

The Sabbath and Genesis 2:2, 3

The Heart of New Testament Ethics

**A Reply to Desmond Ford's
Sabbatarian Arguments**

Robert D. Brinsmead

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Introduction

Recent issues of VERDICT have addressed the subject of the law, and especially the Sabbath, in light of the gospel. These presentations have aroused keen interest and investigation among both Saturday and Sunday Sabbatarians. In the present publication the essays "The Sabbath and Genesis 2:2, 3" and "The Heart of New Testament Ethics," together with a review of the book entitled *The Forgotten Day*, recently written in defense of Sabbatarianism and released by Desmond Ford Publications, are particularly addressed to Seventh-day Adventists. For them much is at stake in this ongoing discussion. Some perceive an ominous threat to the cultural and religious heritage they have treasured for generations. Others have been aroused to defend the integrity of the gospel. They believe that many within the Adventist community are even now deciding whether they will make the Sabbath their christ or Christ their Sabbath. No middle ground or *via media* can resolve this issue. Come, therefore, and let us reason together.

THE PUBLISHERS

The Sabbath and Genesis 2:2, 3

Introduction

By the seventh day God had finished the work He had been doing; so on the seventh day He rested from all His work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it He rested from all the work of creating that He had done.—Gen. 2:2, 3.

An appeal to this scripture is undoubtedly the strongest biblical argument in favor of retaining the weekly Sabbath. In fact, it is probably the only significant support for Sabbatarianism. That argument can be stated like this: "The Sabbath, like marriage, was a creation ordinance given to man before he sinned. Since it belongs to the order of creation, it is a binding obligation on all men for all time."

Such an appeal to Genesis 2:2, 3, however, has the following weaknesses:

The Inadequacy of Beginning with the Old Testament

The New Testament of Jesus Christ is God's final word to the human race. That which precedes the

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the New International Version.

revelation of God in Christ is preliminary, veiled and fragmentary (Heb. 1:1, 2). With the coming of Christ, however, the New Testament proclaims that God's secret is out and His plan for man is made transparently clear (2 Cor. 4:3; Eph. 3:4, 5). This is why Christian theology must begin with Jesus Christ and the New Testament revelation. We must therefore read the Old Testament in the light of the New and not the other way around.

Just as there is an Old Testament and a New Testament, so there is an old creation and a new creation. Just as the Spirit overshadowed inanimate matter and brought forth the old creation (Gen. 1:2), so the Spirit overshadowed the virgin Mary and brought forth Him who was God's new creation (Luke 1:35).¹

Genesis 2:4 begins the history of the old creation by saying, "This is the account [LXX: *Biblos geneseōs*—literally, the book of the genesis] of the heavens and the earth when they were created."

1. For a discussion of the comparison between Genesis 1:2 and Luke 1:35, see Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in Matthew and Luke* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1979), p. 314. See also W. D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1967), pp. 70-71.

The New Testament literally begins, "The book of the genesis [*Biblos geneseōs*] of Jesus Christ" (Matt. 1:1).² The Old Testament begins with the old Adam. The New Testament begins with the new Adam.

According to Colossians 1:15-17, and indeed the entire New Testament witness, the old creation exists for the sake of the new and not the other way around. God did not create the world, have things go wrong, and then send His Son to merely restore everything as He created it. This would make Jesus Christ and the New Testament exist for the sake of the Old. The apostles teach us that the world was created in the first place with a view to Jesus Christ.

The first Adam "was a pattern [Greek: *typos*—a type] of the One to come" (Rom. 5:14). So too, the Sabbath was "a shadow of the things that were to come" (Col. 2:17).³ As Luther often insisted, the entire Old Testament existed for the sake of Jesus Christ. Creation has realized its purpose and goal in Him.

Jesus Christ is therefore more than a restoration of the first creation. The new creation utterly transcends the old creation just as the new Adam is far superior to the old Adam. While there is a correspondence between protology (the first things) and eschatology (the last things)—illustrated by the correspondence between the first two chapters of Genesis and the last two chapters of Revelation—we must not say that eschatology is a mere restoration of protology. The celestial city of the Apocalypse transcends the primeval garden of Genesis even though the tree of life is said to be in both. The last Adam is infinitely superior to the first Adam (1 Cor. 15:22, 45, 47), and the last (or new) creation is infinitely superior to the first (1 Cor. 15:49).⁴

2. The birth of Christ was a new genesis corresponding to and transcending the old. For a discussion of Matthew's allusion to the Genesis story, see Davies, *Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 67-70.

3. See Hebrews 8:5, 6, where "shadow" (as in Colossians 2:17) and "pattern" (as in Romans 5:14) are used interchangeably.

4. There are two Greek words for *new* in the New Testament: *kainos* and *neos*. When the New Testament speaks of the "new" in contrast to the old, it uses the word *kainos*. "... *καινός* [*kainos*] always implies superiority to that which is not *καινός* [*kainos*], whereas what is *νέος* [*neos*] may be either inferior or better than what is not *νέος* [*neos*]" (A. Plummer, *Second Corinthians*, International Critical Commentary, p. 85, quoted in W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980], p. 37, footnote 3).

Although the new age and its glories have yet to be consummated, the New Testament proclaims that they have been inaugurated because God's goal for the creation has already been realized in Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). This is why Christian theology must begin with the crystal-clear certainty of Jesus Christ—God's final word to the human race.

Sabbatarian theology in general, and Seventh-day Adventist theology in particular, begins with the Old Testament and tries to build a Christian theology on the Old Testament shadow. It tries to structure a theological edifice on that which is preliminary, veiled and partial instead of on that which is final, unveiled and complete. It then tries to make the New Testament conform to this theology developed from the Old Testament.

To argue that there will be a weekly Sabbath in the new creation on the basis of the Genesis account is as sound as trying to argue that the saints will be naked because it was that way in Eden. There is, of course, a keeping of a Sabbath in the new creation which has some correspondence to the Sabbath of the old creation, but this Sabbath-keeping transcends the limits of the old (Heb. 4:1-11).

In summary, Genesis 2:2, 3 is not the proper basis for a theology of Christian ethics. In comparison with God's final word given in Jesus Christ, the Old Testament is shadowy, preliminary, veiled and fragmentary. It is not safe to say that an Old Testament passage means a certain thing for Christians who live in the new age of the Messiah unless the New Testament indicates that this is the way the passage should be interpreted.

The Duration of the Original Seventh Day

The cryptic brevity of the creation account in Genesis should warn us not to be too dogmatic about details. It is far safer to deal with the noon-tide clarity of the New Testament than with enigmatic statements of the Old Testament. For example, the Sabbatarian assumes that "the seventh day" of Genesis 2:2 can mean twenty-four hours and nothing else. Two factors, however, indicate that this is an unproved assumption:

1. While each of the preceding six days is precisely marked by a beginning and an end, this is

not said of the seventh day.⁵ The seventh day, like the other creation days, has a commencement point. But unlike the other days, it has no termination point. This is not an accident of inspired composition. The seventh day of Genesis 2:2, 3 is distinct from the other creation days. Yet how easily we overlook the important fact that, unlike the other days, it is not said to have an end.

If God finished His work of creation on the sixth day, why should His rest from the work of creation end? Regarding the seventh day of Genesis 2:2, James M. Houston says:

It is 'a day' unlike all other days, for it has no bounds of evening and morning. It is limitless in its celebration of God's satisfaction with the goodness of creation, and above all with God's communion with man. . . .

Paradise was the state of being after the sixth day, when man was introduced to the rest of God.⁶

We suggest, therefore, that the Edenic Sabbath was intended to be something far greater than a limited twenty-four-hour period. Although the weekly Sabbath given to Israel was modeled after the creation story, it was something less than God's original, unbounded Eden rest, and certainly less than the rest which was to come in Jesus Christ.

2. The Hebrew word for *day* is *yom*. It is sometimes argued that since *yom* consistently means a twenty-four-hour period in Genesis 1 and 2, "the seventh day" of Genesis 2:2 must also mean a twenty-four-hour period. But *yom* does not consistently mean twenty-four hours in Genesis 1 and 2. Here are two examples:

a. "God called the light 'day' and the darkness He called 'night'" (Gen. 1:5). Here the word *day* or *yom* means only one portion of the twenty-four-hour period.

b. "These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the *day* that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens" (Gen. 2:4, KJV). The King James Version is true to the Hebrew text, which uses the same word *yom* to mean the entire period of creation.

5. Although scholars recognize Genesis 1 and 2 as having quite separate literary origins, the priestly account of Genesis 1 is generally thought to terminate at Genesis 2:3 or 4(a). For example, see S. H. Hooke, art. "Genesis," *Peake's Commentary on the Bible*, ed. Matthew Black and H. H. Rowley (Melbourne: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1962), pp. 175-77.

6. James M. Houston, *I Believe in the Creator* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980), pp. 80, 82.

The Sabbath enjoined upon Israel at Sinai was a twenty-four-hour period. Can we assume, however, that because the Sabbath of the Decalogue was patterned after God's rest, His rest must be exactly the same? Moses also built a tabernacle after the pattern of the one in heaven, but did his little tent correspond to the heavenly tabernacle in every detail? (Heb. 8:1-5). And can we assume that the twenty-four-hour Sabbath given at Sinai in a post-fall setting was in all respects similar to God's pre-fall rest?

The Absence of Any Stipulation Imposed on Man

In the creation account we read of two ordinances which God imposed on the human race: "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it" (Gen. 1:28). Marriage and the cultural mandate concerning work are clearly creation ordinances. They are specifically commanded. Moreover, the book of Genesis presents numerous examples of man's carrying out these creation ordinances. But an equally positive command that man should observe a twenty-four-hour Sabbath is conspicuous by its absence. In fact, the word *Sabbath* is not mentioned at all in Genesis. A statement is made that God finished His work and then began *His* rest on "the seventh day." But the entire history from the fall to the Exodus furnishes no example of man's keeping the Sabbath. Marrying and multiplying, yes! Tilling and using the resources of the earth, yes! These things leap out of the pre-Exodus history everywhere. Yet the same history is silent on the Sabbath, either in respect to a divine command or to human compliance.

The Marks of a Mosaic Institution

God made two great covenants with Abraham and his descendants.⁷ He made a promissory covenant with Abraham and gave him circumcision as a covenantal sign (Gen. 17).⁸ Later He made a law-covenant with Israel at Sinai and gave them the sign of the Sabbath.

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, 'You must observe My Sabbaths. This will be a sign

7. In Romans 9:4 Paul refers to the covenants (plural) given to Israel.

8. Thus, Acts 7:8 calls the Abrahamic covenant "the covenant of circumcision."

between Me and you for the generations to come, so you may know that I am the Lord, who makes you holy. . . .

"The Israelites are to observe the Sabbath, celebrating it for the generations to come as a lasting covenant. It will be a sign between Me and the Israelites forever, for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He abstained from work and rested."—Exod. 31:12, 13, 16, 17.

"Therefore I led them out of Egypt and brought them into the desert. I gave them My decrees and made known to them My laws, for the man who obeys them will live by them. Also I gave them My Sabbaths as a sign between us, so they would know that I the Lord made them holy."—Ezek. 20:10-12.

Since the Abrahamic covenant preceded the Mosaic or Sinaitic covenant (and according to Paul was superior to it—Gal. 3:15-20), the sign of circumcision took precedence over the sign of the Sabbath (see John 7:22, 23).

When Nehemiah rehearsed the history from creation to the Exodus, he did not connect Sabbath observance with creation but with the Exodus:

"You alone are the Lord. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship You.

"You are the Lord God, who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and named him Abraham. You found his heart faithful to You, and You made a covenant with him to give to his descendants the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Jebusites and Gergashites. You have kept Your promise because You are righteous.

"You saw the suffering of our forefathers in Egypt; You heard their cry at the Red Sea. You sent miraculous signs and wonders against Pharaoh, against all his officials and all the people of his land, for You knew how arrogantly the Egyptians treated them. You made a name for Yourself, which remains to this day. You divided the sea before them, so that they passed through it on dry ground, but You hurled their pursuers into the depths, like a stone into mighty waters. By day You led them with a pillar of cloud, and by night with a pillar of fire to give them light on the way they were to take.

"You came down on Mount Sinai; You spoke to them from heaven. You gave them regulations and laws that are just and right, and decrees and commands that are good. You made known to them Your holy Sabbath and gave them commands, decrees and laws through Your servant Moses."—Neh. 9:6-14.

If the observance of the Sabbath had been a creation ordinance and had been observed by the patriarchs, Nehemiah might have said, "You reminded them of Your holy Sabbath." But he

says, "You made known to them Your holy Sabbath." This seems to agree with Exodus 31:12-17 and Ezekiel 20:12, which declare that the Sabbath was a sign given to Israel.

The Sabbath commandment occupies a special place in the Decalogue—the place comparable to a seal in a suzerainty covenant.⁹ Although the Ten Commandments obviously contain principles of universal morality, they are specifically called "the words of the covenant" (Exod. 34:28) or even the "covenant" (Deut. 4:13). This is the Mosaic, Sinaitic or old covenant between God and Israel. Thus, the Decalogue is prefaced by the covenantal preamble, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery" (Exod. 20:2). As a covenant, the Decalogue was addressed to Israel alone. For after Moses declared that the covenant was the Ten Commandments, he said:

The Lord our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. It was not with our fathers that the Lord made this covenant, but with us, with all of us who are alive here today.—Deut. 5:2, 3.

Then Moses proceeded to repeat the Ten Commandments; and when he came to the fourth, he said:

Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.—Deut. 5:15.

Are not Nehemiah 9:14 and Deuteronomy 5:2, 3, 15 telling us the same thing? The Sabbath, therefore, was the sign of God's covenant with the Jews.

The Sabbath Was Not Imposed on the Nations.

As a covenant, the Ten Commandments were specifically addressed to Israel. It is true that the stipulations of the covenant contain norms of conduct that are of universal obligation. The last six commandments of the covenant, for example, contain prohibitions for the protection of human life, marriage, property and reputation. Similar prohibitions existed in codes of conduct outside of Israel. But to these universal norms God added

9. See Robert D. Brinsmead, *Covenant* (Fallbrook, Calif.: Verdict Publications, 1979), pp. 29-35.

cultic stipulations designed to rehearse covenantal history and covenantal relationships. Such was the purpose of the Sabbath. Those cultic stipulations were not universal rules of conduct for the nations. For example, no biblical statement declares that the Sabbath is binding on nations other than Israel.

While there are passages in the Old Testament which call Israel to judgment for breaking the Sabbath, it is significant that the nations are never rebuked for Sabbath-breaking. Prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah and Amos pointedly identify the sins of various nations and of non-Jewish cities, but they never chide them for ignoring the Sabbath.

In Romans, Paul stands in the Old Testament tradition when he lists twenty-two sins for which Gentiles are judged worthy of death. Sabbath-breaking is not in his list of Gentile sins.

Furthermore, no great Jewish teacher, past or present, has ever chided Gentiles for not observing the Sabbath. Throughout the centuries, the Jews themselves understood that the Sabbath was a sign that belonged to Israel's religious cultus alone.¹⁰ From pre-Christian times there has been a well-established Jewish tradition which has distinguished between the commandments binding on the entire human race and the commandments given to Moses for the people of Israel. The first were called the Noachian commandments, and the second were called the Torah.

Although the Jews believed that the Torah was the superior expression of the will of God, they were clear that it was not binding on Gentiles. But the Jews believed that what they called the "Noachian commandments" were binding on the Gentiles. These were simply seven universal norms of conduct extrapolated from Genesis 9.

Furthermore, pre-Christian Judaism taught that Gentiles who kept the Noachian commandments would be accepted of God apart from keeping the Jewish Torah and would be numbered among the pious who would inherit life in the age to come.¹¹

10. Although Isaiah 56:6-8 invites foreigners to keep the Sabbath, this is clearly in the context of becoming members of the covenantal community, worshipping at Jerusalem, offering sacrifices, etc. The Jews have always understood that a Jewish proselyte would take the yoke of the Torah and keep the Sabbath.

11. *The Jewish Encyclopedia* says: "Laws, Noachian: Laws which were supposed by the Rabbis to have been binding upon mankind at large even before the revelation at Sinai, and which are still binding upon non-Jews. The term Noachian indicates the universality of these ordinances, since the whole human race was supposed to be descended from the three sons of Noah, who alone survived the Flood. . . . Basing their views on the passage in Gen. ii. 16, they declared that the following six commandments were enjoined upon Adam: (1) not to worship idols; (2) not to blaspheme the name of God; (3) to establish courts of justice; (4) not to kill; (5) not to commit adultery; and (6) not

In the second century B. C., Judaism produced literature for Gentile consumption called "Derek 'Eretz" (literally, Way of the Earth) literature. This consisted of religious tracts for general (outside) consumption rather than for cultic (inside) consumption. In this literature some of Israel's best teachers endeavored to commend the righteous life to those outside their community.¹² It is significant that the Derek 'Eretz literature never urged the Sabbath on Gentiles. Only if a Gentile became a full Jewish proselyte was he expected to come under the yoke of the Torah—which the New Testament generally calls "the Law."¹³ But if any other Gentile should presume to keep the Sabbath, some Jews believed: "A Gentile observing the Sabbath deserves death . . . inasmuch as 'the Sabbath is a sign between God and Israel alone.'"¹⁴

This illuminates the Acts 15 conference. Here the apostles dealt with the dispute over whether Gentile Christians should be circumcised and come under the yoke of the Torah (Acts 15:5). Edersheim points out that although a small group of Jewish extremists contended that Gentiles must keep the Law (the Torah) in the Messianic age, this was not the teaching of the orthodox rabbis.¹⁵ They taught that it was sufficient for Gentiles to keep the Noachian commandments, which were often limited to only four or five in number.

Apparently the extreme teaching found supporters among some Jewish Christians, for they too urged that Gentile Christians must keep the Law (Torah) in order to be saved (Acts 15:1). But on this question Paul was on the side of the orthodox

to rob. . . . A seventh commandment was added after the Flood—not to eat flesh that had been cut from a living animal (Gen. ix. 4). Thus, the Talmud frequently speaks of 'the seven laws of the sons of Noah,' which were regarded as obligatory upon all mankind, in contradistinction to those that were binding upon Israelites only. . . . He who observed the seven Noachian laws was regarded as a domiciled alien . . . , as one of the pious of the Gentiles, and was assured of a portion in the world to come" (*The Jewish Encyclopedia*, ed. Isidore Singer [New York: KTAV Publishing House], 7:648-49). See also Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, pp. 113-16.

12. See Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, p. 132.

13. As W. D. Davies points out, it was always recognized "by Judaism that the whole of the Law should not be demanded of the Gentiles" (*ibid.*, p. 348).

14. *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, 5:623. Although this was stated by a rabbi after the advent of Christianity, it is in harmony with the historic position of Judaism that "the Sabbath is a sign between God and Israel alone."

15. See Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, reprint ed. in 1 vol. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), appendix 14, pp. 764ff. See also Davies, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 180.

tradition,¹⁶ and the council agreed with him. The fledgling church, therefore, came to virtually the same decision as the best Jewish tradition on the relationship of pious Gentiles to the Torah.¹⁷ They were not required to keep the Torah but were simply to live in harmony with the Noachian commandments, which the Jews had always regarded as the universal norms binding on all men. Thus, the council wrote to the Gentile Christians, saying:

You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things.—Acts 15:29.

Two Jewish theologians, David Berger and Michael Wyschogrod, take the same position as pre-Christian Judaism and the Acts 15 conference. They say:

Most religions consist of a set of teachings dealing with right conduct and man's obligations to God or the gods. Membership in these religions is generally open to anyone who subscribes to the teachings of the religion and endeavors to live in accordance with them. In fact, not only is such membership open to all, but great efforts are often made to attract people to the religion in question. Such missionary efforts are made because these religions believe themselves to be in possession of important truths which they wish to bring to the attention of all, and often because they teach that salvation depends on the acceptance of their belief.

In this respect, Judaism is different. It believes itself to be the religion of the Jewish people, with its teachings obligatory only for Jews. Judaism believes that at Mount Sinai God gave Moses the teachings contained in the Pentateuch (Five Books of Moses),

16. W. D. Davies points out that while there is no evidence that Paul accepted the Noachian laws as expounded by the rabbis, he was influenced and guided by the distinction between the cultic stipulations of the Torah and the universal norms of the Noachian commandments (Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, p. 119).

17. See Edersheim, *Life and Times*, appendix 14, pp. 765-66. W. D. Davies says: "In Jewish Christian churches, while justification was proclaimed on the basis of faith, it was acknowledged that Jewish Christians might obey the law—the mission to the circumcision was assigned to Peter. In Gentile churches obedience to the law was not observed—the uncircumcision was the field of Paul (Gal. 2:7-8). This approach to the law was virtually ratified in the Council of Jerusalem, and, either at this council or slightly after, the conditions on which there could be actual intermingling of Gentile and Jewish Christians were laid down (Acts 15:1-30). The exact significance of these conditions has been variously assessed, either as a minimal ethic to be observed by all (but the nature of the conditions, and the Jewish attitude toward the law as a unity, are against this), or as a safeguard against Gnostic influences (a vague phrase which does not take us very far), or as the Noachian commandments which Judaism laid upon all men—this is the most probable interpretation. The church virtually followed Judaism at this point, because the presence of Gentiles in many synagogues had long involved the mother faith in the same problem, and it had dealt with it in terms of the Noachian commandments" (W. D. Davies, art. "Law in the NT," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962], 3:98).

which regulate the life of the Jew. The Pentateuch contains teachings which deal with every aspect of human life, ranging from the ethical to commandments and prohibitions that regulate our diet, sex lives, and ritual observances. These commandments, traditionally said to be 613 in number, exist in written form in the Pentateuch and are elaborated in the Oral Law, which was also revealed to Moses at Sinai but orally rather than in writing. Later these oral teachings were written down, and these writings are called the Talmud. Together, the Written and Oral Law have guided Jewish life for over two thousand years.

But why is there a special set of laws which are binding only for Jews and not for gentiles? The answer is found in the Bible. . . .

The answer is that Judaism believes all good people to have a share in the world to come. In order to clarify this, we must now speak of the Noachide laws. As we have already seen, the Torah and its 613 commandments are intended only for Jews. How, then, is a gentile to live? Does God not care how gentiles act, or does he make demands of gentiles as well as Jews? Judaism teaches that God does indeed make demands of gentiles, though they are different from those he makes of Jews. The Talmud speaks of the laws that are binding for gentiles as the Noachide commandments, basing itself on Genesis 9:1-17. There God makes a covenant with Noah never again to cause a flood to come upon the world. At the same time God demands of Noah and his descendants not to take human life (Genesis 9:6), and the rabbis include other aspects of moral law, such as theft, adultery and incest, idolatry, etc. Judaism believes that a gentile who obeys the Noachide commandments has a place in the world to come. This is the basic reason why conversion to Judaism by gentiles is discouraged. A gentile who wishes to convert to Judaism is told that, as a gentile, he can find favor with God by adhering to the Noachide commandments. Were he to convert, he would be obligated to fulfill all the commandments of the Torah, and since this is a difficult thing to do, he is advised to stay with the Noachide covenant, under which it is easier to please God. Should a gentile persist in his desire to become a Jew, he must indicate his willingness to accept all the commandments of the Torah. He is then circumcised and miraculously becomes a Jew with all the obligations of a Jew.¹⁸

In summary, the Old Testament does not urge Gentiles to keep the Sabbath, the New Testament certainly does not urge Gentile Christians to keep the Sabbath (Acts 15; Rom. 14:4, 5; Gal. 4:10; Col. 2:14-17), and historic Judaism has never urged non-Jews to keep the Sabbath. The fact that the Sabbath is included in the Ten Commandments is not evidence to the contrary, for these are the

18. David Berger and Michael Wyschogrod, *Jews and "Jewish Christianity"* (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1978), pp. 60-63.

words of the covenant between God and Israel (Exod. 20:2; 34:28; Deut. 4:13; 5:2, 3). Contrary to a popular misconception, the Bible nowhere says that this law-covenant is binding on all nations for all time. The Ten Commandments not only contain universal norms, but they also contain cultic religious stipulations binding on Israel alone.

Marriage Is Not Altogether Analogous to the Sabbath.

One final Sabbatarian argument remains to be examined. This argument appeals to the analogy between marriage and the Sabbath to prove that the Sabbath laws of the Old Testament are still binding on all men. The reasoning can be stated like this: "Both marriage and the Sabbath were given to man in the beginning. Like the Sabbath, marriage is also used as a type of Christ's relationship to His people (Eph. 5:22-33). The coming of Christ did not annul the seventh commandment and the institution of marriage. Neither does it annul the fourth commandment and the institution of the Sabbath. The form of the marriage institution is retained in the Christian age even though the form points beyond itself to the union of Christ and His church. The form of the Sabbath is therefore retained in the Christian dispensation even though Christ is its reality."

In response to this argument, we should first acknowledge that marriage and the Sabbath are in some respects analogous. The New Testament, for example, says that the woman was created for man (1 Cor. 11:9) and that "the Sabbath was made for man" (Mark 2:27). But such reasoning overlooks the fact that marriage and the Sabbath are not analogous in every respect. There are also marked contrasts. Trying to prove anything by analogy is fallacious. To be more specific:

1. The Sabbath was declared to be a sign of the covenant (Exod. 31:16, 17) and a sign that Israel was God's people (Ezek. 20:12). The Sabbath, therefore, was a sacramental thing and, in that respect, was a unique commandment of the Decalogue.

Marriage is never spoken of as a "sign" of the covenant even though it may be used as an illustration of the covenantal union between God and Israel. Whereas the Sabbath was unique to the covenantal people, marriage has always been practiced by all nations and cultures. The fact that boy

meets girl and gets married is not a sign of the chosen people. Furthermore, Protestants have always rejected the Roman Catholic stance in making marriage a sacrament.

As a sign or sacrament, the Sabbath is analogous to circumcision rather than to marriage. But we will refrain from appealing to this analogy between the Sabbath and circumcision to prove that the Sabbath law is abolished, because it is a false hermeneutic to rely on an analogy for proof.

2. The Sabbath is declared to be "a shadow of the things that were to come" (Col. 2:17). While marriage is sometimes used as an illustration of divine things, it is never called a "shadow." The connotation of "shadow" indicates a temporary arrangement which passes away when the reality arrives in the promised Messiah. The entire context of Colossians 2:14-17 indicates that the Sabbath, along with the Jewish festivals, New Moons and regulations on eating and drinking, were abolished with the coming of Christ. Needless to say, it would be morally dangerous to include marriage in the same category as Jewish festivals.

3. Marriage obviously belongs to general revelation. All nations and all cultures practice marriage. Boy does not need special revelation to tell him he needs to meet girl. In this respect, marriage is more analogous to work than to the Sabbath. The creation ordinance, "Be fruitful and increase in number," is linked to the other creation ordinance to govern the earth (Gen. 1:26-28). Mankind does not need special revelation to tell him to work. All nations and all cultures work as well as marry. They worked and they married until the Flood, and they will work and marry until the end of the world. These creation ordinances are so written into man's very nature that even sinful man observes them. If the human race ceased to practice these two things, it would cease to exist.

On the other hand, the Sabbath belongs to special revelation. There is nothing in nature or in reason that can establish a certain twenty-four-hour period and indicate that it is different or that it should be observed in a special way. Thus, the Sabbath had to be "made known" to Israel by special revelation (Neh. 9:14) just as circumcision had to be made known to Abraham or baptism had to be made known to the first Christians.

4. Marriage belongs to the ethics of universal interpersonal relationships in a way that the Sabbath does not. A person who lives in violation of the marital order of human life is an immoral person

and should not be recognized as a Christian. According to Paul, such a person should be excluded from the fellowship of the Lord's table (1 Cor. 5:11). Very few Sabbatharians would adopt this stance toward non-Sabbath-keeping Christians. In fact, Seventh-day Adventists practice open communion at the Supper and thereby recognize non-Sabbatharians as Christians. In this respect, therefore, they acknowledge that non-Sabbath observance is not an open sin like sexual immorality.

As we have already seen, historic Judaism did not require Sabbath observance on the part of Gentiles. But Judaism always recognized that the institution of marriage was universal and that sexual purity was included among those universal imperatives they called Noachian commandments. The Sabbath law, however, belonged to the Torah and to Israel alone.

Thus, it is fallacious to try to establish Sabbatarianism by the analogy between marriage and the Sabbath. Another fallacy sometimes used by Sabbatharians is the analogy between protology and eschatology—the first things and the last things. While the Bible does compare the first things and the last things, it also contrasts them. For example, Paul says, "The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second Man from heaven" (1 Cor. 15:47). It would be most unsound to argue that because the first Adam was solely human, the last Adam must likewise be solely human. We must not try to establish a one-to-one relationship between the first things and the last things, because eschatology transcends protology.

P. Gerard Damsteegt, an apologist for Adventism, acknowledges that the pioneers of Seventh-day Adventism formed their doctrinal edifice by reasoning from biblical types, parables and analogies. Damsteegt repeatedly shows that the pioneers reached their conclusions by "reasoning from analogy."¹⁹ The entire sanctuary theology of Seventh-day Adventism is based on the analogy of type and antitype. ("As in the type, so in the antitype." "Antitype must follow type.") But the book of Hebrews clearly shows that the heavenly sanctuary and its ministry are not always like the type

but are often in direct contrast to it (Heb. 7:27; 10:11-14).

In the last fifty years the Christian movement has produced a wealth of scholarly literature on the science of biblical hermeneutics. This scholarship has amply demonstrated the fallacy of building a doctrine solely on a type, parable or analogy.²⁰

20. For example, see I. Howard Marshall, ed., *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977).

19. P. Gerard Damsteegt, *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977). See for example: "It was reasoned from analogy . . ." (p. 52). "An analogy was drawn . . . Another analogy . . . On the basis of typology it was argued . . ." (p. 104). ". . . employed the analogy-of-Scripture principle" (p. 123). "Employing typological reasoning . . ." (p. 124). "Reasoning from analogy . . ." (p. 125). "Reasoning from analogy, Bates said . . ." (p. 143).

The Heart of New Testament Ethics

Chapter 1

The Problem of a New Testament Paradox

Grateful celebration, love, freedom, and the spirit of forgiveness are all important characteristics of New Testament ethics. But none of these principles constitutes the heart of those ethics.

If we are to properly understand New Testament ethics, we must understand the paradoxical way the New Testament speaks of the Law. Some New Testament statements indicate that the Law is abolished. Others indicate that the Law is still in force. Some Christian teachers stress the binding claims of the Law to the exclusion of those New Testament passages which say the Law has been abolished. Others emphasize the statements which declare that the Law is abolished to the exclusion of those passages which indicate that the Law is still binding. Better scholars, however, acknowledge that the New Testament speaks both ways. For example, in his essay on "Torah and Paul," James A. Sanders says:

Paul's attitude toward the Law has been one of the most puzzling and seemingly insoluble in biblical study. Statement of the problem is considerably easier than suggestion of a solution to it.

On the one hand are a number of passages in the epistles which seem clearly to say that the Law has been abrogated or abolished: Rom 7:1-10; Gal 2:19; 2 Cor 3:4-17; Eph 2:14-16. Paul uses in this regard a verb, *katargeō*, which is rather unequivocal in meaning. It can, according to context, range in connotation from "abolish" to "fade away": but there seems no way to alter its basic denotation. Along with these assertions one must align Gal 3:19-4:5 where Paul apparently says that the Law had been valid from Moses only until Christ.

On the other hand are a number of other passages which apparently contradict such assertions. While in Rom 7:6 Paul says, "We are discharged from the Law . . .", in the same epistle at 3:31 he asks, "Do we then abolish the Law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we affirm the Law." The words "discharged" and "abolish" are both forms of *katargeō*. The apparent contradiction is lodged in one and the same epistle so that solutions sought by means of audience criticism would not seem valid. At Rom 7:22 Paul claims that he delights in God's Law in his inner self; and in Rom 13:8-10 he seems to say that stipula-

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the New International Version.

tions of the Law must still be obeyed, and are indeed obeyable through *agapē*.

At the heart of the problem stands Rom 10:4 which seems to belong to the first group of passages: "Christ is the end of the Law . . ." And yet the word translated "end," *telos*, can also mean purpose, goal, accomplishment or climax.

The problem, therefore, is that Paul apparently contradicts himself in the attitudes he expresses toward the Law. Solutions have been sought for the dilemma in a number of directions.¹

Another New Testament scholar states the problem even more bluntly. In an essay entitled "Paul's Theological Difficulties with the Law," Heikki Räisänen says:

Paul has two sets of statements concerning the validity of the law for Christians. According to one set the law has been abrogated once and for all. According to the other the law is still in force, and what it requires is charismatically fulfilled by Christians.²

The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* also acknowledges that both affirmation and negation of the Law are found in Paul.³

In his book, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, W. D. Davies points out that many scholars have wrestled with the problem of Paul's "inconsistency."⁴ Yet this "inconsistency" did not originate with Paul but with Jesus Himself. As W. D. Davies has stated, "Jesus had a twofold attitude toward the law: he seemed to annul it, at least by implication, and at the same time to affirm it."⁵

On detecting that the New Testament seemed to speak both ways about the Law, Voltaire claimed that Paul contradicted Jesus—since Jesus said He did not come to abolish the Law (Matt. 5:17), while Paul said the Law was abolished (Eph. 2:14, 15). But Voltaire was no more mistaken than some Brethren and Seventh-day Adventists who use op-

posite sides of the paradox to oppose one another on the question of the Law in Christian existence.

We must first recognize that the New Testament does speak both ways about the Law—it is terminated, and it is still in force. As long as we continue ignoring this paradoxical attitude to the Law, we shall misunderstand the heart of New Testament ethics.

Various ways of harmonizing the New Testament statements on the Law have been suggested. Marcion proposed eliminating the Law, along with the entire Old Testament, from the canon of Christian Scripture.

Partly in response to Marcion's drastic solution, Origen distinguished between the ceremonial and moral parts of the Law. He proposed that while ceremonies such as circumcision and festivals have been abolished, the moral parts of the Law are still binding. Although this approach boasts a long and respected history, it has a serious weakness. Not only is it difficult to identify which of the 613 commandments of the Torah are "moral," but the Bible treats the Torah (the Law) as a unit. The Old Testament does not distinguish between the moral and ceremonial parts of the Law. And in the New Testament the word "Law" (*nomos*) generally means the Torah as a whole. As W. D. Davies says, "There is no essential difference in Paul between the Decalogue and the rest of the law."⁶ While it may be useful to divide the Law into such categories as "ceremonial," "legal," "ethical" and "national," we must not impose these categories on those scriptures unconcerned with such distinctions. For example, the effort to diminish the force of Ephesians 2:14, 15 by claiming that Paul is only referring to the ceremonial Law cannot be supported by sound exegesis.

Another approach suggests that when Paul says the Law has been abolished, he does not mean the Law as a *standard* of righteousness but only as a *method* of salvation. In this view, *legalism* was abrogated rather than the Law itself. (Cranfield, for example, suggests that Paul had no word for legalism, so he used the word *nomos* to mean either legalism or the norm of behavior.)⁷ This explanation is faulty since it implies that the Law existed as a valid method of salvation until the coming of Christ. But in Galatians 3 Paul does not teach that the Law was added as a method of gaining right-

1. James A. Sanders, "Torah and Paul," in *God's Christ and His People: Studies in Honour of Nils Alstrup Dahl*, ed. Jacob Jervell and Wayne A. Meeke (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1977), p. 132.

2. Heikki Räisänen, "Paul's Theological Difficulties with the Law," in *Studia Biblica 1978: III. Papers on Paul and Other New Testament Authors, Sixth International Congress on Biblical Studies*, ed. E. A. Livingstone (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1980), p. 305.

3. See W. Gutbrod, art. "The Law in the New Testament," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, ed. and trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1967), 4:1071.

4. See W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), pp. 69-71.

5. W. D. Davies, art. "Law in the NT," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 3:97.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 99.

7. See C. E. B. Cranfield, "St. Paul and the Law," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 17, no. 1 (Mar. 1964): 44, 55.

eousness. Furthermore, such passages as Ephesians 2:14, 15 and Colossians 2:14-17 refer to the termination of the regulations of the Torah, not the termination of the Torah as a method of salvation.

A more recent approach tries to trace a development in Paul's thought. It suggests that his early letter to the Galatians is a short, sharp outburst against the Torah, written in the heat of theological controversy. But it proposes that Paul adopted an increasingly irenic attitude toward the Law (espe-

cially in the book of Romans).⁸ However, as James A. Sanders points out, we are not only faced with the problem of harmonizing Galatians and Romans, but with harmonizing negative and positive statements about the Law in the book of Romans.⁹

8. This position was taken by C. H. Dodd in *Bulletin of Rylands Library* 18, no. 1, p. 41, cited in Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, p. 70.

9. See Sanders, "Torah and Paul," p. 132.

Chapter 2

The Centrality of the Person of Christ

There is a reason why the New Testament speaks two ways about the Law, and this reason leads us to the heart of New Testament ethics. As W. D. Davies suggests, Jesus Christ, in His person, teachings and work, became a new, living Torah for the New Testament community.¹

NT ethics is dominated by the fact of Christ . . . the work and words of Jesus, and these in indissoluble unity, constitute the ethics of the NT, of the New Israel. . . . Christ has taken the place of the law and has become the "new Torah."²

Jesus himself had taken over the place previously held by the law.³

1. See W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980); idem, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964); idem, art. "Law in the NT," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 3:95-102.

2. W. D. Davies, art. "Ethics in the NT," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 2:176.

3. Davies, "Law in the NT," p. 96.

Not only did the words of Jesus form a Torah for Paul, but so also did the person of Jesus. In a real sense conformity to Christ, His teaching and His life, has taken the place for Paul of conformity to the Jewish Torah. Jesus Himself—in word and deed or fact is a New Torah.⁴

Jesus in the totality of His teaching and of His person, of His words, life and death and Resurrection, had not merely replaced the 'old Torah', but had assumed for Paul the significance of a 'New Torah'.⁵

A wealth of evidence may be marshaled to prove that, to the New Testament community, Jesus occupies the central place which Judaism gave to the Law:

1. Moses promised that God would raise up a prophet to supersede him (Deut. 18:15). The New Testament declares that Jesus is this promised One (Luke 9:35; Acts 7:37). The Sermon on the Mount

4. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, p. 148.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 177.

is an obvious New Testament counterpart to Mount Sinai, and Christ Himself is presented as the One who supersedes Moses.

2. Paul explicitly stated that the Law was added until the coming of Christ (Gal. 3:19). It operated as a boy-leader, child-trainer or custodian until Christ came and superseded it (Gal. 3:24, 25).

3. In Paul's conversion Jesus replaced the Law as the center of his life. Paul's own account of his conversion, especially as related in Galatians, clearly demonstrates this fact.

4. All that Judaism ascribed to the Law, the New Testament deliberately ascribes to Jesus Christ. For example:

Judaism taught that the Torah was the divine agent by which God created the world.⁶ On the other hand, John and Paul proclaim that Jesus was the divine Agent in the creation (John 1:1-3; Col. 1:16).

In such miracles of the Exodus as the manna from heaven, the water from the rock and the pillar of light, Judaism saw symbols of the efficacy of the Torah.⁷ But the Gospel of John deliberately takes this glory from the Law and ascribes it to Jesus Christ. He is the Bread from heaven, the Water of life and the Light of the world.

Judaism gave the title of Wisdom to the Torah.⁸ But Paul takes this glory from the Law and affirms that Jesus Christ is the Wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:24, 30; Col. 2:3).

When Jesus invited His hearers, "Take My yoke upon you . . ." (Matt. 11:29, 30), He was probably contrasting His yoke and the yoke of the Torah. As W. D. Davies points out, "Taking the yoke of the Torah was a familiar Rabbinic expression."⁹

A well-known rabbinic saying extolled the virtue of studying the Torah: "When they sit together and are occupied with the Torah, the Shekinah is among them."¹⁰ But Jesus declared, "Where two or three come together in My name, there am I with them" (Matt. 18:20).

When Jesus declared, "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life" (John 14:6), He was claiming for Himself the very things Judaism had claimed for the Torah.¹¹ To His first hearers, these sayings of Jesus meant that He was to occupy the central position which Judaism had given to the Law.

Judaism had elevated the Torah as the supreme revelation of God's will, but the entire New Testament proclaims that the revelation of God's will in Christ has superseded the revelation given in the Law. Jesus Christ, not the Law, is God's final word to the human race.

Jesus himself had taken over the place previously held by the law. . . .

Henceforth, it is man's relationship to Jesus, not to the law, that is decisive (Matt. 10:32-40; Mark 8:38).¹²

The Law Terminated and Fulfilled

The age of the Law was superseded by the new age of the Messiah. All that the Law was to Judaism, Jesus was to the New Testament community. In this respect He was the end or termination of the Law (Rom. 10:4). The new Israel was no longer under the regulations of the Torah (Eph. 2:14, 15; Col. 2:14-17); but as subjects of the kingdom, they were led by the Spirit and ruled by the "law of Christ" (Gal. 5:18; 6:2). Now that the great Teacher had come, they were "no longer under the supervision of the law" (Gal. 3:25).

Yet the Law, like the prophets, had pointed to Christ. It reached its true end or goal in Him. He fulfilled the Law just as He fulfilled the prophets. In this respect Jesus validated the Law just as He validated the prophets. The righteousness of God demanded in the Law found its Amen in the life and death of the Son of God. More than that, all that is timeless and eternally valid in the Law was given far better expression in the teachings and actions of Christ. Rather than being repudiated, the Law was given a depth of meaning which far exceeded its Mosaic letter.

The Law (or Torah) had been greatly distorted in the developing history of Judaism. "Torah" meant "instruction." It was given to provide guidance to the covenantal community. But this guidance was not meant to be a series of ironclad, inflexible rules.

6. See W. Gutbrod, art. "The Law in Judaism," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, ed. and trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1967), 4:1057; Davies, "Law in the NT," p. 102.

7. See Davies, "Law in the NT," p. 101.

8. See Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, pp. 169-72.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 150.

10. Quoted in *ibid.*

11. See W. Gutbrod, art. "The Law in the New Testament," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 4:1083.

12. Davies, "Law in the NT," p. 96.

God did not want mere obedience to rules. He wanted a knowledge of Himself and a delight in His will. In his monograph, *Jesus and the Law in the Synoptic Tradition*, Robert Banks shows that the Torah was never intended to be taken as "absolute and timeless norms embracing the whole of human life, and therefore as possessing a rigid and authoritarian character."¹³ Banks points out that the Torah was meant to be "flexible in application."¹⁴ It did not intend to cover every area of human existence. Instead, it "marked out general boundaries for behaviour rather than prescribed precise paths."¹⁵ Since the laws were given in a historic situation, new situations called for reinterpretation. Thus, Deuteronomy 12:11 significantly reinterpreted Exodus 20:24 to meet a situation which demanded a central place to offer sacrifices.

Yahweh's demands did not stand absolutely above time for Israel, for every generation was summoned anew to listen to them and to interpret and apply them for itself.¹⁶

Thus, even the Ten Commandments were conditioned by their historical context. Their ethical precepts were not unique to the people of Israel. The ethical precepts of the Decalogue were also found among pre-Israelite society and had numerous analogies in the civilizations of the Near East. The moral obligations in the Ten Commandments were fundamental, minimal requirements widely acknowledged outside of Israel.

The peculiarity of Old Testament morality, therefore, consists not in finding out new ethical norms, but in placing traditional directives under the authority and protection of Yahweh and his covenant.¹⁷

The prophets were charismatic exponents of the Torah. They pointed out that the Torah did not require devotion to petty rules but obedience to the will of the personal Lord and a living righteousness which consists in the exercise of compassion and social justice.

But Judaism tended to absolutize the Law. Instead of seeing it as a signpost on the boundaries of human existence which pointed the way to living

righteousness, they treated the Law as if it were a comprehensive, absolute and timeless directive that embraced every area of existence.

Jesus stood in the true prophetic succession. He understood that no set of rules could fully express the kind of life which the righteousness of God demanded. At best, the Law could only suggest the kind of righteousness which God required. Christ took His position as the true Exponent of the Law. With absolute prophetic authority He interpreted, or reinterpreted, the Law according to the new situation of the Messianic age. Above all, His life of self-giving love was the ultimate expression of that living righteousness which God had always demanded and which the Law could at best only dimly suggest. This is why no one can understand the righteousness which the Law demanded until he sees it fulfilled in Jesus Christ—His teaching, living, doing and dying.

Jesus fulfilled the Law just as He fulfilled the prophets. The Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled in a way that the prophets could only dimly foresee. Jesus' fulfillment of the prophets was far more than a mere matching of the letter of Old Testament predictions. He gave to the prophets a depth of meaning that they could not otherwise have had. Jesus not only realized their limited prophetic vision, but He transcended their hopes. In the same way, Jesus did more than expound, sharpen and radicalize the Law. He brought a quality of newness to both Law and prophets. He transcended the Law as He transcended the prophets; yet in doing so, He brought to completion all that the Law and the prophets represented and foreshadowed.

When the living Exponent of God's righteousness appeared among His people, the old Torah stepped aside. Its fading glory was superseded by a far greater revelation of the will of God. This brings us to the heart of Christian ethics.

The heart of Christian ethics is not the Ten Commandments. Robert Banks concludes his monograph by saying that "the central position given to the Decalogue in much Catholic and Protestant thinking is open to question."¹⁸ We do not deny a place of honor for the Decalogue, but we emphatically declare that nothing in either the Old or the New Testament states that the Decalogue is an eternal law given to all men apart from and independent of historical circumstances. The tendency to regard the Ten Commandments as though

13. Robert Banks, *Jesus and the Law in the Synoptic Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), pp. 39-40.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 40.

15. *Ibid.*

16. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

17. Hans Küng, *On Being a Christian* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1968), p. 542.

18. Banks, *Jesus and the Law*, p. 244.

they constitute God's absolute and final law for all mankind has enjoyed a long tradition in the Christian (but never the Jewish) community. This position, however, will not withstand biblical scrutiny. Both ancient and modern Jewish scholars have always maintained that the Decalogue is not separable from the rest of the Torah (613 commandments). The New Testament agrees with this, and therefore it never places the Ten Commandments in a category all their own. The insistence that Christians should interpret the Law literally in every respect is as unsound as insisting that the Old Testament prophecies must be interpreted according to their Palestinian letter. The New Testament interprets both Law and prophets according to the transcendent fulfillment which has taken place in Christ and according to the new situation introduced by the dawn of the Messianic age.

The heart of New Testament ethics is not the love commandment. This does not deny its great importance in New Testament ethics, but in itself the love commandment is far too abstract to occupy the central position. The same thing must be said of any abstract principle or any set of rules thought to replace the old Mosaic code.

The heart of New Testament ethics is Christ Himself in all that He was, said and did. He is the good Shepherd, the Light of the world, the Way, the Truth, the Life, the Wisdom of God, the Bread of life, and the Word. He is all those things (and more) which Judaism traditionally ascribed to the Law of Moses. The person of Christ is so much the center of New Testament ethics that we must even hesitate to say that the "law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2; cf. Rom. 8:2) takes the place occupied by the Law of Moses. In a perceptive comment, W. D. Davies says:

In short, the work and words of Jesus, and these in indissoluble unity, constitute the ethics of the NT, of the new Israel. We might say that it differs from the ethics of the old Israel mainly in this, that while in Judaism, within the complex of the event which redeemed Israel from Egypt—i.e., the Exodus—it is the law of the covenant rather than the agent of the covenant, Moses, that is emphasized; in Christianity, the new exodus, it is the opposite that is true: here the person of Jesus, the agent of the new covenant, achieves preeminence, rather than his word of demand. Christ has taken the place of the law and has become the "new Torah."¹⁹

19. Davies, "Ethics in the NT," p. 176.

Robert Banks considers those controversies and incidents, recorded in the synoptic Gospels, which relate to the Law. He repeatedly demonstrates that the real issue is not whether Jesus affirms or negates the Law. The central issue is the authority of Christ. The incidents are recorded to emphasize the claims of Christ, not to debate the validity of the Law. This is especially true in the Sabbath controversies. Jesus neither upholds the Sabbath traditions nor engages in frivolous anti-Sabbatarianism. The purpose of His words and works is to emphasize His mission. He tells the Pharisees that if they had understood His person and mission, they would not have criticized His disciples for breaking the Sabbath. The controversy recorded in Matthew 12 and Mark 2 closes with Jesus' declaration that He is Lord of the Sabbath. Jesus thereby deflects the controversy to point to Himself and His mission.

In His Sabbath healings Jesus used each occasion to call for a decision regarding His own person and work. The eternally decisive issue is men's relationship to Christ rather than to the Torah. This is the radical difference between Christianity and Judaism. The Law is forced from its key position by Jesus Christ.

Banks points out that the real issue at the trial of Jesus—the issue for which He was put to death—was not His relationship to the Law in general or to the Sabbath in particular, but His Messianic claims.²⁰ In the presentation of the synoptic Gospels everything is subordinate to the claims of Christ. His position is above the Law, not against it.²¹ The message of the Gospels is not concerned with whether Jesus affirmed or negated the Law but with the fact that He has inaugurated a new age and a new situation in which it is no longer the Law but His own person and teaching which are decisive.²²

This is illustrated by Jesus' encounter with the rich young ruler (Matt. 19:16-20). Jesus begins with some claims of the Decalogue but uses these as a "springboard" to press His Christological claims. If the young ruler would be complete, he must submit to the all-embracing demand to follow Jesus.²³ This encounter illustrates what the writer of Hebrews says: "The law made nothing perfect"

20. See Banks, *Jesus and the Law*, p. 125.

21. See *ibid.*, p. 130.

22. See *ibid.*, p. 131.

23. See *ibid.*, p. 163.

(Heb. 7:19). Completion is found only in Jesus Christ (Col. 2:10).

Mark and Luke reveal no special interest in the status of the Law but relate incidents of controversy over the Law for the apologetic purpose of pressing the claims of Christ.²⁴ The Law pointed to Christ. Now that He has arrived, all attention must be directed to Him.²⁵

It is also significant that in his instruction there is no encouragement of the disciples to study the Law, i.e., as an end in itself. In such passages as Luke 24.27 and 22.44-5, it is for the light they throw upon him that reference to it occurs.²⁶

Whereas Jesus declared that not one jot or tittle of the Law would pass until it was fulfilled (Matt. 5:18, KJV), He also said that His words alone would endure beyond the dissolution of the present age: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away" (Matt. 24:35). This indicates a distinction between the duration of the Law of Moses and the authority of Christ.²⁷

Banks concludes his monograph by saying:

It appears, then, that not only does Jesus' teaching challenge the centrality often given to the 'moral law' or 'love-commandment' in Christian ethics, but the fundamental position accorded to 'natural law' or the 'ordinances of creation' as well. Jesus thinks not in terms of a 'theology of creation' but of a 'new creation' that is taking place through the presence of the Kingdom of God in his own ministry. While both he and the wise men frequently speak on ethical issues in authoritative terms without reference to the Law and place great emphasis upon the consequences attached to obedience or disobedience of their sayings, the teaching and authority of Jesus move in a qualitatively new dimension. His teaching, as we have seen, though given independently of the Law, does not take place within the framework provided by it, but rather is the fulfilment of it. His authority extends not only to the demand that his teaching be observed (cf. Prov. 4.20ff.; Job 36.4) but to the call for personal discipleship as well (Mark 10.22).²⁸

The distinguishing feature of Christian ethics does not consist in the ethics of the Ten Commandments nor in any single principle such as love or freedom. Christianity shares these ideals with other religions and philosophies. The Christian ethic is

24. See *ibid.*, p. 172.

25. See *ibid.*, p. 226.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 243.

27. See *ibid.*, p. 256.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 259.

unique because its heart is faith in Christ. Not only what He teaches but who He is and what He has done constitute the concrete starting point of all thinking about Christian existence. Obviously, then, Christian ethics cannot be duplicated by anyone who is not a Christian.

Christian proclamation and Christian action remain tied to his person, not merely historically but also essentially. Platonism as a doctrine can be separated from Plato and his life, Marxism as a system from Marx and his death. With Jesus of Nazareth, however, . . . from beginning to end, his teaching forms such a unity with his life and death, with his fate, that an abstract system of universal ideas does not reproduce what was really involved. Even for the earthly Jesus and most of all for the Jesus who has entered into God's life and been confirmed by God, person and cause completely coincide. If the end of his proclamation, his action, his person, had been simply a fiasco, nothingness and not God, his death would have been the disavowal of his cause: nothing then would have been left of that cause which, it is claimed, is God's cause (and only as such man's cause). But if his end is eternal life with God, then he himself is and remains in person the living sign of the fact that his cause has a future, demands effort, deserves to be followed. No one then can claim to believe in the living Jesus without expressing in deeds his allegiance to that cause. Nor, on the other hand, can anyone support his cause without in practice entering into a bond of discipleship and fellowship with him.

The *following* of Christ is what distinguishes Christians from other disciples and supporters of great men, in the sense that Christians are ultimately dependent on this person, not only on his teaching, but also on his life, death and new life. No Marxist or Freudian would want to claim this for his teacher. Although Marx and Freud personally composed their works, these can be studied and followed even without a special commitment to their authors. Their works, their doctrines, are separable in principle from their persons. But we understand the real meaning of the Gospels, the "teaching" (message) of Jesus only in the light of his life, death and new life: in the New Testament as a whole his "teaching" cannot be separated from his person. For Christians then Jesus is certainly a teacher, but at the same time also essentially more than a teacher: he is *in person the living, archetypal embodiment of his cause*.

As long as Jesus remains in person the living embodiment of his cause, he can never become—like Marx and Engels, for instance, in totalitarian systems—a vacant, impassive portrait, a lifeless mask, the tamed object of a personal cult. This living Christ is and remains Jesus of Nazareth as he lived and preached, acted and suffered. This living Christ does not call merely for inconsequential adoration or even to mystical union. Nor of course does he call for literal imitation. But he does call for practical, personal discipleship.

For this it is notable that only the verb is used in the New Testament: "following" means "walking behind him." It is a question of being active, no longer visibly accompanying him around the countryside as in Jesus' lifetime, but of binding oneself to him in the same spirit of allegiance and discipleship, of joining him permanently and making him the measure of one's own life. . . .

In ethics too we shall not find the distinctive Christian feature in any abstract idea or in a principle, not simply in a special mentality, a background of meaning, a new disposition or motivation. And others

too—Jews, Muslims, humanists of all types—can act out of "love" or in "freedom," in the light of a "creation" or "consummation." The criterion of what is Christian, the distinctive Christian feature—this holds both for dogmatics and consequently also for ethics—is not an abstract something nor a Christ idea, not a Christology nor a Christocentric system of ideas: it is *this concrete Jesus as the Christ, as the standard*.²⁹

29. Küng, *On Being a Christian*, pp. 544-45, 549.

Chapter 3

The Concrete Realities of a Christ-Centered Ethic

While it would be a mistake to construct an elaborate code of conduct from the New Testament to replace the 613 commandments of the Torah, we should not dissipate New Testament ethics in some vague spirit-ethic. For the Christian, Jesus is Lawgiver as well as Redeemer. He is the good Shepherd, who does not leave His sheep without adequate guidance. He is the great Teacher, Guide, and the Light of the world, whose person, words and deeds provide an abundance of concrete directives (but not rule-book directions) for the Christian life.

We may illustrate what we mean by drawing attention to the character of Paul's ethics. As we have already seen, Jesus replaced the Torah as the center of Paul's life. Jesus Christ, in His person, life and teachings, had become for Paul not only salvation, but a new and living Torah. Attempts are sometimes made to find the center of Pauline ethics in such things as the indicative-imperative relationships, the new age of the Spirit, or the ethic of love. These are, of course, important elements in his ethics, but for Paul they are not divorced from the

life and teachings of Jesus. When Paul refers to the "law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2), he means commandments either explicitly or implicitly derived from the life and teachings of the Lord Jesus. As W. D. Davies has well said:

The Christian man for Paul . . . is one who has died and risen with Christ; he has undergone a New Exodus. We now see that he has also stood at the foot of a New Sinai, which implies that he is confronted with the teaching of Jesus.¹

Many do not realize the extent to which the Pauline Epistles are reminiscent of the sayings of our Lord recorded in the synoptic Gospels. A German scholar, D. Alfred Resch, has counted 1096 paralleling statements.² We list some of the most prominent ones:

1. W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), p. 146.

2. See *ibid.*, p. 137.

Paul

Romans 12:14

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

Romans 12:17

Do not repay anyone evil for evil.

Romans 12:21

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Romans 13:7

Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue.

Romans 13:8-10

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellow man has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "Do not commit adultery," "Do not murder," "Do not steal," "Do not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

Romans 14:10, 13

Why do you judge your brother? . . . Let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way.

Jesus

Matthew 5:44

"Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."

Matthew 5:39

"Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also."

Matthew 5:41

"If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles."

Mark 12:17

"Give to Caesar what is Caesar's."

Matthew 22:37-40

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Matthew 7:1; 18:6

"Do not judge, or you too will be judged."

"If anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea."³

Romans 14:14, 20

I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself.—KJV.⁴

All food is clean.

1 Corinthians 10:27

If some unbeliever invites you to a meal and you want to go, eat whatever is put before you without raising questions of conscience.

Colossians 3:13

Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

Colossians 4:2

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.

Colossians 4:6

Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

Colossians 4:12

. . . always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm.

1 Thessalonians 4:8

He who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God.

1 Thessalonians 5:2

The day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.

1 Thessalonians 5:6

So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled.

Mark 7:15, 19

"Nothing outside a man can make him 'unclean' . . ." (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods "clean.")

Luke 10:7, 8

"Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you."

"Eat what is set before you."

Matthew 6:12

"Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."

Matthew 26:41

"Watch and pray."

Mark 9:50

"Have salt in yourselves."

Luke 21:36

"Pray . . . that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man."

Luke 10:16

"He who rejects you rejects Me."

Matthew 24:43, 44

"If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming . . . So you also must be ready."

Matthew 24:42

"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come."

3. Both Matthew 18:6 and Romans 14:13 use the unusual Greek word *skandalon* ("causes . . . to sin"/"put . . . [an] obstacle"), so Paul undoubtedly had Jesus' saying in mind.

4. The King James Version suggests that Paul was persuaded on this point by Christ's teaching.

1 Thessalonians 5:13
Live in peace with each other.

1 Thessalonians 5:16
Be joyful always.

Mark 9:50
"Be at peace with each other."

Luke 6:23; 10:20
"Rejoice in that day and leap for joy."
"Rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

A large number of the ethical statements of Paul are based on the sayings of Jesus recorded in the Gospels. Others are based on the sayings of Jesus in circulation in the primitive Christian community but not included in the four Gospels. For example, Paul exhorts the Ephesian elders to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). This and many other sayings of Christ were treasured by the first Christians although never recorded (see also 1 Thess. 4:15-18). Just as Paul had been persuaded by the teachings of Christ that no food was "unclean" in the new age of the Messiah, so it is reasonable to suppose that the apostle's statements about observing holy days were also derived from the teachings of our Lord (see Rom. 14:5; Gal. 4:10; Col. 2:16).

Paul's ethics were not only based on what Jesus said, but also on His person and work. Thus, he points to Jesus, who "did not please Himself," when he appeals to believers not to please themselves (Rom. 15:3). He holds up before the Corinthians the norm of Christ's meekness and gentleness (2 Cor. 10:1). In urging the Philippians to be humble, he points to the self-emptying love of Christ when He humbled Himself to the death of the cross (Phil. 2:5-8). When appealing to the Corinthians to be liberal, he holds up the example of the One who was rich, "yet for your sakes . . . became poor" (2 Cor. 8:9). C. H. Dodd suggests that Paul's great description of love in 1 Corinthians 13 could only have arisen from the life of the historic Christ. This passage could therefore be seen as a character sketch of the Lord.⁵ Last, but not least, are those scriptures in which Paul urges Christians to follow and imitate Jesus (1 Cor. 11:1; 1 Thess. 1:6).

Luther was right when he said that we must accept Christ as a gift before we follow Him as an example. Justification must always precede sanctifi-

cation. Although the imitation of Christ had been distorted in the medieval church by being divorced from the gospel of salvation by grace alone, Luther did not deny the exemplary aspect of Christology. When the Reformers criticized Romanism for making a new law of Moses out of Christ, they did not mean to deny that Christ was Lawgiver, Shepherd, Guide and Teacher. They were merely complaining that, to the opponents of the gospel, Christ was nothing more than a giver of more laws and demands. They did not see that, first of all, He was One who satisfies the demands of God's righteousness on our behalf.

Unfortunately, some are so committed to mindlessly shouting the slogans of the Reformers that they do not do justice to the New Testament concept that Jesus' person, words and deeds replace the old Torah and become the great norm for Christian ethics. Those who fail to recognize this basic fact think that Christians must come to Christ for grace but must go back to Moses for a rule of life. They pass over the wealth of concrete ethical instructions which New Testament Christianity derives from the life and teachings of Jesus.

The word of God consists of both law and gospel. If we confess that Jesus is the Word (John 1:1), we must believe that He is both Lawgiver and Redeemer—God's will and God's gift.⁶

The rabbis extolled the virtue of studying the Torah. God Himself, they said, spent the first three hours of each day studying it.⁷ It is significant that neither Jesus nor His apostles ever exhort us to study the Law except to confirm Christ's Messianic claims. But the New Testament does exhort us to make Christ our daily meat and drink, to follow Him and to live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us and gave Himself for us. The heart of Christian ethics is summed up in one brief statement of the apostle Paul: "For to me, to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21).

5. See C. H. Dodd, *History of the Gospel*, p. 66, cited in Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, p. 147.

6. If someone objects that this presents a danger of confounding law and gospel, we reply that it no more confounds law and gospel than believing in the two natures of Christ necessarily confounds His two natures.

7. See W. Gutbrod, art. "The Law in Judaism," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, ed. and trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1967), 4:1057.

A Reply to Desmond Ford's Sabbatarian Arguments

Introduction

In October, 1981, Desmond Ford Publications released the book, *The Forgotten Day*.¹ This 318-page book constitutes Dr. Desmond Ford's defense of seventh-day Sabbatarianism. Since I have already written extensively on the subjects of the Sabbath, the law and Christian ethics,² I will here confine my remarks to a critical review of *The Forgotten Day*.

Irresponsible Use of Sources

The Forgotten Day conveys the impression that its theological assertions are supported by the best Christian thinkers. Unfortunately, few who read the book are able to check its numerous quotations from various scholars. For this reason, most readers are not aware that the author has often been irresponsible in his use of sources. For example:

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the New International Version.

1. Desmond Ford, *The Forgotten Day* (Newcastle, Calif.: Desmond Ford Publications, 1981).

2. See Robert D. Brinsmead, "Sabbatarianism Re-Examined," *Verdict* 4, no. 4 (June 1981); idem, "Jesus and the Sabbath," *Verdict* 4, no. 5 (Sept. 1981); idem, "Jesus and the Law," *Verdict* 4, no. 6 (Oct. 1981); idem, *Seventh-day Adventist Sabbatarianism* (Fallbrook, Calif.: Verdict Publications, 1981).

1. On page 246 *The Forgotten Day* misrepresents the great Reformer, John Calvin. He is quoted as saying, "... if it [the Sabbath] were abolished, the Church would be in immediate [sic] danger of immediate convulsion and ruin."³ But in the very same passage, after citing Colossians 2:16, 17, Calvin plainly says, "The Sabbath has been abrogated."⁴ Then the Reformer emphasizes the necessity of "decency and order." For this reason, he says that the church should agree on a time to assemble to hear the Word. When Calvin says, "If it were abolished, the Church would be in imminent danger of immediate convulsion and ruin," he is referring to a regulation by the church for decent and orderly assembly and not to the Sabbath of the fourth commandment. *The Forgotten Day* jeopardizes its credibility by handling evidence so carelessly.

3. On page 88 *The Forgotten Day* makes a similar citation from John Calvin: "... if it [the rest day] were abolished, the Church would be in imminent danger of immediate convulsion and ruin." This citation, in another English translation, is found in John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, tr. Ford Lewis Battles, The Library of Christian Classics, vol. 20 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), bk. 2, chap. 8, sec. 32.

4. Calvin, *Institutes*, bk. 2, chap. 8, sec. 32.

2. On page 132 *The Forgotten Day* uses Herman Ridderbos, along with other witnesses, to support its position on the continuing validity of the Law in the New Testament. But Ridderbos does not teach that the regulations of the Law, including the Sabbath, have continuing validity in the New Testament era. An examination of page 132 in *The Forgotten Day* will reveal an ellipsis in its citation from Ridderbos. The following vital portion was excised:

In Colossians 2:16ff., with regard to the keeping of dietary regulations, feasts, new moons, or sabbath days, we find the typical expression: "which are a shadow of the things to come, but the body is Christ's." In comparison with the administration of redemption that has commenced with Christ, all these prescriptions are but provisional and unreal, as a shadow exhibits only the dim contours of the body itself. Herein is the important viewpoint that with Christ's advent the law, also as far as its content is concerned, has been brought under a new norm of judgment and that failure to appreciate this new situation is a denial of Christ (Gal. 5:2).⁵

Rather than supporting *The Forgotten Day*, Ridderbos would label its theology "a denial of Christ."

3. In its treatment of the vital Colossians 2:16 passage, page 110 of *The Forgotten Day* refers to a number of "first class exegetes" for support. It conveys the impression that virtually all reputable scholars support its interpretation. But the author should be more candid with his readers. He knows that the Christian church over the centuries has generally taught that the Sabbath regulations of the Old Testament are no longer binding on the Christian community. According to Calvin, "the early fathers customarily called this commandment [the fourth] a foreshadowing because it contains the outward keeping of a day which, upon Christ's coming, was abolished with the other figures."⁶ Not only the early Fathers of the church and the Reformers, but by far the great majority of respected scholars in the Christian church today, take Colossians 2:16, 17 at face value and declare that laws of Sabbath-keeping have been removed as a norm by which we may judge the behavior of other Christians. In his excellent book, *The Ten Com-*

mandments for Today—cited in *The Forgotten Day's* selected bibliography—William Barclay emphasizes that Sabbatarianism has never represented mainstream Christianity but has been an aberrant position in the history of the Christian church.⁷ The most that the author of *The Forgotten Day* can say is that the minority viewpoint of the Anglo-Saxon Puritan tradition upholds some form of Sabbatarianism.

While *The Forgotten Day* gains its only real support for Sabbatarianism from Sunday Sabbatarians, who largely stand in the Puritan tradition, most of these would vehemently oppose Seventh-day Adventism and especially its major premise that the Saturday Sabbath is a final test for all Christians. It would have been better for the author of *The Forgotten Day* to take his stand on the Bible rather than to misrepresent what most "first class exegetes" have said.

Unsatisfactory Proof

Thoughtful readers look for solid scriptural proof of an author's major theological assertions. And on crucial points, *The Forgotten Day* makes strong assertions with scriptural passages given or implied as proof. But those who pause to check these assertions are often confronted with marked discrepancies. Let us examine some examples of the kind of "proof" offered in *The Forgotten Day*:

1. On page 21 *The Forgotten Day* states, "None can doubt that the Sabbath was the first religious sign entrusted to the human race." Of course we can doubt this, especially since no scripture is cited as proof.

2. On page 32 *The Forgotten Day* declares that the Sabbath "is a sign of justification." Matthew 11:28-30 is the only New Testament passage given as proof. The book subsequently says, "Thus the Sabbath is a test for all professed worshippers of God." The only New Testament texts listed are "Mt. 12, etc., Rev. 13." Although a fertile apocalyptic imagination could read such a test into Revelation 13, it is not even inferred in Matthew 12. Perhaps it is found in the "etc."

3. *The Forgotten Day* repeatedly declares that the Sabbath is a test for all ages. It was certainly a test in the Mosaic dispensation, but is it too much

5. Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, tr. John Richard De Witt (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1975), p. 284.

6. Calvin, *Institutes*, bk. 2, chap. 8, sec. 28.

7. See William Barclay, *The Ten Commandments for Today* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1973), pp. 26-48.

to ask for one scripture which plainly makes it a test for Christians? *The Forgotten Day* offers no such proof.

4. On page 95 *The Forgotten Day* says:

The most precious promises and the most awful warnings of Scripture are associated with the Sabbath and these become more pronounced the further along in Scripture we read. For example, see Isa. 56:3-7; 58:13, 14; Jer. 17:24-27; Mt. 11:28-12:13; Mk. 2:27, 28; Heb. 4:1-9.

The burden of Matthew 11:28-12:13 and of Mark 2:27, 28 is to emphasize the Messianic claims of Christ, not any Sabbatarian claims. Hebrews 4:1-9 contains an urgent invitation to accept the gospel and enter into God's rest. It is not a fearful warning against rejecting the Sabbath but against rejecting the gospel.

5. On page 96 *The Forgotten Day* says:

Throughout the approximately 150 references to the Sabbath in Scripture (more proportionately in the New Testament than in the Old), we find it always elevated as the sign and the seal of the divine covenant with man, and a specific test in all ages. For the Sabbath as a test at the beginning and end of the patriarchal age, see Gen. 2:1-3; Ex. 16:4, 28-30; as a test during the Levitical age, see Ex. 20:8-11; Eze. 20:12-24; 22:7-8; Jer. 17:24-27; Neh. 13; as a test in the Christian era, see the Sabbath controversies in Mt. 12; Mk. 2, 3; Lu. 6, 13, 14; Jn. 5, 9. Apocalyptic is characterized by tests over the fidelity to the law. See Dn. 1, 3, 6 and 7:25. Rev. 13 is based on Dn. 3 and warns against violation of the first commandment (vs. 3), the second commandment (v. 14), the third commandment (v. 6), and the fourth (vv. 15-18; cf. 14:8-17, which emphasizes the eschatological climax over worship of the creature rather than the Creator).

In the 150 references mentioned above, the Sabbath is sometimes spoken of as a sign. But *The Forgotten Day* says that "we find it always elevated as the sign . . . a specific test." But many of the biblical references, especially in the New Testament, only refer to the Sabbath in a neutral way, neither to enforce it nor to disannul it. One only has to examine the texts given as proof that the Sabbath is "a test in the Christian era . . . Mt. 12; Mk. 2, 3; Lu. 6, 13, 14; Jn. 5, 9." Such assertions do not constitute sober Christian exegesis and can only embarrass thoughtful Sabbatarians.

6. On page 243 *The Forgotten Day* says:

Q. Is there any evidence that Gentiles kept the Sabbath?

A. There is abundant evidence. But first let us remember that the N.T. gives us next to nothing about the regular worship meetings of the early Christian church. But what we do know is that Isaiah, in speaking of the influx of Gentiles, foretold that they would keep the Sabbath. See Isa. 56:1-8. Gentiles interested in the religion of the Old Testament were already observing the Sabbath in the days when the gospel began to be preached. See Acts 13:44.

It is first asserted, "There is abundant evidence." But then follows the amazing contradiction, "Let us remember that the N.T. gives us next to nothing about the regular worship meetings of the early Christian church." How can that which is "next to nothing" be "abundant evidence"?

For the present we will refrain from commenting on *The Forgotten Day's* appeal to Isaiah 56:1-6. The only New Testament scripture offered as "abundant evidence" that Gentiles kept the Sabbath is Acts 13:44: "On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord." This passage does not say Gentiles kept the Sabbath. Lutherans, Baptists, Methodists and others have also come to hear me speak on the "Sabbath" day (bearing in mind that the New Testament has no other word for the seventh day of the week). But they would be greatly embarrassed if the author of *The Forgotten Day* used this as evidence that they were keeping the Sabbath.

While it is true that Gentile God-fearers attended Jewish synagogues, this in itself is not Sabbath-keeping. Contrary to repeated inferences in *The Forgotten Day*, the Sabbath commandment of the Decalogue says nothing regarding the time for worship or for attending church. Worship is something we owe to God at all times. The fourth commandment speaks of resting from labor for an entire twenty-four-hour period. Luke does not say that the women returned from the tomb to *worship* according to the commandment, but "they *rested* on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment" (Luke 23:56).

Advocates of both Sunday and Saturday observance who appeal to New Testament texts which mention various times for religious meetings have not found any real proof for a Christian Sabbath. Holding a meeting on a particular day is not proof of Sabbath-keeping.

7. On pages 52 and 53 *The Forgotten Day* makes the astounding claim that there is "abundant evidence" that all the laws of the Ten Commandments were known and observed by the faithful

from the *beginning of time*. Let us examine the "proof" for this assertion, given on page 53:

- Commandment 1: Gen. 11:1-19; Ro. 1:20-26.
- Commandment 2: Gen. 31:19; 35:2-4.
- Commandment 3: Gen. 27:1-41; with Hb. 12:16.
- Commandment 4: Ex. 16:27, 28.
- Commandment 5: Gen. 9:20-27.
- Commandment 6: Gen. 4:8-15.
- Commandment 7: Gen. 34:1-7; 39:7-9.
- Commandment 8: Gen. 31:29-37.
- Commandment 9: Gen. 26:6-11; 27:1-45.
- Commandment 10: Gen. 13:10, 11.

Note that the Sabbath law is found in Exodus 16, which deals with the Exodus story. The fact is that no Sabbath commandment existed before Moses.

8. On pages 96 and 154 *The Forgotten Day* declares that the New Testament makes 59 positive references to the Sabbath. But most of these references are casual statements made in a historical narrative about Jewish people living in Palestine. They are neutral statements whose burden is neither to advocate nor to repudiate the Sabbath. Imagine estimating the importance of the Passover for Christians by counting the number of times the word *Passover* appears in the New Testament (28 times)!

If in these 59 references the Sabbath is "always elevated as the sign and the seal of the divine covenant with man, and a specific test in all ages," why does the author of *The Forgotten Day* attempt to explain the silence of the New Testament on the obligation of the Sabbath for Christians.

9. On page 153 *The Forgotten Day* says, "About a dozen chapters in the Gospels refer to the Sabbath and frequently at great length, but like the Epistles taking the obligation for granted." There is a great deal of difference between saying that the obligation is taken for granted and saying that it is "always elevated as the sign and the seal of the divine covenant with man, and a specific test in all ages." It is difficult to see how taking the obligation for granted can be designated as "specific."

False Assertions

The Forgotten Day makes a number of false assertions which are presented as incontrovertible truths. Here are some examples:

1. On page 55 *The Forgotten Day* says, "At no time did Christ deliberately reform any institution intended to fall into desuetude after His death." But do not the Gospels record how Jesus cleansed the temple and thus reformed an institution about to fall into disuse?

2. On page 95 *The Forgotten Day* says, "The original arrangements of human duty in Eden would ever remain binding." This is a typical Seventh-day Adventist theological assumption which cannot be truthfully made without definite qualification. For example, God commanded Edenic man to eat only fruit (Gen. 1:29).⁸ Neither vegetables nor flesh was permitted until after the fall. It would have been a serious crime for man in Eden to kill animals for his food. But man is not now in Eden. He is living in a fallen world where many conditions have drastically changed. If Adventists insist on returning to the original conditions of Eden, they should also insist on wearing no clothes. God gave concrete commandments adapted to the Edenic conditions. Later He gave specific commandments adapted to post-Flood conditions. He also gave some commandments to Israel adapted to the needs of a religious cult within Palestine. And He gave concrete commandments adapted to the Christian age. Thus, there are Edenic laws, Noachic laws, Mosaic laws and Christian laws. Some elements are common to all, but we cannot assume that commandments given in a particular age are applicable to other ages.

Why argue about Edenic Sabbath laws when the Bible is silent on this matter? The only Sabbath laws that the Bible mentions are those given to Israel at the Exodus.

3. On page 117 *The Forgotten Day* says, "We never read that he [Paul] was accused of breaking the Sabbath or teaching others so to do." But what about Acts 21:17-21?

When we arrived at Jerusalem, the brothers received us warmly. The next day Paul and the rest of us went to see James, and all the elders were present. Paul greeted them and reported in detail what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.

When they heard this, they praised God. Then they said to Paul: "You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have believed, and all of them are zealous for the law. They have been informed that you teach all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to

8. I use the word "fruit" in its proper biological sense.

turn away from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or live according to our customs.

The issue here was not simply circumcision but keeping the Torah or Law of Moses (the sign of which was the Sabbath). Circumcision stood for subjection to the entire Law of Moses (see Gal. 5:2). Thus, Paul was charged by some with teaching the Jews to forsake the Torah.

4. On pages 141 and 142 *The Forgotten Day* quotes Dr. Jack Provonsha, who suggests that while men may make an idol out of spatial things, the Sabbath, being a temporal thing, is an "inherent prophylaxis against idolatry." But the overwhelming evidence is that Judaism did make an idol out of the Sabbath. The Jews attributed marvelous powers to the Sabbath, even claiming that the perfect keeping of one Sabbath would bring the Messiah.

One of the things which may well have ruined the Anglo-Saxon Puritan movement was its Sabbatarianism. It became an idolatrous oppression. The entire history of Seventh-day Adventism has been characterized by its "gospel" of Sabbatarianism. The author of *The Forgotten Day* ought to recognize that Adventism has put the Sabbath in place of the gospel. Is not this making an idol out of the Sabbath?

In its eulogy of Sabbatarianism *The Forgotten Day* makes astounding claims for the Sabbath which sound much like old Judaism. For example, on page 5 the book declares, "Most of the world's misery may be attributed to the fact that humanity has forgotten that commandment which above all the rest should have proved of infinite blessing to the race." As though one could solve the world's misery by teaching people to observe the right day! *The Forgotten Day* also says that the Sabbath "supports and interlocks all other doctrine" (p. 28), "undergirds faith for the present" (p. 28), is "central" (p. 54), and "is the lungs by which the Christian religion breathes" (p. 138).

Such Sabbatarian eulogies will certainly encourage Sabbatarian idolatry. Neither places nor times will prevent idolatry, and the sooner Seventh-day Adventists realize this, the better. All that Judaism and *The Forgotten Day* ascribes to the Sabbath, apostolic Christianity ascribes to Jesus Christ alone. Can we candidly read the New Testament and imagine that the apostles would eulogize the Sabbath as *The Forgotten Day* has done? Is there any real evidence that they thought Sabbatarianism was the great testing truth for all men?

5. On page 237 *The Forgotten Day* says, "The Epistles have almost nothing to say about the life and words of Jesus." This claim is one of the great fallacies of twentieth-century liberalism, which tried to make Paul a Hellenizer who was uninterested in the Jesus of history but only in the Lord from heaven. In recent years W. D. Davies has patiently and exhaustively exposed this fallacy.⁹ Davies shows that Paul extensively bases the ethical passages in his Epistles on the sayings of Jesus later recorded in the synoptic Gospels. Many of Paul's counsels are taken almost word for word from the teachings of Jesus.¹⁰ Davies cites a German scholar who claims to have found over 1,000 parallels between Paul's words and the words of Jesus in the synoptic Gospels.¹¹ Davies has compiled an illustrative comparison of such texts:

Paul interweaves words of Jesus "unconsciously" into his exhortations, which suggests that these words were bone of his bone (see, e.g., Rom. 12:14 [Matt. 5:44]; 12:17 [Matt. 5:39ff]; 12:21 [Matt. 5:38ff]; 13:7 [Matt. 22:15-22; Mark 12:13-17; Luke 20:20-26]; 13:8-10 [Matt. 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-34; Luke 10:25-28]; 14:10 [Matt. 7:1; Luke 6:37]; 14:13 [Matt. 18:7; Mark 9:42; Luke 17:1-2]; 14:14 [Matt. 15:11; Mark 7:15]; I Thess. 4:8 [Luke 10:16]; 5:2-3 [Matt. 24:43; Luke 12:39]; 5:6 [Matt. 24:42; Mark 13:37; Luke 21:34, 36]).¹²

Yet on page 237 *The Forgotten Day* claims that the Epistles have almost nothing to say about the "words of Jesus"!

Neither is *The Forgotten Day* correct in stating on page 237 that Paul has almost nothing to say about the life of Christ. As W. D. Davies shows, Paul's ethics are not only based on the teachings of Christ, but on His person and life. Thus, Paul speaks of Christ's self-denial (Rom. 15:3), poverty (2 Cor. 8:9), gentleness and meekness (2 Cor. 10:1), and life of humility (Phil. 2:5-8). C. H. Dodd suggested that 1 Corinthians 13—the hymn in praise of love—could be seen as a character sketch of our Lord and could only have been born out of a

9. See W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980); idem, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1964); idem, art. "Ethics in the NT," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 2:167-76.

10. See my essay in this publication, "The Heart of New Testament Ethics," chapter 3, where I have listed many of these texts side by side.

11. See Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, pp. 136-37.

12. Davies, "Ethics in the NT," p. 175.

reflection on the life of Christ. And how could Paul appeal to believers to imitate Christ unless he had something to say about Christ's life? (1 Cor. 11:1; 1 Thess. 1:6).

6. On page 254 *The Forgotten Day* says, "In Galatians, it [law] does not mean the Ten Commandments but the whole Jewish system." As it stands, this statement is incorrect. Much scholarly work has shown that in Galatians 3:17-19 Paul is alluding to the giving of the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. *The Living Bible* actually takes the liberty of substituting the Ten Commandments for Law in Galatians 3:17.¹³ If the author of *The Forgotten Day* had said, "In Galatians, it [law] does not mean the Ten Commandments *alone* but the whole Jewish system," his statement would have been correct; but that would have altered its meaning entirely.

7. On page 214 *The Forgotten Day* says that the New Testament contains "nothing analogous to Sinai." Such a statement is astounding in view of the impressive scholarship which has long recognized that Matthew presents the history of Jesus as a replay of Old Testament history. Jesus is the Son of Abraham and the firstborn Son (Matt. 1). He escapes the wrath of Herod as Moses escaped the wrath of Pharaoh. He comes out of Egypt (Matt. 2). He passes through the waters of baptism as Israel was baptized in the sea (Matt. 3). He is tempted in the wilderness as Israel was tempted in the wilderness, and even the figure of 40 days is an allusion to Israel's 40 years in the wilderness. Then in Matthew 5 the Sermon on the Mount obviously awakens the memory of Mount Sinai. Here Jesus gives the law of His kingdom and repeatedly uses His "I tell you" statements as a comparison with or even antithesis to the Law of Moses. Of course the Sermon on the Mount is a New Testament counterpart to Mount Sinai, just as Jesus' act of redemption is a New Testament counterpart to the Old Testament Exodus story.

Pentecost is another New Testament event which refers to Sinai. The Old Testament Pentecost celebrated the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai. But in 2 Corinthians 3 Paul declares that the new ministration of the Spirit has superseded what was written on tables of stone. Jerome was right when

he compared Sinai and Pentecost in the following words:

There is Sinai, here Sion; there the trembling mountain, here the trembling house; there the flaming mountain, here the flaming tongues; there the noisy thunderings, here the sounds of many tongues; there the clangor of the ramshorn, here the notes of the gospel-trumpet.¹⁴

It is almost incredible that the author of *The Forgotten Day* could say that the New Testament has "nothing analogous to Sinai." That the major events of New Testament history replay the major events of Old Testament history is the elementary warp and woof of the gospel story.

8. On page 243 *The Forgotten Day* argues that, compared with the Sabbath, circumcision was a "minor" issue among the Jews. (This comparison is vital to the book's argument on Paul's silence over urging Gentiles to keep the Sabbath.) But any authority on Judaism would have told the author of *The Forgotten Day* that, for the Jew, circumcision was the preeminent sign.¹⁵ Jesus Himself recognized the validity of this Jewish custom when He reminded the Pharisees that the law of circumcision took precedence over the law of the Sabbath (John 7:22, 23). And to this day it is circumcision which preeminently makes a man a Jew. In fact, circumcision was so preeminent to a Jew that it stood for subjection to the entire Torah, including the Sabbath, the food laws and all other Mosaic regulations—as even modern Jewish theologians still testify. This is why circumcision rather than the Sabbath was the greater issue in the New Testament. The Jewish Christians, therefore, did not say, "The Gentiles must keep the Sabbath and be required to obey the law of Moses," but, "The Gentiles must be *circumcised* and required to obey the law of Moses" (Acts 15:5). Circumcision stood for Sabbath-keeping, eating kosher food and keeping all the regulations of the Law of Moses.

13. See Kenneth M. Taylor, *The Living Bible: Paraphrased* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 1971).

14. Quoted in Henry E. Dosker, art. "Pentecost," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, James Orr, gen. ed. (1939; reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976), 4:2319.

15. For example, Severino Pancaro says, "The precept of circumcision is above that of the Sabbath." He then cites a rabbinic saying: "See how beloved circumcision is (by God): it overrides the Sabbath" (Severino Pancaro, *The Law in the Fourth Gospel: The Torah and the Gospel, Moses and Jesus, Judaism and Christianity According to John* [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975], p. 162).

Unwarranted Dogmatism

There are matters on which committed Christian scholars should be dogmatic. But a true scholar is ready to consider other interpretations of doubtful passages where the evidence is scanty or ambiguous. *The Forgotten Day*, however, breathes the spirit of strident dogmatism on points that are not beyond question.

Unfortunately, such emphatic dogmatism on matters that are often side issues is characteristic of Seventh-day Adventism. Its traditional interpretation of Daniel 8:14 is a classic example. Adventism takes its fantastic theory on 1844 and the sanctuary from an obscure passage in an apocalyptic book of the Old Testament and teaches it with breathtaking dogmatism. An orthodox Adventist scholar is not supposed to even consider the possibility that Daniel 8:14 might mean something else. A similar dogmatism is reflected in *The Forgotten Day's* defense of its Sabbatarianism. In the absence of proof, it says, "No one can doubt," "There is abundant evidence." It then proceeds to make some vague scriptural reference without any obvious connection between the assertion and the scriptural reference. Or it makes a farfetched apocalyptic analogy among Daniel 3, Sabbath-keeping and the mysteries of Revelation 13 and then assumes that no sane person would dare challenge this fantastic apocalypticism. This spirit of Seventh-day Adventism acts as though no one else has any insight into God's mysteries of the future and discusses events supposed to transpire on this earth as though they were gospel realities.

But we turn from this rarefied atmosphere of apocalyptic speculation to more mundane examples of unwarranted dogmatism:

1. *The Forgotten Day* repeatedly refers to Jesus' statement, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27). It dogmatically asserts that this refers to the creation story. In my essay, "Jesus and the Sabbath," I granted this possibility; but I also indicated that this may not be the real point Jesus is making.¹⁶ There is nothing in the context of this scripture which demands this conclusion, and the passage is not even repeated in the parallel accounts of Matthew 12 and Luke 6. It is entirely possible that Jesus was referring to a well-known rabbinic saying, "The Sabbath is given

over to you and not you to the Sabbath."¹⁷ In his recent commentary on Luke, I. Howard Marshall says:

Rather we should interpret Mk. 2:27 along the lines of Mekhilta Ex. 31:14 (109b): 'The Sabbath is given over to you and not you to the Sabbath', a text which refers not to mankind in general but to Israel as God's people: the authority of the Son of man is then due to his position vis-à-vis Israel.¹⁸

In other words (and as the context could indicate), Jesus may have been simply saying that the Pharisees were to be censured for failing to recognize that the Sabbath was designed for the benefit of people. But *The Forgotten Day* insists that Jesus' statement is a theological assertion regarding creation. Elsewhere the book complains that those who take Colossians 2:16 at face value fail to heed the hermeneutic principle of relying on the testimony of two or three witnesses. But this hermeneutic principle also applies to the book's own interpretation of Mark 2:27. When we are faced with reasonable interpretive alternatives, it would be wise to temper our dogmatism. Such modesty is the mark of a good scholar.

2. On page 157 *The Forgotten Day* makes this dogmatic comment on Colossians 2:16: "The verse does not parallel Eze. 45:17, as the Greek words translated 'eating and drinking' cannot possibly refer to meat and drink offerings. See all modern translations." The words often translated "eat" and "drink" are from the Greek words *brōsis* and *posis*, and are nouns in the dative case. They literally mean "food" and "drink." They may simply refer to eating and drinking as in Romans 14:17. Or they may refer to the food and drink regulations of the sanctuary as in Hebrews 9:10, where the same Greek words are used, but in a different Greek case. The link between Ezekiel 45:17 and Colossians 2:16 is grammatically possible, and I invite the reader to candidly examine the remarkable similarity between the two passages. From a contextual and grammatical standpoint, however, Colossians 2:16 may refer to dietary regulations—e.g., either to the clean-unclean food laws of Moses or to some other kind of dietary asceticism. Elsewhere I have granted the possibility of this interpretation. But let us remember that the real issue in

16. See Brinsmead, "Jesus and the Sabbath."

17. Quoted in I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1978), p. 232.

18. Ibid.

Colossians 2:16 is that laws on food and drink, festivals, New Moons and Sabbaths (whether connected with cultic worship or religious asceticism) have been removed as a norm by which Christians can judge one another. Paul declares that none of these things is a legitimate test within the Christian church. Yet the author of *The Forgotten Day* tries to dissolve the real issue in Colossians 2:16 in side issues and say, contrary to Paul, that the Sabbath is indeed a test.

On page 228 *The Forgotten Day* says that Sabbath-keepers can never have complete fellowship with non-Sabbath-keepers. Yet is not the existence of such religious barriers the very thing Paul opposes in Colossians 2:16 as well as in Ephesians 2:14, 15 and Romans 14:1-7? Is not Christ alone to be the basis of fellowship? There is a place for dogmatism. But in the face of overwhelming New Testament evidence, we should not allow such questions as food and the observance of holy days to divide Christians. This, however, is the very thing Seventh-day Adventism attempts to do and which *The Forgotten Day*, by its own teaching, must inevitably do.

False Issues

In a number of instances *The Forgotten Day* sidesteps real issues by raising false issues. For example:

1. On pages 107, 158, 242 and elsewhere, *The Forgotten Day* argues that even though the Sabbath might be a shadow of Christ (Col. 2:17), we should retain it because spirit does not do away with form. The book indicates that although we eat Christ spiritually by faith, we should not abandon the Lord's Supper, baptism and other appointed forms.

It is true that spirit still needs form. I have never denied this. In fact, I have argued that spirit still needs form. I therefore object to having my position represented as a kind of mystical super-spirituality. The issue is not whether the church needs forms. But since God has effected His new creation and new exodus in Christ, are the forms of the old-covenant age adequate to express what we have in the new age of the Messiah? Can the new wine be conveyed in the old wineskins? Do those who want to retain the Old Testament "shadow" and "signs" do justice to the radically new thing which God has done in Christ? Do they do justice

to the rupture which the new age of the Spirit brings to the old era?

Using *The Forgotten Day's* logic, we could argue for the retention of animal sacrifices. Hebrews 10:1 calls them "a shadow" just as Colossians 2:17 calls the Sabbath "a shadow." If the Sabbath shadow is still useful in pointing us to what Christ has done, as *The Forgotten Day* argues, why not retain the sacrificial shadows to remind us of Christ's death? And why not also keep the Old Testament Passover? But in Colossians 2:16, 17 Paul groups such things as Passover festivals, New Moons and Sabbaths and calls them a shadow of things to come. If the author of *The Forgotten Day* is correct in stating that the reality of Christ does not make the form of the Old Testament Sabbath obsolete, why not retain the other Old Testament forms mentioned in Colossians 2?

The issue is not, Do we need forms? but, Are the Old Testament forms adequate? or, In the light of Colossians 2:16, 17, are the Old Testament forms to be urged upon Christians as religious tests?

2. *The Forgotten Day* makes an issue out of the necessity for time, even a regular time, to worship God. Few serious Christians would disagree with this. Luther was vehemently anti-Sabbatarian, but he could also argue strongly for the necessity of regular congregational assembly.

Let us suppose that the board of a seminary is discussing whether the institution should require students to turn off their lights at a certain hour. A professor who had taught at a boarding academy emphasizes the necessity of students' getting adequate rest. Another replies, "What my colleague says is beside the point. The issue is not whether these seminary students need adequate rest. The issue is whether the school should legislate when the students must turn off their lights or should treat them as mature students who will act responsibly in the matter."

I suggest that the New Testament has no more interest in telling the gospel community when to worship than it has in telling them where to worship (see John 4:19-24). Whereas the Old Testament contains legislation concerning times and places of religious assembly, the New Testament contains no such legislation. The international, transcultural Christian community is free to adapt both times and places of worship to the needs of its own situation.

The Forgotten Day argues for Sabbatarianism on the ground that since we need time for the worship of God, God Himself must tell us how much time.

This argument is astonishing. Worship is something we owe to God all the time. Whether we work or rest, eat or fast, we should do all to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31). The idea of limiting a time that belongs to God is a Judaistic evasion of our real responsibility. Christ calls us to radical discipleship which cannot be limited to percentages. He demands from His followers an unqualified "all." To teach little children at Sabbath School, "Six days for work and play, but the seventh is for Jesus," is a mistake. Every day is for Jesus. The new exodus which has taken place in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ has brought us to the last days (Acts 2:17), the age of the Spirit, the day of salvation (2 Cor. 6:2). Christ has begun His Messianic or millennial reign (1 Cor. 15:25-27), and the kingdom is "ready to be revealed" (1 Pet. 1:5). He "is ready to judge the living and the dead" (1 Pet. 4:5). The eschatological jubilee (which is a great Sabbatical rest) has been inaugurated (Luke 4:18, 19). We are in the great antitypical day of atonement, which is a Sabbath of Sabbaths. If Christ has begun His Messianic reign, the Jewish hope of a great millennial Sabbath has already begun. It is not sufficient to live as though Christ were coming tomorrow. Every day is to be lived as though He were coming today. Christ is reigning as King today, and He extends His Lordship not only over all places but over all time.

The Old Testament form of the Sabbath, therefore, is no longer adequate for the new age of the Messiah. That form is too prone to blind people to the absolute demands which every day makes upon us.

3. On page 215 *The Forgotten Day* argues that the church needs concrete commandments and practical instruction. Without such, it declares, love is too abstract, and ethics is inclined to become too mystical and super-spiritual. This is correct. I, too, have written against a mystical spirit-ethic in "Jesus and the Law" and have drawn attention to the New Testament's wealth of practical instruction given to the church to live by.¹⁹

In this matter *The Forgotten Day* has raised another false issue. The issue is not an ethic of love with practical instruction or an ethic of love without practical instruction. The issue is whether we should return to the Law of Moses (the documents of the old covenant) for practical instruction or should go to the law of Christ (the documents

of the New Testament) for such instruction? The real issue, therefore, is Judaism or Christianity, Galatianism or Paul. Should we return to the Torah with its commandments and regulations (which Paul says Christ has abolished—Eph. 2:14, 15), or should we come to the great Teacher and His apostles? On the ethics of interpersonal relationships, the New Testament has far more to say, and of a more practical nature, than the Law of Moses.

4. On page 116 *The Forgotten Day* says, "Did the early Christian church interpret Col. 2:16 as prohibiting Sabbath-keeping? The testimony of church-history is that it did not." This question raises a false issue. Of course Paul does not prohibit Sabbath-keeping in Colossians 2:16 any more than he prohibits observing Passover festivals. Jewish Christians were not to be condemned for continuing to follow a Jewish lifestyle. The issue, therefore, is not *prohibiting* Sabbath-keeping but *prescribing* Sabbath-keeping. *The Forgotten Day* should have asked, "Did the early Christian church interpret Col. 2:16 as reprimanding those who would prescribe Sabbath-keeping as a test?" This question would have to be answered, "The testimony of church history is that it did." Calvin, for example, appeals to the united testimony of the early Fathers to support the orthodox interpretation of Colossians 2:16.²⁰

5. On page 119 *The Forgotten Day* says, "It must never be forgotten that Christ's last words to His church had to do with the duty of believers till the end of time to make disciples through teaching all that He (*Christ*, not Paul) had commanded. See Mt. 28:18, 19."²¹ Did not Paul declare that his words constituted the Word of God? (1 Thess. 2:13). And to the Corinthians he said: "I give this command (not I, but the Lord)" (1 Cor. 7:10). "If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command" (1 Cor. 14:37). In His commission to teach whatever He has commanded, Jesus includes not only His personal teaching but the instruction He would send the church through His apostles after the coming of the Spirit (see John 16:12, 13).

The issue is not whether Jesus is the foundation of the church. The issue is whether Paul's teaching

19. See Brinsmead, "Jesus and the Law," and my essay in this publication, "The Heart of New Testament Ethics."

20. See Calvin, *Institutes*, bk. 2, chap. 8, sec. 28.

21. See also *The Forgotten Day*, pp. 151, 230, where the author raises the issue of Jesus versus Paul.

is the teaching of Jesus (as he claimed) and whether Paul is to be accepted as an inspired interpreter of Jesus. On this point of "Jesus or Paul" *The Forgotten Day* echoes the earlier (and now discredited) liberals of the twentieth century who played their little games about Jesus versus Paul.

6. *The Forgotten Day* argues that since the Gospels were written later than the Epistles, the Epistles cannot interpret the Gospels as Edward J. Carnell proposes in his five laws of biblical hermeneutics.²² But the issue is not which was written first—the Gospels or the Epistles—but which came first—the life and teaching recorded in the Gospels or the situations addressed in the Epistles. For example, Jesus spoke of the necessity of His death, but the Gospels do not develop the doctrine of atonement as the Epistles do. Jesus was limited by historical circumstances in what He was able to say. He therefore hinted at many things. What is implied in the Gospels, however, we find explicitly stated in the Epistles. Jesus had many things to say which the disciples could not bear while He was still with them (John 16:12). We therefore find rather enigmatic statements in the Gospels which are clarified in the Epistles. As W. D. Davies shows, Paul based His teachings on the life and teachings of Jesus. For example, what Paul says in Romans 14 about all food being clean is an application of Christ's words regarding defilement (cf. Mark 7:14-19 with Rom. 14:14, 20).

The central issue of the timing of Jesus' teaching and of Paul's teaching is that Jesus did not specifically address the Gentile problem. This problem did not arise during His ministry. Nor were the disciples ready to receive the revolutionary instruction about admitting Gentiles into the church apart

22. See Edward J. Carnell, *The Case for Orthodox Theology*, 1st British ed. (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1961), p. 53. Carnell's position is not discredited today as Dr. Ford asserts. For example, Herman Ridderbos says: "The fact still remains, however, that Jesus' preaching represents the stage in the history of the gospel before the resurrection, and Paul—even as the early Christian church—looks back to the resurrection as the highest point of the revelation of the divine mystery. It is in such terms that the peculiar differences of Jesus' and Paul's preaching can be explained. What we have said is especially true with respect to the significance of Jesus' own person and work. Jesus' self-revelation, especially in the synoptic gospels, is still in many respects characterized by a certain amount of reserve and hiddenness, and even the meaning of his suffering and death is kept in the background. . . . Herein lies a difference from what comes to the fore in Jesus' own preaching and self-revelation before his resurrection. For now is revealed what then was still hidden; now that is preached from the housetops, what then was whispered in the ear (Mark 4:22; Matt. 10:27). . . . The difference . . . lies in the fact that the history of redemption had progressed" (Herman Ridderbos, *Paul and Jesus: Origin and General Character of Paul's Preaching of Christ*, tr. David H. Freeman [Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co., 1974], pp. 68-9).

from circumcision and submission to the Law of Moses. But as the great apostle and spokesman of Jesus to the Gentiles, Paul specifically addressed this issue. When we want to decide whether Gentile Christians must keep the Sabbath, we must therefore expect to secure specific answers from the one who specifically addressed this question. But *The Forgotten Day* would have us believe that Jesus Himself spoke most directly to this question. On page 157 *The Forgotten Day* would have us believe that while Jesus' instruction on the Gentile problem is explicit, Paul's instruction on the same matter (e.g., Col. 2:16) is "vague" and "notoriously hard to be understood."

If the author of *The Forgotten Day* should ever debate with an exponent of eternal torment, I suggest that he will soon resort to my hermeneutic of using the Epistles to interpret the Gospels. The exponents of eternal torment find no support in the Epistles, but in the Gospels they find all those statements by Christ Himself which have been used to support the popular theory of hell. I would frankly acknowledge that Jesus' pre-Passion sayings on hell are enigmatic and mysterious. Were it not for the clarifying light of the Epistles, they could easily be understood as supporting an eternally burning hell. The subject of the wrath of God as well as that of life beyond the grave remained largely an apocalyptic mystery until God's wrath was revealed at Calvary and the resurrection demonstrated the nature of life beyond the grave.

Likewise, the fate of the temple services, of the Sabbath, the food laws and other regulations of the Torah, remained largely a mystery until these issues were clarified by the New Testament Epistles. When Jesus was with His disciples, they were not ready to receive the instruction found in the book of Hebrews. Christ could only hint at these things.

Furthermore, evidence suggests that the Gospels were written after the Gentile problem had been settled. They were not written to address that problem but primarily to keep the Jesus story alive in the church.

Unproved Assumptions

Traditional Adventist arguments on Daniel 8:14 and the sanctuary are built on a series of unproved assumptions made at crucial points where evidence is lacking. *The Forgotten Day's* arguments on the Law exhibit a similar weakness. For example:

1. *The Forgotten Day* repeatedly assumes that Genesis 2:2, 3 means that a Sabbath law was given to Adam in Eden and that the Sabbath was a creation ordinance. In my essay on Genesis 2:2, 3, I have shown that these assumptions cannot be proved.

2. *The Forgotten Day* repeatedly assumes that the Sabbath has been a sign of the covenant in every age. There is no proof, however, that the Sabbath was a sign of the Noachic or Abrahamic covenants. The Bible is clear that it was a sign of the Sinaitic covenant (Exod. 31:16, 17; Ezek. 20:20). There is not a single text which declares that the Sabbath is a sign of the New Testament age. In the New Testament, Christ is declared to be a sign and the Holy Spirit a seal (Luke 2:34; Eph. 1:13), but never the Sabbath. When Paul wanted a sign that the Baptist's disciples at Ephesus were Christians, he did not ask which day they kept any more than he asked them if they were circumcised. He simply asked, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit?" (Acts 19:2). And when Jesus spoke of a distinguishing mark of His followers, He did not say, "The great test of all ages by which all men will recognize My people is that they will observe the right twenty-four-hour period as the Sabbath." Rather, He said, "All men will know that you are My disciples if you love one another" (John 13:34).

How can the Sabbath be a test when the New Testament is not only silent about such a test, but Colossians 2:16 says the Sabbath is not to be a test among Christians? On this point there is nothing "vague" about Colossians 2:16, as *The Forgotten Day* claims on page 157. Neither is Romans 14:5 "vague," except to those who insist that Moses should have veto power over Paul.

3. *The Forgotten Day* assumes that the Ten Commandments were given by God to be a law for all men in all ages. This assumption has certainly enjoyed a long tradition in many sections of the church, but it needs to be challenged on several counts:

a. No biblical passage says that the Ten Commandments are God's law for all men for all time.

b. The preamble of the Ten Commandments is addressed to Israel (Exod. 20:1). Deuteronomy 4:13 and 5:2, 3 say that the Ten Commandments are the covenant which God made with Israel and not with their fathers. The Ten Commandments are the words of the old or Mosaic covenant (Exod. 34:28). We are not under the old covenant. It is ob-

solete (Heb. 8:13). Second Corinthians 3 explains that what was engraved in letters on stone is a fading glory which has been superseded by the new covenant of the Spirit.

c. The New Testament does not regard the Ten Commandments as something separable from the Torah as a whole. The word "law" (singular) in the New Testament generally means the entire Torah, which exists as an indivisible whole. According to Galatians 5:3, one cannot pick and choose in the Law. All of it stands, or none of it stands. The entire Law of Moses was designed to operate until the coming of Christ (Gal. 3:19). After that, Christians were not to remain under its supervision (Gal. 3:24, 25). No New Testament doctrine tells us which part of the Law of Moses to discard and which part to retain. All the Ten Commandments are part and parcel of the Law of Moses (Mark 7:9, 10; John 7:19; cf. Heb. 10:28 with Deut. 17:2-6). All efforts to divide the Law of Moses into neat categories called "temporary" and "permanent," "ceremonial" and "moral," have no clear biblical support.

4. *The Forgotten Day* assumes that when the Bible uses the word "commandments," it must mean Ten Commandments. Thus, when Paul speaks of keeping God's commandments in 1 Corinthians 7:19, *The Forgotten Day* assumes that the apostle means the Ten Commandments. The context indicates something else, however, for Paul also says, "To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord)" (1 Cor. 7:10). And further on the apostle says, "What I am writing to you is the Lord's command" (1 Cor. 14:37).

When it cites the words of Jesus, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments" (John 14:15, RSV), *The Forgotten Day* assumes that Jesus is referring to the Ten Commandments and the Sabbath. But in context, Jesus means His final instruction to His disciples, and especially the one He repeated over and over: "A new commandment I give you: Love one another" (John 13:34). "If you love Me, you will obey what I command" (John 14:15). "My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you" (John 15:12). "You are My friends if you do what I command" (John 15:14). "This is My command: Love each other" (John 15:17). In his Epistle John says, "This is His command: to believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as He commanded us" (1 John 3:23).

5. *The Forgotten Day* assumes that the New Testament citations of some of the Ten Commandments prove that this entire covenantal document, including the Sabbath, remains in force for Christians. But this is an erroneous assumption. Does the fact that Paul cites something from the Law of Moses (1 Cor. 9:9) prove that the entire Law of Moses is still in force for Christians?

As there are two covenants, so there are two laws—the Law of Moses and the law of Christ. Some concrete demands are common to both. For example, the Law of Moses forbids lying. But because the New Testament also forbids lying does not prove that Christians are under the Law of Moses. It simply shows that some of the same ethical demands are included in the law of Christ. Thus, one who lives in the United States is under United States' law. But if he travels to Australia and finds that some things forbidden in the United States are also forbidden in Australia, this does not prove he is still under United States' law. If he drives recklessly, for example, he does not break United States' law even though it also forbids reckless driving. He breaks the law of Australia, because that is the law he is now living under. Australia may have borrowed some of its laws from the United States' statute books, but this does not mean that Australians live under the laws of the United States.

Christians do not live under the Law of Moses (1 Cor. 9:20, 21) but under the law of Christ. Jesus and His apostles used their prophetic freedom to take what is useful from the Law of Moses and incorporate it into the law of Christ. But the New Testament believer is not bound by the Law of Moses as such. He may keep it voluntarily as Jewish Christians continued to do, but he should not bind it on the conscience of other Christians or make a religious test out of it.

There is no scripture which proves that the Ten Commandments were a divine legislation to be imposed on all men for all time.

6. On page 83 *The Forgotten Day* asks, "Did the Omniscient One err by slipping a temporary command into the heart of a set of eternal laws?" This question assumes that the Law of Moses divides temporary "ceremonial" laws and eternal "moral" laws into separate and clearly defined categories. Human logic strives to develop tidy theological systems, but God's ways often defy such logic. William Barclay has drawn attention to the fact that the Law of Moses constantly mingles profound and timeless ethical principles with seemingly

trivial ceremonial stipulations.²³ Leviticus 19 is an illustration of this. If moral principles are embedded in sections of the Law dealing with cultic requirements, why should we be surprised to find a cultic requirement among timeless ethical precepts?

The Ten Commandments incorporate simple principles of common morality which obviously apply to all men. But to these God attached a cultic religious duty as a sign of His covenant with Israel. Why should we question God's wisdom in doing this?

Unsatisfactory Theological Method

The Forgotten Day does not appear to have any orderly theological method. There is no logical pattern in its developing argument. No scriptural evidence for Sabbatarianism is presented in a systematic way. Yet a certain feature gives the book its peculiar character. The author is a confirmed Adventist apocalyptic spirit. He is the child of and apologist for an apocalyptic movement. This explains his exaggerated eulogizing of the Sabbath. For him the Sabbath is the great final test for all mankind. He is not an ordinary Sabbatarian like a Seventh-day Baptist. He is an apocalyptic Sabbatarian. He sees the Sabbath as a sign and a mighty testing truth in the most unlikely places, especially in apocalyptic symbols. He is so certain that an apocalyptic passage like Revelation 13:15-18 is referring to the Sabbath that he does not even try to prove it. ("Those who are wise will understand.")

Traditional Seventh-day Adventism was developed largely by reasoning from analogies.²⁴ Like Adventism, *The Forgotten Day's* theological method is analogy. For example:

1. Those who carefully follow *The Forgotten Day's* theological method will find that the author's major argument for the continuity of the Sabbath is the analogy he draws between the Sabbath and marriage. He circumvents Colossians 2:16, 17 with the analogy of marriage. For an extended reflection on the fallacy of this analogy, I refer the reader to my essay on Genesis 2:2, 3.

23. See William Barclay, *Ethics in a Permissive Society* (London: William Collins, Sons & Co., 1971), pp. 18-20.

24. See my essay in this publication, "Genesis 2:2, 3 and the Sabbath," section 6.

2. On page 229 *The Forgotten Day* makes an analogy between eschatology and protology—i.e., the last things correspond to the first things and *vice versa*. This argument has a fatal flaw. While there is correspondence between eschatology and protology, eschatology transcends protology and is infinitely superior to it. There is not only correspondence between the last things and the first things, but there is also profound contrast.²⁵

3. *The Forgotten Day* finds evidence for making the Sabbath a testing truth in the apocalyptic analogy between Daniel 3 and Revelation 13. How this proves that the Sabbath is a test I do not know, but apparently the author of *The Forgotten Day* assumes that "those who are wise will understand." His great apocalyptic interest colors his interpretation of the entire Bible. Whereas for him apocalyptic remains the key to Scripture, for me the key is the New Testament gospel.²⁶

Wrong Use of Scripture

The Forgotten Day's theological method, which is governed by apocalyptic speculation, results in a wrong use of Scripture. For example:

1. On pages 96, 153, 177 and 243 *The Forgotten Day* uses Isaiah 56:1-8 to prove Sabbath-keeping among Gentiles. But this passage, which is a favorite for most Sabbatarians, does not prove that Gentiles kept the Sabbath, nor does it prove that Christians should keep the Mosaic Sabbath regulations.

In its historical Jewish context, Isaiah 56 is referring to Gentiles' becoming Jewish proselytes—i.e., they will join the covenantal community (v. 6), keep the Sabbath (v. 6), participate in the temple festivals (v. 7), and offer the burnt offerings and sacrifices prescribed by the Law of Moses (v. 7). If this scripture is to be applied to the Christian age, it must be interpreted or reinterpreted according to the new situation which has been brought about

25. See my essay in this publication, "Genesis 2:2, 3 and the Sabbath," for a more extended discussion on this issue.

26. The same difference applies to our respective approaches to Daniel 8:14. In his Glacier View document, "Daniel 8:14, the Day of Atonement, and the Investigative Judgment," Dr. Ford's preoccupation was not the gospel but apocalyptic. The interpretive solution which he offered the crisis-ridden Seventh-day Adventist Church was not the gospel but what he called "the apotelesmatic principle." In his massive manuscript the gospel became lost in an apocalyptic flea hunt.

through Christ. If *The Forgotten Day* insists that to "keep the Sabbath" (Isa. 56:6) means literally keeping the twenty-four-hour Sabbath of the Mosaic Law, why should not "their burnt offerings and sacrifices" (Isa. 56:7) be literally practiced according to the Law of Moses? The Sabbatarian is inconsistent in his interpretation of Isaiah 56. He arbitrarily selects what suits him and discards the rest. Likewise, he misuses Isaiah 66:23. If this passage proves that God's people will keep the Old Testament Sabbath in the world to come, it also proves that they will then observe the Jewish New Moon festival. There is something radically wrong with using either passage in this way.

2. In its treatment of Colossians 2:16, 17, *The Forgotten Day* seems to conceal the passage in an impenetrable fog. The book refers to the Colossian heretics with considerable certainty but then, on page 157, declares that the meaning of Colossians 2:16 is vague and difficult to understand. The opposite is true. Andrew John Bandstra issues a caution about excessive dogmatism on the background of Colossians 2. With a touch of humor he says, "It has been said that the less that is indisputably known about a subject, the more that is written on it."²⁷

Let no one, therefore, be confused by talk about astral gnosticism, elemental spirits, etc. The orthodox, face-value meaning of Colossians 2:16, 17 has been accepted by the greatest Christian thinkers for two thousand years. The essence of Paul's message in Colossians 2:16, 17 is crystal clear except to those determined spirits who wish to impose their Sabbatarianism on everyone else on pain of incurring God's displeasure. Paul states in unmistakable terms that such things as food and drink regulations, religious festivals, New Moons and Sabbath days are not to be a norm of judgment in the Christian church. They are not to be made test questions. Anyone is free to eat grass like Nebuchadnezzar and to keep a Sabbath if he chooses. But Seventh-day Adventism is not content with this liberty. It wants to urge its lifestyle on others as a matter of life and death and to make the matter of observing holy days the supreme issue of the Christian religion. Such impositions

27. Andrew John Bandstra, *The Law and the Elements of the World: An Exegetical Study in Aspects of Paul's Teaching* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1964), p. 1.

only prey on people with a weak conscience.²⁸ This is the very thing that Colossians 2:16, 17 opposes. God's Word is plain enough, and all the farfetched apocalyptic devisings of *The Forgotten Day* cannot silence the witness of Romans 14:5, Galatians 4:10 and Colossians 2:16, 17.

3. On pages 211 and 241 *The Forgotten Day* contends that Galatians 4:10 and its context have nothing to do with Sabbath days. I invite the reader to carefully compare Galatians 4:10 in its context with Colossians 2:16, 17 in its context. Here Judaizers (Jewish Christians) were urging Gentile Christians in Galatia to be circumcised and to keep the Law of Moses (see Acts 15:5). The foolish Galatians began the practice of circumcision and of observing days, months, seasons and years.²⁹

4. On page 235 *The Forgotten Day* would like us to believe that when Paul says that some (presumably the strong in faith) regard every day alike (Rom. 14:5), "every day" means every week day except the Sabbath—because of an analogy with Exodus 16:4, where "each day" means each of the six days of the week. Such an analogy is far removed from the context of Romans 14. I refuse to believe that using the Bible in this unconscionable way is sober, God-honoring exegesis. There is not the slightest hint in Romans 14:5 that "every day" merely refers to the six days of work. No one should have any difficulty understanding Romans 14:5. It is so straightforward that it does not need to be interpreted. It obviously conveys the same message as Colossians 2:16, 17.

I submit that Romans 14:5, Galatians 4:10 and Colossians 2:16, 17 meet the qualification of two or three reliable New Testament witnesses. How could the New Testament be clearer that the observance of any holy days should not be made a test in the Christian church?

5. In interpreting certain texts in the book of Revelation, *The Forgotten Day* makes a serious mistake. In its appendix on "The Everlasting Ten,"

on pages 291-299, the book uses a familiar line of argument. In brief, proof for Sabbatarianism consists in showing from Exodus that the Ten Commandments are called the Testimony (Hebrew: *eduth*), that they were kept in the ark of the covenant, and that the Sabbath was the sign of this covenant (e.g., Exod. 31:7, 16-18; 34:27-29). The argument then jumps from Exodus to the book of Revelation, where John said he saw the ark of the covenant and the tabernacle of the Testimony in heaven (Rev. 11:19; 15:5) as well as the remnant people of God on earth keeping the commandments of God and having God's sign or seal (Rev. 7:1-4; 12:17; 14:12).

The Forgotten Day is correct when it says that John the revelator is referring to the Testimony—the *eduth*—which is the Ten Commandments. I will go further and say that Revelation 7 is not only an allusion to the Passover story recorded in Exodus, but it is also an allusion to the Mosaic sign, which is the Sabbath. On page 298 *The Forgotten Day* says, "These texts [Rev. 15:5; 12:17; 11:19] prove without any disputation that the Ten Commandments are in prominent focus sixty years after the cross." I will go further and say that Revelation not only pictures the Ten Commandments in heaven, but it also presents the imagery of God's people keeping them on earth and having the seal of the Testimony, which is the Sabbath.

There is a basic fallacy, however, in *The Forgotten Day's* argument. The book of Revelation is a mosaic of Old Testament scripture, Old Testament events, Old Testament persons and Old Testament institutions. There is scarcely a text in Revelation which is not clothed in Old Testament imagery. But it is just that—Old Testament imagery. These Old Testament images are not given Old Testament meaning but are filled with Christian meaning. For example, Babylon no longer means the Old Testament Babylon but the great enemy of Christ and His gospel. Jerusalem does not mean the city of the Jews but the "city" of those loyal to Jesus. The ark that goes before the armies of Israel is not the Old Testament ark but Jesus Himself. The seven lamps of fire are not the candlesticks of the Old Testament sanctuary but the Spirit, who is sent from the presence of Jesus to animate His people. Like the rest of the New Testament, John sees that the new history of Christ fulfills Old Testament history. John figuratively describes Christian things by using Old Testament imagery, but he does not give them a literal Old Testament meaning. The author of *The Forgotten Day* knows bet-

28. *The Forgotten Day* suggests that even if the evidence for Sabbatarianism is not convincing, it would be wise to keep the Sabbath as a matter of playing it safe (p. 215). This is preying on people with a weak conscience. The pagans kept their lucky or unlucky days to ward off evil spirits. Are Christians now to keep Saturday to ward off God's wrath? This is surely a denial of the finished work of Christ (see Rom. 5:19).

29. Compare Colossians 2:16, which has the reverse order—festivals (yearly), New Moons (monthly) and Sabbaths (weekly).

ter than to interpret Babylon, Euphrates and the twelve tribes of Israel in a literal Old Testament sense. Yet he insists on interpreting the Testimony, the ark and the seal in this way.

6. *The Forgotten Day* repeatedly refers to the Sabbath controversies and Sabbath miracles in the Gospels. These are supposed to prove that Jesus upheld the Sabbath, that the Sabbath is the great sign of the covenant, the undergirding of faith, the lungs of a Christian, the test for God's people in all ages, etc. Such use of Scripture brings us to the heart of the issue.

It is said that Beethoven was not troubled if a musician made a technical mistake in rendering one of his compositions. But he became angry if the musician misinterpreted the spirit of his composition. There is a much more serious problem with *The Forgotten Day* than its technical mistakes. The heart of the issue is the way it has totally missed the spirit of the New Testament. This is demonstrated in the way it misinterprets the Sabbatarian controversies featured in the Gospels.

In Judaism the Torah was central. The Pharisees stood ready to contest the regulations of the Law. But with the coming of Christ, the Law was forced from its key position. Henceforth men's relationship to Christ rather than to the Law was decisive. The Gospels do not relate various events of Christ's life to emphasize the Law but to emphasize the superior claims of the One who supersedes the Law as the revelation of God. To suggest that the Sabbath controversies were recorded in the Gospels to emphasize the Sabbath is to misunderstand the entire message of the Gospels. In every instance Christ deflected the argument from the Law to His own person and mission. In the debate over the disciples' plucking corn on the Sabbath, Christ used the occasion to assert that His authority was above the Law. To a Jew this was a breathtaking claim, but Christ made it clear that the issue was His person and authority. Whether in Matthew, Mark or Luke, the incident climaxes with Jesus' words, "So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:28; cf. Matt. 12:8; Luke 6:5).

It is not correct, as *The Forgotten Day* claims on page 166, that it was the Sabbath issue which precipitated Christ's crucifixion. Such misrepresentation has no support in the story of the four Gospels. The real issue at the trial of Jesus, and the issue for which He was put to death, was not the Sabbath but His claim to be the Son of God. Christ's person was the great issue. Those who

crucified Him did not hang some Sabbatarian charge above His head on the cross. He was crucified under the caption, "King of the Jews."

This is the heart of the matter. In trying to press the Sabbath to the front with exaggerated eulogies and claims of its importance, *The Forgotten Day* has seriously misrepresented the entire thrust of the New Testament. Anyone who thinks that the New Testament is concerned about laws of food and drink or laws of where and when to worship is not really reading the New Testament at all. Jesus Christ—His person and work—is the subject matter of the New Testament. He is God's final word to the human race. All that the Torah was to Judaism, He is to the New Testament community. His gospel, not the Sabbath, is the great final test by which the eternal destiny of everyone is decided. To introduce any other religious issue as the test is to make it an antichrist. In this sense, Christ is the end and abolition of religion, because men are not to divide and separate themselves on any religious issue except faith in Jesus Christ for man's total acceptance with God. The New Testament has no command to remember the Sabbath. Rather, it commands us to remember Christ's death ("Do this in remembrance of Me"—Luke 22:19), to remember that He rose from the dead (2 Tim. 2:8), and to remember the gospel of His death and resurrection (1 Cor. 15:1-4). God's great act of redemption in Christ is "the forgotten day" of which the world and many Christians need to be reminded. I would suggest, therefore, that *The Forgotten Day* concentrates on the wrong day.

On pages 88 and 89 *The Forgotten Day* claims that the church and the gospel would perish without the Sabbath. It suggests that if only the Sabbath were kept, the gospel would live and the church would mightily prosper. Such claims do not fit the facts. The Christian church has existed for most of its two-thousand-year history without the Sabbath, yet the church is still alive and well. Why is it that Sabbatarians have generally been such feeble exponents of the gospel? The Jews were great Sabbatarians, yet crucified the Son of God. Seventh-day Adventism has never been comfortable with the gospel. Throughout its history it has crucified the gospel again and again. The author of *The Forgotten Day* knows that this is true.

To the author of *The Forgotten Day* the gospel is apparently only a means to preach the Sabbath more fully. What traditional Adventism has failed to do in winning all true Christians to the Sabbath, he thinks can be done by linking the Sabbath to the

gospel. He tries to use the gospel to glorify and vindicate the Sabbath. I confess that there was a time when I thought this was the thing to do. But I learned that Jesus Christ and His gospel do not exist to serve and to glorify the Sabbath. To use the gospel in this way is to prostitute the gospel, and I do not believe that God will be in it.

Sabbatarian Adventism has been guilty of mak-

ing non-issues compete with Jesus Christ. I appeal to my Seventh-day Adventist brothers and sisters to remove their apocalyptic Adventist glasses. Read the New Testament for what it really says without looking for and trying to prove things that are not there at all. Honestly let the New Testament put the emphasis where it will—on the glorious person and work of Jesus Christ.