

7. THE NATURE OF THE SABBATH COMMANDMENT

ONE Of Mr. Canright's strong arguments against the Sabbath commandment is that it is not entirely moral in its nature, but partly ceremonial, and was therefore of temporary obligation only. On this point, after becoming a Baptist, he wrote:

“That the Sabbath of the Ten Commandments was partly moral and partly ceremonial, or positive, in its nature has been the doctrine of the church as taught by its best theologians in all ages.” Seventh-day Adventism Renounced, p. 166.

“Adventists claim that there was nothing ceremonial in the Ten Commandments or about the Sabbath. But let us consider what a ceremony is. Webster says: 'Ceremony. Outward rite, external form in religion.' That is exactly what the observance of the Sabbath was in Jewish worship....

“The observance of the Sabbath on a particular day was a ceremonial service. “ Ibid., P. 171.

Now this further objection is not difficult to answer. In fact, Mr. Canright, in one of his former publications, *The Morality of the Sabbath*, written while he was still a Seventh-day Adventist, makes such a comprehensive and convincing reply to this later quibble. of his that we will again grant him the privilege of demolishing his own argument.

At that time he wrote:

“When the claims of God's holy Sabbath are presented, and its observance is urged upon the people, then every effort is made by its opponents to belittle it as an institution of small account. It is said that the Sabbath law is only a ceremonial precept, given simply for man's convenience, and that its observance or nonobservance is a matter of little importance. While it is admitted that all the other precepts of the Ten Commandments are moral and their observance all-important, it is asserted that the fourth commandment is of a very different nature, containing no test of moral character. The only importance attached to it is that of a day for physical rest and religious gatherings.

“While the Sabbath is regarded in this light, of course men will not feel very particular about observing it. We propose, therefore, to show that the nature and design of God's Sabbath day is as much higher than this view of it as heaven is higher than the earth. That it is not only a moral institution, but that it is the most important precept in the whole Ten Commandments. In proof that the Sabbath is a moral precept, we offer the following facts:

“Moral duties and precepts are such as grow out of the attributes of God. Creative power is the distinguishing attribute of the living God, and the Sabbath grew directly out of the exercise of this attribute in the creation of the world.

“I do not see how the truthfulness of this proposition can be denied by any one. Why are we morally bound to serve God? - Because He created us and all the blessings which we enjoy. None will deny that this is the basis of all our duties to God. A little reflection will show that it is not much the wisdom, or the justice, or the holiness, or any other attribute, of the Deity, as it is His act of creating which makes it our moral duty to obey Him. Notwithstanding God is infinitely wise, just, holy, etc., could we bring ourselves into existence and sustain ourselves without His aid, we would be under no obligation to serve Him. This is an important fact which we wish the reader to weigh carefully. It is, then, God's attribute of creative power above all others, that is the basis of all our moral duties to Him. He made us by His power as a Creator, and by His power He can destroy us; hence He has a perfect right to say what we shall, or shall not, do. So Paul argues in Romans 9:20-23.

Now the very basis of the Sabbath was God's act of creating the world in six days and resting upon the seventh. 'Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. . . . For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore [for this reason] the Lord blessed the

Sabbath day, and hallowed it.' Ex. 20:8-11; Gen. 2:1-3.

“The foundation of the Sabbatic precept, then, is the same as that of all other moral precepts; and hence it 'Must be moral.

“The Sabbath, like all other moral precepts, rests upon eternal and unalterable facts.

“In creating the world, God worked the first six days of the first week of time. He then rested upon the seventh day. That act made it His rest day, or Sabbath day. Sabbath is a Hebrew word signifying rest. Hence, the Sabbath day of the Lord signifies the rest day of the Lord. Therefore, when God had rested upon the seventh day, that day had thus become distinguished from all the other days of the week as God's rest, or Sabbath, day. When a man is born upon a certain day, that day becomes his birthday. No other day in the year is his birthday. So the day upon which God rested, the seventh day, and no other, is God's Sabbath day.

“These facts of creation are just as true now as they were when the Sabbath was first given, six thousand years ago. Is it not as true now as it was then that God did work the first six days of the week? Certainly. Then these are still only working days, as the Lord has properly named them. 'Thus says the Lord God, The gate of the inner court that looks toward the east shall be shut the six working days; but on the Sabbath it shall be opened.' Eze. 46:1. Is it not also just as true now as it was then that the seventh day is God's Sabbath day? Is it not still the day upon which He rested, and, hence, His rest day? Can you change your birthday from the day upon which you were born to one upon which you were not born? Of course not. Neither can the Lord's rest day be changed from the day upon which He did rest to one upon which He did not rest. Has the first day of the week become the Sabbath (rest) day of the Lord? Impossible, because no day can become God's rest day till He has first rested upon that day. But God never did rest upon any day except the seventh. Hence, the Sabbath day of the Lord is unchangeably fixed to the seventh day. This will always remain a fixed fact while the earth stands, which will be eternally. For this earth is to be purified and become the everlasting abode of the righteous. Isa. 65:17-25; 2 Peter 3:7-13; Isa. 66:22,23. So long as days shall, continue to succeed each other, so long must the seventh day continue to be the Creator's Sabbath day. And so we read in Isaiah 66:22,23: 'For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before Me, says the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before Me, says the Lord.' This evidence proves my proposition true, that the Sabbath is founded upon unchangeable and eternal facts, the same as all moral precepts are. Here, also, it seems to me that all must admit the truthfulness of this proposition.

“The principle of every moral precept existed before the fall, and would have existed if man had never fallen. This is true of the Sabbath. But all ceremonial precepts were introduced after the fall, to shadow forth redemption. . . .

“But the Sabbath was given before man sinned, and hence was not a typical or ceremonial institution. So we find that the Sabbath is a primary institution, all the reasons for which, like those for every moral precept, existed before the fall. . . .

“Every fact and reason upon which the Sabbath was founded did exist before man fell in Eden. Hence the record in Genesis 2:1-3, which says that God made, blessed, and set apart the Sabbath day in Eden, is true and reasonable. Hence it cannot be typical or ceremonial.” Pages -11.

Thus Mr. Canright while an Adventist shows conclusively that the Sabbath command is neither typical nor ceremonial, but is a great moral precept. Yet he later declares it to have been ceremonial and to have ended at the cross with the other ceremonies of Moses' law. But let him continue to argue against himself. We still quote from his former publications:

“Thus the Sabbath is declared to be a divinely appointed memorial of God's great work of creation. Its importance cannot be overestimated. God instituted it for a great moral purpose, namely, to preserve in the memory of men a knowledge of His work of creation.

“Had the human family carefully observed this sacred memorial, they never would, have forgotten the living God and have become atheists or the worshippers of false gods.

“ 'Had all men properly kept the Sabbath, all would have known Jehovah and worshiped Him from the creation of the world to the present time, and idolatry never would have been practiced on the earth. - Justin Edwards.

“The Sabbath, therefore, does have for its object the greatest of all moral principles, namely, the preservation in the earth of the knowledge of the true and living God, the Creator of the earth. The reader cannot fail to observe that, if this be so, the farther we come from creation the more important becomes the careful observance of the Sabbath. For during the first few generations, the facts of creation might have been handed down from father to son without any memorial. But now, when all such traditional knowledge has been lost, and men are becoming skeptical with regard to God's existence and the miraculous work of creation, how morally important becomes the preservation of the ancient and divinely instituted memorial of creation, God's holy rest day.” -Ibid., pp. .14, 15.

“The fact that God Himself has associated the Sabbath with the moral precepts affords conclusive proof that it is a moral institution.

'Fallen man has one document which came directly from the living God Himself, and that is the ten commandments. God came down personally upon Mt. Sinai amidst thunderings and lightnings and most terrible majesty, and there, in the hearing of the whole nation, He spoke from heaven, with His own voice, His moral law of Ten Commandments.

“Webster, in defining the moral law, says that it is 'summarily contained in the, Ten Commandments.' When God spoke this law, His voice shook the earth. Heb. 12:26. With His own divine finger He then engraved it in imperishable stone (Ex. 31:18); here again indicating that this law was as imperishable and as enduring as the solid rock. It was then deposited in the ark, under the Shekinah in the holy of holies. No other part of the Bible, no other law of God, was ever given in such a solemn manner. Why was this? This question our opponents have never been able to answer. Nine Of these Ten Commandments are universally acknowledged to be moral in their nature, and of perpetual and universal application, applying through all ages and to all nations. Look at them. 1. You shall have no other gods. 2. You shall not make and worship an image. 3. You shall not profane God's name. 5. Honor your parents. 6. Do not kill. 7. Do not commit adultery. 8. Do not steal. 9. Do not bear false witness. 10. Do not covet.

“Reader, are not these commandments all moral, and as enduring as truth itself? There is not a shadowy or ceremonial precept in the whole ten, except it be the Sabbath. Now, we ask the reader, If the Sabbath was, unlike the other nine precepts, a mere ceremonial institution, why did God place it in the moral law? Why did He not put it where it belonged, with those precepts which are confessedly only types and shadows? Shall we impugn God's wisdom to sustain our theories? Would God mar an otherwise perfect moral law? God's own action gives the lie to that baseless theory. It is a true saying that a man is known by the company he keeps. Now look at the Sabbath. God, who knew its character, has placed it in the midst of a strictly moral neighborhood. It has three perfectly moral neighbors on one side, and six on the other. We claim that this important fact shows that the all wise God has put His stamp upon the Sabbath as a moral institution. What God has joined together let no man put asunder.” Ibid., pp. 36-38.

“It is not a type. Types were given after the fall to shadow forth redemption; but the Sabbath points back to creation, not forward to redemption. (See Ex. 20:11.)” Ibid., p. 43.

“All admit 'that the eighth commandment, 'Thou shall not steal,' is a moral commandment. Why? - Because it guards the right of property. You shall not take and appropriate to your own use that which belongs to another. The Creator, who is the author of everything, has divided time into weeks of seven days each. All these days were the Lord's; but He, in His benevolence and goodness, has given six of them to man to be properly used in his own necessary business, but the seventh day, God's rest day, He has reserved to Himself. The fourth precept is given to guard this Sabbath day. It forbids our appropriating to our own use

that which belongs to another, viz., to God. The right of property then, is recognized in this commandment the same as in the eighth commandment; and, hence, if one is moral the other is also for the same reason.

'To illustrate: A wealthy man has seven apple trees, all bearing fruit. He has a poor neighbor living near him. He takes him into the orchard and tells him to use freely of the fruit of the first six trees; but the seventh one he forbids him to touch, as that he has reserved for a special purpose to himself. This would be a very generous act on the part of the rich man. Now how ungrateful and wicked it would be on the part of the poor man to use not only the fruit from the six trees, but to take that of the seventh also. It would be a grossly immoral act.

“Just so God has given us six days which we can freely use in an honorable manner; but the seventh day belongs to God. Thus the Lord says by the mouth of Isaiah: 'If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day,' etc. Chap. 58:13. Again, the Lord says, 'Verily My Sabbaths you shall keep.' Ex. 31:13. And so the fourth commandment says, 'The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God.' Ex. 20:10. It is not our day, our time, nor our property. It belongs to God.

“And the fourth commandment is given to guard the Lord's right to this day. Another prophet exclaims, 'Will a man rob God? But you say, 'Wherein have we robbed Thee? In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse; for you have robbed Me, even this whole nation.' Mal. 3:8, 9. God -had reserved to Himself one tenth of all their increase. This belonged to Him. Thus He says, 'And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's; it is holy unto the Lord.' Lev. 27:30. But the people had taken these tithes which belonged to the Lord and had used them for their own benefit. In doing this they had 'robbed God.' Then a man can rob the Lord.

“If this was true in the above case, with how much greater force can it be said that a man robs God who every week takes God's holy day and appropriates it to his own worldly purposes! Verily, he is guilty of stealing. A little reflection will show that the same motive which leads a man to steal from his neighbor, also leads him to break the Sabbath. He covets his neighbor's property, that he may use it for his own selfish purposes; so he takes it without his consent. So a man covets God's holy day, that he may use it in his own worldly business or pleasure; hence he proceeds to appropriate that sacred time to his own purposes. A man who knowingly appropriates God's Sabbath to his own use is robbing God, and thus violating the very highest principle of morality. If it is wrong to rob our neighbor who is our equal, how much more wicked is it to rob God our Creator? The same moral principle, then, is involved in the Sabbath precept that is in the precept against theft; and therefore it is moral for the same reason.” Ibid., pp. 38-41.

“The seventh-day Sabbath was placed in the moral law. Ex. 20:1-17. No others were. This is a stubborn fact which our opponents can never account for. If the Sabbath was a mere typical, shadowy, or ceremonial institution, as were the festival days of the Jews, why did God Himself put it in the moral law, and thus associate it with moral precepts? Why did He not place it with the other Jewish holy days if it was like them? Did God make a mistake and place it where it did not belong? Our opponents, with their view of the Sabbath, certainly never would have put it where God did, in the moral law. Here God has marked an important difference between the Sabbath and all other sacred Rays. . . .

“All other holy days grew out of man's actions as a sinner, and they would never have existed but for sin. Here we have a marked contrast which we wish the reader to distinctly notice. The Sabbath grew out of the action of a holy and infinite God, but all festival days originated in some action of man himself. (See a complete list of these days in Leviticus 23.)

“All other holy days originated this side of the fall, after types and shadows were introduced. This marks them as shadowy and typical. But the Sabbath, as we have shown, was given in Eden before types were instituted. . . .

“So many and so marked differences between God's holy Sabbath and all other holy days show that they are of very different natures, - the first was unchangeable, perpetual, and for all people; but the second was only ceremonial, temporal, and for one nation.” Ibid., pp. 59-61.

'From the foregoing we see that the Sabbath is an institution of the greatest importance to man physically, mentally, morally, and spiritually. It has been plainly shown that men absolutely need such a day of rest from physical or mental labor. The man who does not obey this law of nature, sins against himself, and will inevitably suffer loss in the end. The social benefits of the Sabbath in promoting friendly intercourse, moral culture, and refinement of manners, are beyond all estimation even if only this life is considered.

“But it is in the holy work of religion, in man's duties to his Creator, that the highest importance of the Sabbath is seen. It sets apart a definite, regular, and oft-recurring day of rest from all worldly employments, upon which men can be free to attend to the worship of God. No other law can compare in importance with the Sabbath in preserving and promoting the knowledge and worship of the true God. We have seen that it is the sign which distinguishes the true God from all false gods. It [the Sabbath] is the memorial of the great work of creation. It is the seal to the moral law of Jehovah, without which that law would -be of no authority. This fact alone elevates the Sabbath precept in importance above any other. We have shown that the Sabbath is a moral precept in every sense of the term. Every argument against it falls with equal weight against one or more of the other commandments of the moral law.”

Upon the conclusion of this argument Canright writes the following appeal:

DANGER OF WORLDLINESS

“Our great and constant danger is that we shall become 'choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life' (Luke 8:14); and so bear no fruit for the Lord. To obviate this, the Lord has interposed the Sabbath after six days of labor, to break up the tide of worldliness and call man's attention back to God. If it were not for this provision, the business of the world would absorb all man's attention, and God would soon be forgotten. Man needs a constant reminder of his duty to God, an oft-recurring test of his own spiritual condition. For this purpose, no other precept is like the Sabbath.

'We have before shown that the principle involved in the violation of all the other commandments is also involved in the violation of the Sabbath. A man covets his neighbor's property. This leads him to steal it. So a man covets God's time for his own work; hence he proceeds to take it and use

it for himself, and he thus robs God. A man who will knowingly and deliberately use God's holy day for his own worldly, selfish purposes, would also steal if he could do it with the same impunity. If a man will steal from his Creator, will he not from his fellow men? I know that men do not like to regard it in this light, but it is true, notwithstanding. When we come to look at the claims and sacredness of the Sabbath day in a proper light, it must be seen that it is no slight offense to disregard the Sabbath. I cannot conceive how a man could set at naught God's authority in so defiant a manner as this.

“Look at the facts a moment. The omnipotent God, whose glory fills all heaven, whose hands have made the universe, has created our earth, ourselves, and every blessing which we enjoy. To commemorate this great work, He has set apart, as sacred to Himself, the Sabbath day. With a voice that shook the earth, He has forbidden us to use this day in doing our own work. With a full knowledge of these facts before him, with the law of God pointing out his duty, with the eyes of Jehovah upon him, a man arises Sabbath morning and deliberately proceeds to use this holy time in his own business. How must such an act appear in the eyes of God? How will it appear on the record in the judgment? What act could puny man perform which would more deliberately set at naught the law and authority of the great Creator? Reader, we beseech you to stop and think seriously of this matter, and consider whether the observance of the Sabbath is not of greater importance than you have hitherto considered it.” Ibid., pp. 89-91.

“With all these facts before us, we appeal to the reader's judgment and conscience to decide whether or not the Sabbath is of so little importance as its opponents are wont to represent it. Is it not, on the other hand, the keystone of God's great, moral law, without which the law would have no strength to stand? Dear reader, as you value your soul and the favor of your Creator, do not pass by the light which God in His providence is now causing to shine out so clearly upon the subject of His holy but downtrodden Sabbath day. May the Lord help you to turn away your feet from the Sabbath, and call it 'a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable.’” - Ibid., P. 96.

What a pity that, after seeing so clearly the light concerning the great moral obligation of the Sabbath, Mr. Canright should later have gone so far into darkness, that he could no longer discern this light. He referred to the Sabbath as the keystone of the great moral law, and then later, when he renounced Seventh-day Adventism, he proceeded to try to remove this keystone and thus destroy the law in its entirety.

In 1898 D. L. Moody published his little book *Weighed and Wanting*, devoted to a discussion of the Ten Commandments. In his chapter on the fourth commandment, although he was not an observer of the seventh day, Mr. Moody speaks of those who try to excuse themselves from the obligation to keep the Sabbath, as follows:

“But some one says: 'Mr. Moody, what are you going to do? I have to work seven days a week or starve.'

“Then starve! Wouldn't it be a grand thing to have a martyr in the nineteenth century? 'The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.' Some one says the seed is getting very low; it has been a long time since we have had any seed. I would give something to erect a monument to such a martyr to his fidelity to God's law. I would go around the world to attend his funeral.

“We want today men who will make up their minds to do what is right, and stand by it if the heavens tumble on their heads. . . . Let men call you narrow and bigoted, but be man enough to stand by God's law, and you will have power and blessing. That is the kind of Christianity we want just now in this country. Any man can go with the crowd, but we' want men who will go against the current.

“Sabbath breaker, are you ready to step into the scales - Pages 61, 62.