, and universal holy obedience unto God, is to be inquired into. This is the end of all religious worship, and of all the institutions thereof. And a due observation of the regular tendency of things unto this end will give a great discovery of their nature and acceptance with God. Let things be urged under never so specious pretences, if they be found by experience not to promote gospel holiness in the hearts and lives of men, they discover themselves not to be of God. Much more when principles and practices conformable unto them shall be evidenced to obstruct and hinder it, to introduce profaneness, and countenance licentiousness of life, to prejudice the due reverence of God and his worship, do they manifest themselves to be of the tares sowed by the evil one. And by this rule we may try the opinion which denies all divine institution unto a day of holy rest under the new testament. (276)

C. The Name of the Day

The final portion of this exercitation deals with the name of the day. “Sunday” was used by early Christians merely to communicate with the heathens. Calling it the “Sabbath” would be confusing, since the heathens identified Sabbath with the Jewish Sabbath, and to call it “the Lord’s Day” would still have the heathen uncertain which day of the week was in view. The pagans named their days for their deities, the planets, or their number in the week (“their natural order within their hebdomadal revolution”). Regarding the continuation of the pagan names for the days, he says, “As they are now riveted into custom and usage, claiming their station on such a prescription as in some measure takes

away the corruption of their use, I judge that they are not to be contended about; for as they are vulgarly used, these names are mere notes of distinction, of no more signification than first, second, and third, the original and occasioned imposition of them being amongst the many utterly unknown.” Nevertheless, those who reject these pagan names should not be reproached: they have good reason for so doing, since the faithful were forbidden (Ex. 23:13, Deut. 12:3, Joshua 23:7) to use the names of other gods.

So, what shall the scripturally prescribed “day of rest” be called. In the Old Testament, “It was and was to be called ‘the Sabbath day,’ ‘the Sabbath of the LORD.’” But what about the New? It was called “the first day of the week.” Owen says this is, “the indigitation of such a day, and the discrimination of it from the other days of the week, but it is no proper name for a day of sacred rest,” i.e., it just describes the occasion of the resurrection without being anything like an official designation for the day. On the other hand, for several good reasons, which he expounds, it may be called “the Lord’s Day,” and this was the way Christians ordinarily referred to the day among themselves.

On supposition, therefore, that such a day of rest there is to be observed under the new testament, the name whereby it ought to be called is “the Lord’s day;” which is peculiarly expressive of its relation unto our Lord Jesus Christ, the sole author and immediate object of all gospel worship. But whereas the general notion of a sabbatical rest is still included in such a day, a superaddition of its relation to the Lord Christ will entitle it unto the appellation of “the Lord’s-day Sabbath;” that is, the day of sacred rest appointed by the Lord Jesus Christ. And thus, most probably, in the continuation of the old testament phraseology, it is called “the Sabbath day,” Matt. 24:20, and in our Epistle comes under the general notion of a sabbatism, chap. 4:9. (286-7)

III. EXERCITATION II: OF THE ORIGINAL OF THE SABBATH

A. Significance of the origin of the Sabbath.

Owen’s next step is to examine the important question of the *origin* of the Sabbath. Here he is speaking of the antiquity of the day. This is important because--

if it began with the world, probably it had a cause cognate to the existence of the world and the ends of it, and so must in duration be commensurate unto it. If it owed its rise to succeeding generations, amongst some peculiar sort of men, its cause was arbitrary and occasional, and its continuance uncertain; for every thing which had such a beginning in the worship of God was limited to some seasons only, and had a time determined for its expiration. This, therefore, is first to be stated (287).

The importance of this must not be overlooked as it is vital to the question of the nature of the Sabbath and its place in Old Testament and New Testament religion. From the 16th century to the present it has been a fundamental question, pertinent to a number of arguments raised in that debate.

To prove the point he will first refute the opinion that it first instituted at Marah as recorded in Exodus 15 (287-291). This opinion was not universal among the Jews, however. There were others who said it was revealed in the Wilderness of Sin (Exodus 16:22-26). Owen acknowledges the reference to the Sabbath there, but argues that this was not the first revelation of it. Rather, “those who deny its original from the beginning, or a morality in its law, cannot assert that it was first given on Sinai, or had its spring in the decalogue, nor can give any peculiar reason why it should be inserted therein, seeing express mention is made of its observation some while before the giving of the law there” (293). The *only* thing to commend this view is that it provides a setting for the revelation of the Sabbath prior to the revelation upon Sinai *other than* the explanation which would make it moral and universal. At this point, Owen addresses another argument advanced today,

And those of this judgment, some of them, contend that in these words of Moses, Gen. 2:3, “And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it, because that in it he had rested from all his work,” a prolepsis is to be admitted; that is, that what is there occasionally inserted in the narrative, and to be read in a parenthesis, came not to pass indeed until above two thousand years after, namely, in the wilderness of Sin, where and when God first blessed the seventh day and sanctified it. And the reason given for the supposed intersertion of the words in the story of Moses is, because when it came to pass indeed that God so blessed the seventh day, he did it on the account of what he was then relating of the works that he made, and the rest that ensued thereon (293-4).

B. Genesis 2: 1-3

No, Owen argues that the first revelation of the Sabbath rest was given in Genesis 2: 1-3, adding—

But set aside prejudices and preconceived opinions, and any man would think that the institution of the Sabbath is here as plainly expressed as in the fourth commandment. The words are the continuation of a plain historical narration. Having finished the account of the creation of the world in the first chapter, and given a recapitulation of it in the first verse of this, Moses declares what immediately ensued thereon,—namely, the rest of God on the seventh day, and his blessing and sanctifying that day whereon he so rested. That day on which he rested he blessed and sanctified, even that individual day in the first place, and a day in the revolution of the same space of time for succeeding generations. This is plain in the words, or nothing can be thought to be plainly expressed. And if there be any appearance of

difficulty in these words, “God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it,” it is wholly taken away in the explication given of them by himself afterwards in the fourth commandment, where they are plainly declared to intend its setting apart and consecration to be a day of sacred rest.(295-96)

He has a few more biting criticisms of those who want to make the description of the sanctification of the Sabbath day in Genesis 2 to explain a law not revealed until the Exodus:

But of so monstrous and uncouth a prolepsis as this would be, which is supposed, no instance can be given in the Scripture or any sober author, especially without the least notice given that such it is. And such schemes of writing are not to be imagined, unless necessity from the things themselves spoken of compel us to admit them, much less where the matter treated of and the coherence of the words do necessarily exclude such an imagination, as it is in this place; for without the introduction of the words mentioned, neither is the discourse complete nor the matter of fact absolved (300).

C. **Hebrews 4:3-4 and God’s Rest**

Next, he makes his first comments upon Hebrews 4:3-4, pointing out that it refers to several rests and this one, when his “works were finished from the foundation of the world,” was the first of them.--

And first he fixeth upon the sabbatical rest of the seventh day, as that which was the first in order, first instituted, first enjoyed or observed. And this, he says, ensued upon the finishing of the works of creation.... The works and the finishing of them did not at all belong to the apostle’s discourse or purpose, but only as they denoted the beginning of the seventh day’s sabbatical rest; for it is the several rests of God alone that he is inquiring after. ‘The first rest mentioned,’ saith he, ‘cannot be that intended in the psalm; because that rest began from the foundation of the world, but this mentioned by David is promised,’ as he speaketh, ‘so long a time after.’ And what was this rest? Was it merely God’s ceasing from his own works? This the apostle had no concernment in; for he treateth of no rest of God absolutely, but of such a rest as men by faith and obedience might enter into,—such as was that afterwards in the land of Canaan, and that also which he now proposed to them in the promise of the gospel, both which God calleth his rests, and inviteth others unto an entrance into them. Such, therefore, must be the rest of God here intended; for concerning his rest absolutely, or his mere cessation from working, he had no reason to treat: for his design was only to show that notwithstanding the other rests that were proposed unto men for to obtain an entrance into them, there yet remained another rest, to be entered into and enjoyed under the gospel. Such a rest, therefore, there was instituted and appointed of God from the foundation of the world immediately upon the finishing of the works of creation; which fixeth immovably the beginning of the sabbatical rest (301-302).

D. **Observed by the Patriarchs**

In support of its antiquity he also argues that it was observed by the patriarchs, something, he says, is held by all who hold its antiquity, and denied by all who hold it to be first given in the Exodus. But what evidence is there that they observed it? In response, Owen compares it with the revelation concerning the institution of sacrifices.

The Sabbath we find expressly instituted; and therefore do and may justly conclude that it was constantly observed, although that observation be not directly and in terms mentioned. Sacrifices we find constantly observed by holy men of old, although we read not of their express institution; but from their observation we do and may conclude that they were instituted, although that institution be not expressly recorded. But yet as there is such light into the institution of sacrifices as may enable us to justify them by whom they were used, that they acted therein according to the mind of God and in obedience unto his will, as we have elsewhere demonstrated; so there want not such instances of the observation of the Sabbath as may confirm the original divine institution of it pleaded for (302).

There are other arguments for patriarchal practice, however. The supposed institution at Marah is actually an example supporting this. Another is God testifying his assurance that Abraham would command his children to keep the ordinances and statutes and charge of the Lord. It is plain that God had revealed, and the people had received unspecified ordinances and statutes. They could not have worshipped God agreeably to his statutes and by faith without some divine revelation of them.

E. **Recognized by Pagans**

Owen makes another, quite lengthy and interesting argument, with many citations from scripture and pagan authors, of demonstrating the universal notion of what he calls the “hebdomadal revolution of time,” i.e., the division of time into weeks.

But whence the hebdomadal revolution, or weekly period of time, should make its entrance and obtain a catholic admittance, no man can give an account, but with respect to some impressions on the minds of men from the constitution and law of our nature, with the tradition of a sabbatical rest instituted from the foundation of the world (309)

F. **Renewed in the Wilderness**

Was the law first given to the Jews in the wilderness? No, but it was renewed there, “accommodated unto the pedagogical state of the church of the Israelites.” His point? “It is no argument, therefore, that this command was not, for the substance of it, given before to mankind in general, because it hath some modifications added in the decalogue, to accommodate it to the present church and civil state of the Hebrews, as likewise had the fifth

commandment in particular (314). The point is, that even the fact that it was delivered in the wilderness is no argument that it was not delivered as a creation ordinance, because other creation ordinances were also re-published in the wilderness (316). Further details concerning this “accommodation” are given in Exercitation IV.

G. **Supposed lack of rebuke against non-compliance of the heathen..**

Another argument against the antiquity and universality of the Sabbath law is that, unlike some other commandments, God did not rebuke the gentile nations for violating the Sabbath, therefore it was not a law revealed to them. Owen provides several answers. “God reproveth the profane feasts of the heathen, and therein unquestionably the neglect of them that were of his own appointment” (318). Just because the gentile people did not have the Law of Moses, does not imply that they were free of its obligations. They were lost, and if they were to be saved they must become Jews, which would have meant coming under the Sabbath law.

IV. **EXERCITATION III: OF THE CAUSES OF THE SABBATH**

Having demonstrated that the Sabbath is a creation ordinance, Owen proceeds to show its *significance as a creation ordinance*. This is in order to determine the issue which is absolutely crucial to understanding the nature of and abiding relevancy of the Sabbath: whether the Sabbath is moral or positive, or if is mixed, in what way are moral and positive aspects mixed, and with what results. His presentation will include an explanation of the nature of moral vs. positive law, the meaning of the “law of nature,” “natural light,” and how the observance of one day in seven or of a particular one of those days becomes moral or positive law.

A. **Meaning of Moral and Positive Law**

Owen begins by describing the importance of drawing the distinction between moral and positive law, and then makes the following helpful explanation of the difference and importantly, the significance of each.

Positive laws are taken to be such as have no reason for them in themselves,— nothing of the matter of them is taken from the things themselves commanded,— but do depend merely and solely on the sovereign will and pleasure of God. Such were the laws and institutions of the sacrifices of old; and such are those which concern the sacraments and other things of the like nature under the new testament. *Moral laws* are such as have the reasons of them taken from the nature of the things themselves required in them; for they are good from their respect to the nature of God himself, and from that nature and order of all things which he hath placed in the creation. So that this sort of laws is but declarative of the absolute goodness of

what they do require; the other is constitutive of it, as unto some certain ends. Laws positive, as they are occasionally given, so they are esteemed alterable at pleasure. Being fixed by mere will and prerogative, without respect to any thing that should make them necessary antecedent to their giving, they may by the same authority at any time be taken away and abolished. (329).

Some laws may be mixed, with moral and positive elements, which “God can separate at his pleasure, and taking away that which is positive, leave only that which is absolutely moral in force.” He calls these “moral-positive.” The Sabbath is such a law.

What Owen is aiming at here lay the foundation for both the obligation of the perpetuity of the Sabbath, and the possibility of the change in the day. His position is this: that there is a “sacred sabbatical rest unto God, of *one day in seven*, to be enjoined unto all that fear him, by a law perpetual and indispensable, upon the account of what is moral therein”(332). Now, this is important: “The reason, I say, of the obligation of the law of the Sabbath is moral, and thence the obligation itself universal; however, the determination and declaration of the day itself depend on arbitrary revelation and a law merely positive (332).

B. **“Rest” as a Moral Law**

In order to establish this he must first discuss the idea of the “sacred rest ” as connected with the law of our creation. The rest in view is not an absence of activity, but something answering to the ultimate purpose of our creation, something that takes time. “The general notion of the Sabbath is, ‘a portion of time set apart, by divine appointment, for the observance and performance of the solemn worship of God.’” (332) Mankind was made for worshipping God with all that we receive from Him, including our time. So, Owen says, “upon its own account, firstly and directly, a separation of a part of it unto God and his solemn worship is required of us.”

So now the question remains, how much and what particular portion of time is proper? Owen answers, “This is declared and determined in the fourth commandment to be the seventh part of it, or one day in seven. And this is that which is positive in the command; which yet, as to the foundation, formal reason, and main substance of it, is moral.

The moral obligation of worship of God is based upon, i.e., answerable to, the revelation He has made of Himself, and in that revelation He has indicated a “hebdomodal” cycle of work and “Sabbath rest.”

in the work and rest of God thus stated did the whole rule of the obedience of man originally consist; and therein was he to seek also his own rest, as his happiness and blessedness; for God had not declared any other way for his instruction in the ends of his creation,—that is, his obedience unto him and blessedness in him,—but in and by his own works and rest. This, then, is the first end of this holy rest. (335)

This will be clearer as we consider the “ends” of the Sabbath.

- First, That we might learn the satisfaction and *complacency that God hath in his own works, Gen. 2:2, 3;*
- that it might be a *pledge unto man of his rest in and with God; for in and by the law of his creation, man had an end of rest proposed unto him, and that in God*
- Consideration was had of the *way and means whereby man might enter into the rest of God proposed unto him. And this was by that obedience and worship of God which the covenant wherein he was created required of him*

Next, Owen describes the “Law Commanding the Sabbath.” Man was created a rational creature, under a covenant of rewards and punishments,” and with “respect unto the especial nature of that covenant.” Following a brief analysis of notions about the “Law of Nature” Owen says this law of creation, “comprised every thing whereby God instructed man, in the creation of himself and of the universe, unto his works or obedience, and his rest or reward. And whatever tended unto that end belonged unto that law .” He goes on to say, and this is important, “*Whatever was designed to give improvement unto those notions and his natural light, to excite or direct them,—I mean in the works of nature, not superadded positive institutions,—doth also belong thereunto*” (343). Okay, he is going to be talking about what was revealed to Adam by his observation of God taking His rest on the seventh day--

And whereas the innate light and principles of his own mind informed him that some time was to be set apart to the solemn worship of God, as he was a rational creature made to give glory unto him, so the instruction he received by the works and rest of God, as made under a covenant, taught him that one day in seven was required unto that purpose, as also to be a pledge of his resting with God. 344.

So, he comes to this conclusion--

And thus was the Sabbath, or the observation of one day in seven as a sacred rest, fixed on the same moral grounds with monogamy, or the marriage of one man to one woman only at the same time; which, from the very fact and order of the creation, our Saviour proves to have been an unchangeable part of the law of it. (343).

This, to me, is a powerful argument. Against the idea that the obligation of Sabbath observance was not revealed before the Exodus, and that Genesis 2:2-3 was inserted to explain it is this fact: Jesus, referring to the same part of scripture, to that same creation period, and establishing what is unarguably a creation ordinance, says, “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’?” (Matthew 19:4–5). The one gloss, according to Jesus, is the word of the Creator, establishing what was to be true from the beginning, the other, according to

these interpreters, is the word of Moses explaining an ordinance issued thousands of years later.

C. Colossians 2:16-17

One of the key texts for many who argue that the commanded weekly observance of the Sabbath is Colossians 2:16-17. It is often confidently asserted, as if it were altogether beyond doubt that the sabbaths referred to there as perishing certainly include the weekly ones. Owen argues that it cannot be “absolutely proved ... that the weekly Sabbath is in any sense intended in these words of the apostle; for he may design the sabbatical years which were instituted among that people, and probably now pressed by the Judaizing teachers on the Gentile proselytes.” Rather, “our apostle chargeth the Galatians,—as far distant from Canaan as the Colossians,—that when they began to Judaize, they observed years, as well as days, and months, and times; which could respect only the sabbatical years that were instituted by the law of Moses.” To argue that he means to include the weekly Sabbath is to unwarrantably remove it from the moral law. The simple use of the common word “sabbath” for designation is not sufficient warrant.

Owen’s argument is four-pronged: first, the context is dealing with the imposition of Judaical laws, of which there are plenty of Sabbaths in addition to the weekly Sabbath.

(1.) It is known and confessed, that at that time all Judaical observations of days, or the days which they religiously observed, whether feasts or fasts, weekly, monthly, or annual, were by themselves and all others called their sabbaths, as we have before evinced. And that kind of speech which was then in common use is here observed by our apostle (382).

(2.) It is evident that the apostle in this place dealeth with them who endeavoured to introduce Judaism absolutely, or the whole system of Mosaical ceremonies, into the observation of the Christian church. Circumcision, their feasts and new moons, their distinctions of meats and drinks, he mentioneth directly in this place. And therefore he deals about these things so far as they were Judaical, or belonged unto the economy of Moses, and no otherwise (383)..

Secondly, he argues that such an understanding is unorthodox: “(3.) It cannot be said that the religious observance of one day in seven, as a holy rest unto God, is abolished by Christ, without casting a great reflection of presumption on all the churches of Christ in the world.” (383).

Third, the observance of a weekly Sabbath, in distinction from these other Sabbaths, is moral law, and therefore must be exempted from exclusion based on the cessation of the ceremonial law.

Herewith fall the arguments taken from the apostle’s calling the Sabbath in this place “a shadow;” for it is said that “nothing which is moral can be a shadow.” It is

true, that which is moral, so far as it is moral, cannot be a shadow. We therefore say, that the weekly observation of a day of rest from the foundation of the world, whereunto a general obligation was laid on all men unto its observation, the command whereof was a part of the moral law of God, was no shadow, nor is so called by the apostle, nor did typify good things to come.

The opponents in the 17th century and today, argue it was ceremonial and therefore, not moral. Owen counters, it was moral, therefore not ceremonial, therefore not included among these Sabbaths. How can this be resolved? Owen (and Dr. Vickers in this very conference) has shown us the resolution—conclusively demonstrating that it *was* moral. *Q.E.D.*

We find that Owen’s next remarks make up a fourth prong, when he argues that there are accoutrements to the weekly observance which are positive, or, as we might say, accidental not substantial to its observance, and what may be rejected under the new covenant. This goes to continue the standard argument—the observation of the day is moral, the choice of the particular day is positive.

But that which is in its own nature moral, may, in respect of some peculiar manner of its observance, in such a time or season, and some adjuncts annexed unto it, in respect whereof it becomes a part of ceremonial worship, be so far and in those respects esteemed a shadow, and as such pass away. In brief, the command itself, of observing one day in seven as a holy rest unto God, hath nothing Aaronical or typical in it, but hath its foundation in the light of nature, as directed by the works of God and his rest thereon. [As] for its limitation precisely to the last day of the week, with other directions and injunctions for and in the manner of its observance, they were Mosaical, and as a shadow are departed, as we shall manifest in our ensuing Exercitation (384).

V. EXERCITATION IV: OF THE JUDAICAL SABBATH

The objective in this Exercitation IV is to show that the Mosaic law included additions to the Sabbath day observance which are not unalterably fixed to its substance. This additional materials pertain only to the Mosaic law, or Old Covenant which passed away. Consequently, they have no bearing on the question of the morality or perpetuity of the Sabbath per se, nor, as we will see later, to its practical observance under the New Covenant. Let us see how he argues this.

He begins by reminding us that the seventh-day Sabbath was given to man in the Covenant of Works as a “token and pledge of God’s rest in that covenant,... of the interest of man in that rest” and “a means of entrance into it.” For this reason, he says, “ it should have been observed in the state of innocency.” There is no reason “why it should be

thought accommodated only to the administration of the covenant under the old testament after the giving of the law.” Owen here is reminding us that the idea of “rest” even the periodic cessation of labor on the Sabbath, was present even before it was commanded at Sinai. So, the question is, “what place, as such, it had in the Mosaical economy, whereon the true reason and notion of the Sabbath as peculiarly Judaical doth depend” (387)? That is what we need to know now, what change, if any, was made to the Sabbath in its renewal under Moses?

As the result of the great corruption of man by the fall, when God would renew the knowledge of himself and man’s duty toward him in the posterity of Abraham, he did so by a renewal of the “precepts of the law and covenant of nature for the guide and rule of their obedience” in the Ten Commandments. But, and this is important “there was an innovation both in its form and principle of obligation” (388). This was its being made an externally written code (i.e., on tablets), which were delivered with motives peculiar to Israel. It is not that the whole world were freed from Sabbath observance any more than any other moral law or any more than before the Exodus, but this law, this Sabbath law with these attachments, was, in fact, delivered peculiarly to Israel. So, those scriptures which speak of God giving the Sabbath to Israel, and not to any other nation, refer not to the Moral Law, nor to any part of it, including the Sabbath *absolutely*, but *as it is articulated in the Mosaic law*. That is what is given to Israel. So, as he says,

It was now no more to them a mere moral command only, equally regarding all mankind, but had a temporary respect given unto it, which was afterwards to be abolished and taken away. So was it with the whole law, and so was it with the Sabbath in particular (388).

The difference between the Law as given to Moses and the original covenant of works is the addition of the promises and means of grace and relief from the curse associated with it but two things need to be kept in mind: 1) there was nothing in it to indicate a change in the day for the Sabbath, but 2) there were additions which made it a burdensome ordinance. The first day was continued, “because it was a moral pledge of the rest of God in the first covenant; for this the instructive part of the law of our creation, from God’s making the world in six days, and resting on the seventh, did require.” (391) But the Mosaic law in general, and the Sabbath law in particular, was “the instrument of the polity of the people under the government of God ... for all the judgments relating unto civil things were but an application of the moral law to their state and condition.” (392) This moral law of Sabbath observance, was now, like other moral laws, part of a covenant, with peculiar promises and threatenings. “Hence,” he says, “the covenant form given unto it rendered the obedience of that people in a great measure servile, for it gendered unto bondage.” (390) As a “rule of the polity and government of that people” it “came to have an absolute necessity accompanying it of an outward, carnal observance, the neglect whereof, or acting any thing against the law of it, was to be punished with death.” (390) So, the Sabbath, enforced by the threat of capital punishment, as in Numbers 15:32-36, became “a yoke and a burden, that wherein their consciences could never find perfect rest.” (392).

Not only was it moral law enforced by the Mosaic civil law, it was also part of Israel's "law for religious worship in their typical church state." Now this, like the former, is especially important for Owen's argument. It was *in this peculiar capacity* "in which and whereby the whole dispensation of the covenant which they were under was directed unto other ends" that "it had the nature of a shadow, representing the good things to come, whereby the people were to be relieved from the rigour and curse of the whole law as a covenant." (392). So,

The representation of that covenant, with the sanction given unto it amongst the judgments of righteousness in the government of the people in the land of Canaan, ... made it a yoke and burden; and the use it was put unto amongst ceremonial observances made it a shadow: in all which respects it is abolished by Christ. To say that the Sabbath as given unto the Jews is not abolished, is to introduce the whole system of Mosaical ordinances, which stand on the same bottom with it. And particularly, the observation of the seventh day precisely lieth as it were in the heart of the economy. And these things will the more clearly appear if we consider the dealing of God with that people about the Sabbath from first to last. (392-3)

This consideration of the dealing of God with that people comprises the remaining content of Exercitation IV. We don't have time to consider all of the details of this exposition, but one is especially important for the present debate. That is where he discusses the distinction between the weekly Sabbath and the other Sabbaths commanded to Israel. After discussing the announcement of the weekly Sabbath in Exodus 31:12-17, he says,

This is the next mention of the Sabbath amongst that people, wherein all that we have before laid down is fully confirmed. God had now by Moses appointed other sabbaths, that is, monthly and annual sacred rests, to be observed unto himself. With these he now joins the weekly Sabbath, in allusion whereunto they have that name also given unto them. He had sufficiently manifested a difference between them before: for the one he pronounced himself on mount Sinai, as part of his universal and eternal law; the others he instituted by revelation unto Moses, as that which peculiarly belonged unto them. The one was grounded on a reason wherein they had no more concern or interest than all the rest of mankind,—namely, God's rest in his works, and being refreshed thereon, upon the creation of the world, and the establishment of his covenant with man; the others all built on reasons peculiar unto themselves and that church-state whereinto they were admitted. But here the sabbaths of both these kinds are brought under the same command, and designed unto the same ends and purposes. Now, the sole reason hereof lies in those temporary and ceremonial additions which we have manifested to have been made unto the original law of the Sabbath, in its accommodation to their church-state, with the place which it held therein, as we shall see yet further in particular. (397-98)

Owen summarizes the lessons learned in this examination of the Judaical Sabbath with the following conclusions. First, the observation of the seventh day belonged unto the covenant of works, founded in the law of creation-- a covenant which was "revived, and

unto certain ends reenforced unto the church of Israel. Second, as delivered to them it was a yoke and burden to them “because that dispensation of the law gendered unto bondage, Gal. 4:24; for it begot a spirit of fear and bondage in all that were its children and subject unto its power,” and “it was applied unto sundry ends in their typical state; in which regard it was “a shadow of good things to come.” (402). Now, here is the entire point of this Exercitation IV, a motif which has been repeated throughout:

On all these accounts I doubt not but that the Mosaical Sabbath, and the manner of its observation, are under the gospel utterly taken away. But as for the weekly Sabbath, as required by the law of our creation, and re-enforced in the decalogue, the summary representation of that great original law, the observation of it is a moral duty, which by divine authority is translated unto another day. (402).

VI. EXERCITATION V: OF THE LORD’S DAY

We have seen Owen’s exposition of the Sabbath as an ordinance of the first creation, then *as a first creation ordinance* renewed and modified in the Law of Moses, and now, with this 5th Exercitation, we will see the Sabbath ordinance as it is renewed and modified as an ordinance of the *New Creation*. The objective of Exercitation V is to show that under the New Covenant the Sabbath is to be observed on the Lord’s Day and only on that day. A) To do that, Owen must expound the New Covenant for what it really is, as connected with the renewal of all things by Christ. Just as he showed the connection of the Mosaic covenant to the covenant of works and the first creation, now he must compare and contrast the New Covenant with what went before it. In particular, he will show the relation of the day of rest to the old covenant and show that there is a corresponding day of rest in the new. B) Then, he will show that just as the completion of the first creation, and God’s rest thereon, was the ground of the sanctification of the seventh day, so Christ’s completion of the work of the New Creation and his rest thereon is the ground of the sanctification of the first. Owen goes on to show that this is why the Sabbath day was changed to the 1st day of the week. C) This will include an exposition of Hebrews chapter 4, which, rather than showing the discontinuation of the Sabbath as a day of rest for God’s people, exegetically confirms that it remains and points to the new day. D) He will then provide additional arguments for the Lord’s Day as the Christian’s day of sacred rest from the giving of the Spirit on Pentecost, and the practice of the apostolic church. E) Finally, he will show that the continued observation of the Seventh Day Sabbath is unchristian.

A. The New Covenant

He begins with a brief exposition of Old Testament eschatology, the Old Testament hope of the days of the Messiah, otherwise known as the “latter days;” when “the renovation of all things by Jesus Christ is prophesied of and foretold as a new creation of all, even of the heavens and the earth, and all things contained in them.” This renewal of all things is tied to the idea of the anticipated “rest” corresponding to the “rest,” or Sabbath, initiated by God at the beginning and renewed at Sinai.

“How the creation of all things was finished, and how the rest of God and man ensued thereon, hath been declared. It hath also in part, and sufficiently as unto our present purpose, been evidenced how the great ends of the creation of all, in the glory of God, and the blessedness of man in him, with the pledge thereof in a sabbatical rest, were for a season as it were defeated and disappointed, by the entrance of sin, which brake the covenant that was founded in the law of creation, and rendered it useless unto those ends; for the law became weak through sin and the flesh, or the corruption of our nature that ensued thereon, Rom. 8:3. Hence it could no more bring man to rest in God.”

That is, as a covenant bringing man to rest it was helpless, but

a continuation of the obligatory force of that law and covenant, with the direction of it unto other ends and purposes than at first given unto them, was under the old testament designed of God, and hath been declared also. Hence was the continuation of the original sabbatical rest in the church of Israel, with the especial application of its command unto that people, insisted on in [Exercitation IV]. In this state of things *God had of old determined the renovation of all by a new creation, a new law of that creation, a new covenant, and a new sabbatical rest, unto his own glory, by Jesus Christ; and these things are now to be discussed (403f., emphasis mine.)*.

So, he makes a comparison and contrast between the old and new covenants, describing the importance of the change thus:

The old law, old covenant, old worship, old Sabbath, all that was peculiar unto the covenant of works as such, in the first institution of it and its renewed declaration on mount Sinai, are all antiquated and gone. What now remains of them, as to any usefulness in our living to God, doth not abide on the old foundation, but on a new disposition of them, by the renovation of all things in Christ; for “in the dispensation of the fulness of times,” God gathered unto a head “all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him,” Eph. 1:10. The whole old creation, as far as it had any thing in itself or its order that belonged unto or contributed any thing towards our living unto God and his glory, is disposed anew in Christ Jesus unto that end. (405f.)

The old covenant of works was a law in the mind, to be obeyed. It was impaired by the Fall, and restored to a vocal revelation in the Mosaic. This new covenant in Christ consists in the renovation of the image of God. The end of both covenants was to bring man to “rest.” The end of the first to bring us to rest in God as our creator, the end of the latter to bring us into rest in Christ our redeemer.

So the moral law of our obedience is in each condition, the old and the new, materially the same; nor is it possible that it should be otherwise. But yet this old law, as brought over into this new estate, is new also; for “all things are become new.”

This is of fundamental importance, pervasively significant to the issue.

And it is now the rule of our obedience, not merely and absolutely unto God as the creator, the first cause and last end of all, but as unto God in Christ bringing us into a new relation unto himself. In the renovation, then, of the image of God in our souls, and the transferring over of the moral law as a rule, accompanied with new distinct principles, motives, and ends, doth the law of the new creation consist, and fully answer the law of the first, as it was a principle and a rule, each of them having their peculiar positive laws annexed unto them (406).

The moral law remains.

B. The Covenant Changed/the Day Changed

Just as the day of rest under the old covenant was formerly tied to the rest of God in the old creation, so, under the new covenant, the day of rest must be tied to the rest of Christ in the new creation, “for all our rest in God is founded in his own rest in his works.” If we wonder why have any day at all, his next words tell us.

For a pledge hereof, a day of rest must be given and observed, the reasons and necessity whereof we have explained and confirmed in our preceding discourses. This, as hath been showed, was originally the seventh day of the week; but, as the apostle tells us in another case, “The priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law,” so the covenant being changed, and the rest which was the end of it being changed, and the way of entering into the rest of God being changed, a change of the day of rest must of necessity thereon ensue...

But now that covenant being absolutely abolished, both as to its nature, use, efficacy, and power, no more to be represented or proposed unto believers, the whole of it and its renewed administration under the old testament being removed, taken away, and disappearing, Heb. 8:13, the precise day of rest belonging unto it was to be changed also; and so it is come to pass (407).

Having shown the connection of the change of day to the change in covenant, he summarizes the whole thus:

On these suppositions we lay, and ought to lay, the observation of the Lord's day under the new testament, according to the institution of it, or declaration of the mind of Christ, who is our Lord and Lawgiver, concerning it. (1.) A new work of creation, or a work of a new creation, is undertaken and completed, Isa. 65:17, 18, 66:22; 2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1; Rom. 8:19, 20; 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15. (2.) This new creation is accompanied with a new law and a new covenant, or the law of faith and the covenant of grace, Rom. 3:27, 8:2–4; Jer. 31:31–34; Heb. 8:8–13. (3.) Unto this law and covenant a day of holy rest unto the Lord doth belong; which cannot be the same day with the former, no more than it is the same law or the same covenant which were originally given unto us, Heb. 4:9; Rev. 1:10. (4.) That this day was limited and determined to the first day of the week by our Lord Jesus Christ, is that which shall now further be confirmed (408).

Again, with his usual Christocentric approach he directs us back to the foundation:

As our Lord Jesus Christ, as the eternal Son and Wisdom of the Father, was the immediate cause and author of the old creation, John 1:3, Col. 1:16, Heb. 1:2, 10, so as Mediator he was the author of this new creation, Heb. 3:3, 4. He built the house of God; he built all these things, and is God. Herein he wrought, and in the accomplishment of it “saw of the travail of his soul, and was satisfied,” Isa. 53:11; that is, “he rested, and was refreshed.” Herein he gave a new law of life, faith, and obedience unto God, Isa. 42:4; not by an addition of new precepts to the moral law of God not virtually comprised therein, and distinct from his own positive institutions of worship, but in his revelation of that new way of obedience unto God in and by himself, with the especial causes, means, and ends of it,—which supplies the use and end whereunto the moral law was at first designed, Rom. 8:2, 3, 10:3, 4,—whereby he becomes “the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him,” Heb. 5:9. This law of life and obedience he writes by his Spirit in the hearts of his people, that they may be “willing in the day of his power,” Ps. 110:3, 2 Cor. 3:3, 6, Heb. 8:10; not at once and in the foundation of his work actually, but only in the causes of it. For as the law of nature should have been implanted in the hearts of men in their conception and natural nativity, had that dispensation of righteousness continued, so in the new birth of them that believe in him is this law written in their hearts in all generations, John 3:6. Hereon was the covenant established and all the promises thereof, of which he was the mediator, Heb. 8:6. And for a holy day of rest, for the ends before declared, and on the suppositions before laid down evincing the necessity of such a day, he determined the observation of the first day of the week (409).

In this way, Owen has demonstrated that Christ has accomplished a new creation and that this warrants, and has brought in, a new law and a new rest for the Creator and His creation. The next task is to determine the particular day in view, but first he makes one more confirmation of the new rest and the new day with an exegesis of Hebrews 4:3-10.

C. Hebrews 4:3-10

Far from providing an argument against the Lord's Day Sabbath, Owen sees Hebrews 4:3-10 as a confirmation of it. First, he reminds us of the context. It is an argument to confirm that there is, under the gospel, a promise of entering into the rest of God by believing the promise of it. The people of God had been promised rest before (with the worship and rest of God in Canaan) which their forefathers had fallen short of by unbelief, but now according to Psalm 95, a new rest is proposed unto them in the promise. However, there is a problem which needs to be cleared, this this seems to be past and not relevant to present readers. Purpose of this text is to remove that objection by showing that the rest in view was the rest now offered in this new covenant. To prove this, the apostle enumerates the several rests of God and his people to show that the rest in the Psalm is not any previous rest. Three rests are presented, the rest promised under the law of nature, which the people of God did not enjoy, the rest under the law of Moses, which the people of God did not enjoy, and a third rest under the Messiah which, at the time of the Psalmist, the people of God were going to enjoy, the one that "yet remaineth," which we are now invited to enjoy, by believing in Christ.

This is a double rest, God's rest and the rest that ensued thereon. What is required for that rest? He says three things: "some signal work of God, completed and finished whereon he enters into his rest," a *spiritual* rest ensuing, for them to enter into, and a new or renewed *day of rest*. to express that rest of God, and to be a pledge of our entering into it. "If any of these ...be wanting, the whole structure of the apostle's discourse will be dissolved.

That a new day is called for even here is that it is called a new "sabbatism," one day in seven, as founded in the light of nature and observed in every state of the church. The day is changed as belonging to another covenant founded in a work of another nature. Also necessary is that the observation of it is suited unto the spiritual state of the church under the gospel, delivered from the bondage frame of spirit (411-19).

D. The Day of Christ's Entry Into His Rest

Owen next addresses the question so important to the issue, how and when did Jesus enter into his rest. He must distinguish between Christ's body resting in the grave and the Mediator coming into His rest as such. His entrance into rest was not His burial, nor His ascension, as he explains, but His resurrection, for--

Then and therein was he freed from the sentence, power, and stroke of the law, being discharged of all the debts of our sins, which he had undertaken to make satisfaction for, Acts 2:24. (2.) Then and therein were all types, all predictions and prophecies fulfilled, which concern the work of our redemption. (3.) Then, therefore, his work was done,—I mean that which answereth God's creating work; though he still continues that which answers his work of preservation. Then was the law fulfilled and satisfied, Satan subdued, peace with God made, the price of

our redemption paid, the promise of the Spirit received, and the whole foundation of the church of God gloriously laid on his person, in his works and rest. (4.) Then and therein was he “declared to be the Son of God with power,” Rom. 1:4; God manifesting unto all that this was he concerning and unto whom he said, “Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee,” Acts 13:33.

Thus did the author of the new creation, the Son of God, the builder of the church, having finished his works, enter into his rest. And this was, as all know, on the morning of the first day of the week. And hereby did he limit and determine the day for a sacred sabbatical rest under the new testament; for now was the old covenant utterly abolished, and therefore the day which was the pledge of God and man's rest therein was to be taken away, and was so accordingly, as we have showed. As the rest from the beginning of the world had its foundation from the works of God, and his rest which ensued thereon, which was determined unto the seventh day, because that was the day wherein God ceased from those works, which day was continued under the legal administration of the covenant by Moses; so the rest of the Lord Christ, the Son of God, is the foundation of our rest; which, changing the old covenant and the day annexed unto it, he hath limited unto the first day of the week, whereon he ceased from his works and entered into his rest. (420-21).

And here do we fix the foundation and reason of the Lord's day, or the holy observance of the first day of the week, the obligation of the fourth commandment unto a weekly sacred rest being put off from the seventh day to the first, on the same ground and reason whereon the state of the church is altered from what it was under the law unto what it is now under the gospel. (422)

E. Remaining Arguments for the Lord's Day

The first of these is the fact that the Spirit was given on the Lord's day. This is not coincidence, but significant.

Wherefore, first, when the Lord Christ intended conspicuously to build his church upon the foundation of his works and rest, by sending the Holy Ghost with his miraculous gifts upon the apostles, he did it on this day, which was then among the Jews the feast of Pentecost or of weeks. Then were the disciples gathered together “with one accord,” in the observance of the day signalized to them by his resurrection, Acts 2:1. And by this doth their obedience receive a blessed confirmation, as well as their persons a glorious p 423 endowment with abilities for the work which they were immediately to apply themselves unto. And hereon did they set out unto the whole work of building the church on that foundation, and promoting the worship of it, which on that day was especially to be celebrated. (422–423).

Secondly, not only does he appeal to the practice of the apostles and the “apostolical churches,” but says that in so doing they

owned the authority of Christ ... in this change of the day of sacred rest; for henceforward, whatever apprehensions any of them might have of the continuance of the Judaical Sabbath, as some of them judged that the whole service of it was still to be continued, yet they observed this day of the Lord as the time of their assemblies and solemn worship.”

For biblical examples he cites Acts 20:6, 7 and 1 Cor. 16: 2. These scriptures are familiar to all who have endeavored to prove the point, but his comments upon them add some force to them. Regarding Acts 20:6-7, he says,

I doubt not but in the seven days that the apostle abode there, he taught and preached as he had occasion in the houses of the believers; but it was the first day of the week when they used, according to their duty, to assemble the whole body of them for the celebration of the solemn ordinances of the church, synecdochically expressed by breaking of bread. This they did without an extraordinary warning or calling together; for in answer to their duty they were accustomed so to do.

He cites Justin Martyr, Augustine, and Athanasius, and continues his argument: “whosoever reads this passage without prejudice will grant that it is a marvelously abrupt and uncouth expression, if it do not signify that which was in common observance amongst all the disciples of Christ; which could have no other foundation but only that before laid down, of the authority of the Lord Christ requiring it of them.” For example, regarding 1 Cor. 16:2, where the church is told to lay up money for the support of the church at Jerusalem, “upon the first day of the week,” Owen says, “The constant day of the churches’ solemn assemblies being fixed he here takes it for granted, and directs them unto the observance of an especial duty on that day” (424-5).

That this was the day to be observed in substitution of the seventh day, Owen next argues from the fact that to it were applied “the duties and services of the Sabbath.” pleading “that this was owned from the authority of the Lord, is declared by John in the Revelation, who calls it “The Lord’s day,” Rev. 1:10; whereby he did not surprise the churches with a new name, but denoted to them the time of his visions by the name of the day, which was well known unto them.” The question is, *why* was it called “the Lord’s day,” and his answer is that it was so called from the Lord’s *institution* of it. Like Bownd, and others before him he mentions clear patristic examples, and then makes an often disregarded but considerable argument:

As for those who assign the institution of this day to the apostles, although the supposition be false, yet it weakens not the divine original of it; for an obligation lying on all believers to observe a Sabbath unto the Lord, and the day observed under the law of Moses being removed, it is not to be imagined that the apostles fixed on another day without immediate direction from the Lord Christ; for indeed they delivered nothing to be constantly observed in the worship of God but what they had his authority for, 1 Cor. 11:23. In all things of this nature, as they had the

infallible guidance of the Holy Ghost, *so they acted immediately in the name and authority of Christ, where what they ordained was no less of divine institution than if it had been appointed by Christ in his own person* (425, emphasis mine).

The fact that they went to the synagogues on the seventh day is immaterial, since they had an evangelistic reason for so doing.

Finally, “We have the like common consent, that whatever, in the institution and observance of the Sabbath under the old testament, was peculiar unto that state of the church, either in its own nature or in its use and signification, or in its manner of observance, is taken away, by virtue of those rules, Rom. 14:5; Gal. 4:10; Col. 2:16, 17” (425-6). This is highly significant, for much of the scripture understood as opposed to keeping the Lord’s day Sabbath is actually against observing *it in an Old Testament way*, that is, e.g., learning to observe it with the spirit of one who dreads being killed for picking up sticks. This is the idea, I believe, behind Owen’s statement, “Nor can it be denied but that sundry things annexed unto the sabbatical rest, peculiar to that church-state which was to be removed, were wholly inconsistent with the spirit, grace, and liberty of the gospel.” As we see next, here is a powerful reason for not keeping a 7th day Sabbath.

F. Owen vs. Seventh Day Adventism

Of course Owen never had to deal with the 19th century cult of Seven-Day Adventism, but their doctrine actually originated with the Seventh Day Baptists. This denomination is reported to have started with London’s Millyard Baptist Church which was promoting observance of the seventh day Sabbath at least as early as 1651, though there were other advocates even earlier in the 17th century. The observance was advocated as obligated by the fourth commandment. In the final paragraphs of this 5th Exercitation, Owen offers his case against it.

First, he says, “It was not directly nor absolutely required in the decalogue, but consequentially only, by way of appropriation to the Mosaical economy, whereunto it was then annexed. The command is to observe the Sabbath day, and the blessing is upon the Sabbath day.” Owen has already explained that “Sabbath” does not intrinsically equal “seventh.” As he says,

the mention of the seventh day in the body of the command fixeth the number of the days in whose revolution a sabbatical rest returns, but determines not an everlasting order in them, seeing the order relating to the old creation is inconsistent with the law, reason, and worship of the new. And if the seventh day and the Sabbath, as some pretend, are the same, the sense of the command in the enforcing part of it is, “But the seventh day is the seventh day of the LORD thy God,”—which is none at all.

Secondly, and this is so often overlooked, “The state of the church and the administration of the covenant, whereunto the observation of this day was annexed, are removed; so that it cannot continue, no more than a house can stand without a foundation.” Third, “The Lord Christ, who is the ‘Lord of the Sabbath,’ and by assuming that title to himself manifested his authority as to the disposal of the day whereon a sabbatical rest was to be observed, hath, in his own rest from his works, limited unto us another day of sacred rest, called, from his appointment of it, ‘The Lord’s day,’—his day who is the Lord of the Sabbath.” Finally, “The day so introduced by his authority hath from the day of his rest been observed without interruption, or any such difference about it as fell out among the churches of God about other feast days, whose observation was introduced among them they knew not well how, as of the Pascha, and the like.” His concluding assessment of all of this is that “The observation, then, of this day first, is an evident Judaizing, and a returnal unto those “rudiments of the world” which the apostle so severely cautioneth us against.” (434-5).

Furthermore, it is a doctrine that has a strong intrinsically schismatic quality. Christians will be divided over many things because, as Owen reminds us, “the best know but in part, and prophesy but in part.” Nevertheless we ought to labor at the healing of our differences, especially in our “joining together in the same public solemn worship.” The great problem with the advocates of Seventh-Day Sabbath observance is that they separate the people of God from the very thing which would be most conducive to their unity, this unified worship.

But now, upon a supposition of an adherence by any unto the seventh-day Sabbath, all communion amongst professors in solemn gospel ordinances is rendered impossible; for if those of that persuasion do expect that others will be brought unto a relinquishment of an *evangelical observance of the Lord’s-day Sabbath*, they will find themselves mistaken. The evidence which they have of its appointment, and the experience they have had of the presence of God with them in its religious observation, will secure their faith and practice in this matter. Themselves, on the other hand, supposing that they are obliged to meet for all solemn worship on the seventh day (which the others account unwarrantable for them to do on the pretence of any binding law to that purpose), and esteeming it unlawful to assemble religiously with others on the first day on the plea of an evangelical warranty, they absolutely cut off themselves from all possibility of communion, in the administration of gospel ordinances, with all other churches of Christ. And whereas most other breaches as to such communion are in their own nature capable of healing, without a renunciation of those principles in the minds of men which seem to give countenance unto them, the difference is here made absolutely irreparable, whilst the opinion mentioned is owned by any. I will press this no further but only by affirming, *that persons truly fearing the Lord ought to be very careful and jealous over their own understandings, before they embrace an opinion and practice which will shut them out from all visible communion with the generality of the saints of God in this world* (434).

Furthermore, if the Seventh Day Sabbath is preserved, the question arises, on what basis is it preserved? If its observance is still in force by virtue of its promulgation in the Mosaic Law, then “the sanction of it, in its penalty against transgressors, is yet continued,” namely, the death of the offender by stoning (Num. 15:35). It was this fear, argues Owen, that impelled the Jews to “into that bondage frame wherein they observed the Sabbath; and this always put them upon many anxious arguings, how they might satisfy the law in keeping the day, so as not to incur the penalty of its transgression.”

And do men know what they do, when they endeavour to introduce such a bondage into the observance of gospel worship, a yoke and bondage upon the persons and spirits of men which those before us were not able to bear? Is it according to the mind of Christ, that the worship of God, which ought to be “in spirit and in truth,” now under the gospel, should be enforced on men by capital penalties? And let men thus state their principles, ‘The seventh day is to be kept precisely a Sabbath unto the Lord, by virtue of the fourth commandment: for not one day in seven, but the seventh day itself, is rigorously and indispensably enjoined unto observation: and the transgression of this law, not as to the spiritual worship to be observed on it, but as to every outward transgression, by journeying or other bodily labour, is to be avenged with death.’—undoubtedly, in the practice of these principles, besides that *open contradiction* which they will fall into unto the spirit, rule, and word of the gospel, they will find themselves in the same entanglements wherein the Jews were and are.... And what, then, is become of “the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free?” and wherein is the pre-eminence of the spiritual worship of the gospel above the carnal ordinances of the law? (435)

One might reasonably ask, is this not the real reason for such widespread resistance to the observance of the Lord's Day as the Christian Sabbath, namely, that it has been made an occasion for Judaistic entanglements and casuistic impositions until the notion of standing fast in anything like “liberty” sounds contradictory.

In all its precepts, κατακυριεύει, it exerciseth a severe dominion over the souls and consciences of them that are under it. And we have no way to extricate ourselves from under that dominion, but by our being dead unto its power and authority as such through the death of Christ; or by an interest by faith in the benefits which, through his fulfilling and satisfying the law, do redound to the church. But what is required of any one, under the notion of the formal and absolute power of the law, is to be performed in and by that spirit which is administered by the law, and the strength which the law affords; and this indeed is great as to conviction of sin, nothing at all as unto obedience and righteousness. Do men in these things appeal unto the law? unto the law they must go; for **I know not any thing that we can expect assistance of gospel grace in or about, but only those things which are originally moral, or things superadded unto them in the gospel itself, to neither of which heads this observation of the seventh day as such can be referred.** It is therefore a mere legal duty, properly so called; and in a bondage frame of spirit, without any especial assistance of grace, it must be performed. And how little we

are beholden unto those who would, in any one instance, reduce us from the liberty of the gospel unto bondage under the law, our apostle hath so fully declared that it is altogether needless further to attempt the manifestation of it (436).

This same concern for evangelical obedience which is opposed to Seventh Day Sabbath keeping, is also evident in Owen's teaching on the keeping of the Lord's Day, as seen in the final exercitation.

VII. EXERCITATION VI: THE PRACTICAL OBSERVANCE OF THE LORD'S DAY

I noted earlier the relatively small attention Owen gives to the practical observance of the day. As the following will demonstrate, this was not because he was some cerebral, ivory-tower theologian with little interest in nuts-and-bolts Christianity, but because he felt that many of the other expositions of the doctrine had erred in their practical applications not building upon the Christian foundation, and consequently, by being too particular. He was not going to follow that path, but he stresses the important principles, and provides a few particular directions, because "The end, then, of our learning Scripture truths, is to obtain such an idea of them in our minds as may direct us unto a suitable practice" (437).

Many have committed the error of the Pharisees in being excessive in their directions for sanctifying the day. One effect of this has been that some have rejected the sanctification of the day altogether.

Of this nature some men do judge some rigorous prescriptions to be which have been given in this matter. And they say that a great disadvantage unto religion hath ensued hereon: for it is pretended that they are such as are beyond the constitution of human nature to comply withal; of which kind God certainly requires nothing at our hands. Hence it is pleaded, that men finding themselves no way able to come unto a satisfaction, in answer unto the severe directions for duties and the manner of their performance which by some are rigorously prescribed, have taken occasion to seek for relief by rejecting the whole command; which, if duly interpreted in such a condescension as they were capable of a compliance withal, they would have adhered unto. On this account men have found out various inventions, to colour their weariness of that strict course of duty which they were bound unto. Hence have some taken up a plea that every day is to them a Sabbath, that so they might not keep any; some, that there is no such thing as a sacred rest on any day required of us by the authority of Christ, and therefore that all directions for the manner of the observance of such a day are to no purpose. And many by degrees have declined from that strictness which they could not come up unto a delight in, until they have utterly lost all sense of duty towards God in this matter (438).

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For this reason, teachers must be careful to avoid extremes; for “he that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord.” (438). We must avoid the error of the Pharisees, who “When they had gotten the pretence of a command, they would burden it with so many rigid observances, in the manner of its performance, as should make it a yoke intolerable to their disciples, getting themselves the reputation of strict observers of the law” (438-9). “On the other hand,” he says, “there lieth a rock of far greater danger; and this consists in the accommodation of the laws, precepts, and institutions of God, unto the lusts, and the present courses and practices of men. (439). No, we must still maintain the truth of God in this regardless of the errors.

Most significantly, however, is the way he critiques the “Mosaical” way many of his, and our, colleagues have handled the practical sanctification of the day.

Directions have been given, and that not by a few, for the observation of a day of holy rest, which, either for the matter of them or the manner prescribed, have had no sufficient warrant or foundation in the Scripture. For whereas some have made no distinction between the Sabbath as *moral* and as *Mosaical*, unless it be merely in the change of the day, they have endeavoured to introduce the whole practice required on the latter into the Lord's day. But we have already showed that there were sundry additions made unto the command, as to the manner of its observance, in its accommodation unto the Mosaical pedagogy, besides that the whole required a frame of spirit suited thereunto (441).

On the other hand,

Others, again, have collected whatever they could think of that is good, pious, and useful in the practice of religion, and prescribed it all, in a multitude of instances, as necessary to the sanctification of this day; so that a man can scarcely in six days read over all the duties that are proposed to be observed on the seventh.

Now, getting to what I regard as the greatest distinctive of Owen's work, he says,

And it hath been also no small mistake, that men have laboured more to multiply directions about external duties, giving them out as it were by number or tale, than to direct the mind or inward man in and unto a due performance of the whole duty of the sanctification of the day, *according to the spirit and genius of gospel obedience* (emphasis mine, 441).

How shall we do this? First, “the Lord's day, is to be set apart unto the ends of a holy rest unto God, by every one, according as his natural strength will enable him to employ himself in his lawful occasions any other day of the week” (443). This provides part of his

answer to what period of time is to be sanctified,⁵ and also insures that persons are not obligated to meet other people's personal standards of what is fitting, but "according to their own measures." Second, "Labour to observe this day, and to perform the duties required in it, with a frame of mind becoming and answering the spirit, freedom, and liberty of the gospel." (444). For instance, in his comments on Isaiah 58:13, one of the principle proof texts for the practice of the Sabbath he says,

...I no way think that here is a restraint laid on us from such words, ways, and works, as neither hinder the performance of any religious duties belonging to the due celebration of the worship of God on this day, nor are apt in themselves to unframe our spirits, or divert our affections from them. And those whose minds are fixed in a spirit of liberty to glorify God in and by this day of rest, seeking after communion with him in the ways of his worship, will be unto themselves a better rule for their words and actions than those who may aim to reckon over all they do or say; which may be done in such a manner as to become the Judaical Sabbath much more than the Lord's day. (446-447)

Third, he says, "Be sure to bring good and right principles unto the performance of the duty of keeping a day of rest holy unto the Lord," such as –

- (1.) Remember that there is a weekly rest, or a holy rest of one day in the week, due to the solemn work of glorifying God as God.
- (2.) Remember that God appointed this day to teach us that as he rested therein, so we should seek after rest in him here, and look on this day as a pledge of eternal rest with him hereafter.
- (3.) Remember that we have lost our original rest in God by sin.
- (4.) That the rest in God and with God, which we now seek after, enter into, and celebrate the pledge of, using the means for the further enjoyment of it in the observation of this day, is a rest by a recovery, by a reparation in Jesus Christ.
- (5.) That in the observation of the Lord's day, which is the first day of the week, we subject our consciences immediately to the authority of Jesus Christ, the mediator, whose day of rest originally it was, and which thereby and for that reason is made ours. And hereby, in the observation of this day, have we fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ. Of old there was nothing appeared in the day, whilst the seventh day was in force, but the rest of God the creator, and his sovereign authority, intimated unto us thereby, for the observing of a holy rest unto him, according to the tenor of the first covenant. But now the immediate foundation of our rest on the Lord's day is the Lord's rest, the rest of Christ, when, upon his

⁵ *Contra*. such works as William Prynne, *A Briefe Polemicall Dissertation, Concerning the True Time of the Inchoation and Determination of the Lordsday-Sabbath...* EEBO (London: T. Mabb for Edward Thomas dwelling in Green Arbour, 1655). When the Sabbath begins, and whether the entire 24 hrs. is to be sanctified were 17th century issues also.

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resurrection, he ceased from his works, as God did from his own. This gives great direction and encouragement in the duty of observing this day aright.

(6.) We are then to remember, that this day is a pledge of our eternal rest with God (447-450).

This emphasis upon a holy *rest* must not be forgotten. The public and private duties of worship and piety are not to be drawn out to “wearisomness and satiety.” Pastors and parents must have regard for people’s weaknesses, infirmities and indispositions and dull not the “spiritual edge of the affections.” Furthermore, “Refreshments helpful to nature, so far as to refresh it, that it may have a supply of spirits to go on cheerfully in the duties of holy worship, are lawful and useful.” The Sabbath is not a day for fasting.

On the other hand, the rest is not indolence. “Labour or pains for the enjoyment of the benefit and advantage of the solemn assemblies of the church, and in them of the appointed worship of God, is so far from intrenching on the rest of this day that it belongs unto its due observation (459). The same is true for labor in works of charity and necessity.

“For sports and such like recreations.” Regarding this issue which was most likely the greatest stimulus in the Prelatical vs Puritan debate (and ours as well?), Owen answers by citing references to early Christian antipathy to them, including a lengthy quotation in Latin of a sermon by Ephraim Syrus which lumps such violators with those who, “make gods of their bellies and glory in their shame” (460)⁶

As for private “personal and domestical” duties in general, i.e., “the known religious exercises of prayer, reading the Scripture, meditation, family instructions from the advantage of the public ordinances, they are to be recommended unto every one’s conscience, ability, and opportunity, as they shall find strength and assistance for them” (460).

With this he ends his Exercitations: “Μόνω τῷ Θεῷ δόξα.”

VIII. CONCLUSION

What is the value of Owen’s work? Here we have what can, I believe, legitimately be called the seventeenth century’s most mature thought on the subject of the Sabbath. That is especially important because it was a century which, probably more than any other since the coming of Christ, was devoted to finding and following a Biblical doctrine of honoring the Sabbath Day to keep it holy. Its value is not for the student of Historical Theology alone. While theologians have reasserted and rephrased some aspect or nuance of the doctrine of our British Reformed Confessions, and have made genuine and valuable

⁶ This same text of Ephraim the Syrian is quoted by Charles Hodge, in his critique of the “American Quarterly Review on Sunday Mails” in *The Biblical Repertory and Theological Review* 1931, Volume 3 p. 96, offered in proof that the present restriction of Sunday work is not based on a novelty of narrow minded 17th century Brits but on the ancient doctrine of the church.

contributions to our understanding of it, most of the main points, particularly points raised in the modern debate, were already raised in the 17th century and, to my mind, at least, satisfactorily handled by Owen.

Owen did at least these four things in the doctrine's behalf. First, he has argued convincingly for the importance of settling the issue. The question of whether and when to observe the "day of sacred rest" is not adiaphora. Paul's admonition to avoid controversies about days cannot include whether or not to obey the Moral Law, and, as we have been reminded in this conference, the Sabbath is not only moral law but very practically important to the whole of Christian doctrine and life. Second, in his usual manner he has cleared away the rubble of men's prejudice and theological error and firmly laid the foundation of his doctrine in express scripture testimonies, soundly interpreted and firmly fitting into a carefully laid foundation of Biblical, Covenantal theology. Third, in doing so he showed, agreeably to his pervasive Christocentrism, the importance of the retention of a day of rest grounded in the work of Christ, and, hence, the necessity of the change of the day to the first day of the week. Fourth, he pointed out the danger and the cure of the Pharisaical, Judaistic applications which have tended to obscure rather than demonstrate its New Testament character as the celebration of the New Creation in Christ. That not only determines the choice of day, but also the manner of its observance, demonstrating the eschatological reality that makes its New Testament observance *truly*, the "market day of the soul."

Finally, I would ask the readers of this paper to remember that it was intended only as an introduction to this great work. It does not do it justice in adequately presenting the full strengths of Owen's argument as a whole or his treatment of any individual part. Please go to the full text, available in print or on-line, to see the argument in its strength.