

**THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH:
ITS HISTORY, AUTHORITY,
DUTIES, BENEFITS AND
CIVIL RELATIONS**

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The Christian Sabbath: Its History, Authority, Duties, Benefits and Civil Relations by Various

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VARIOUS

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✓CHRISTIAN SABBATH:

ITS

HISTORY, AUTHORITY, DUTIES, BENEFITS,
AND CIVIL RELATIONS.

A Series of Discourses

BY

THE REV. N. L. RICE, D. D.
THE REV. WILLIAM HAGUE, D. D.
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THE REV. WILLIAM ADAMS, D. D.
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WITH A SKETCH OF THE SABBATH REFORM BY THE SECRETARY
OF THE NEW YORK SABBATH COMMITTEE.

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SKETCH OF THE SABBATH REFORM.

THE literature of the Sabbath in this country is singularly meagre. No considerable treatise is known to have been issued for a quarter of a century. The present contribution claims to be little more than a monogram: still leaving to be supplied the discussion of a vital question in its manifold relations.

The Discourses in this volume, form a part of the series delivered before crowded assemblies in the winter of 1862, on the invitation of the New York Sabbath Committee, by the Rev. Drs. Rice, Hague, Ganse, Adams, Foster, Vinton, and Schaff, in the Fifth-Avenue Presbyterian, Collegiate Reformed Dutch, Madison-Square Presbyterian, Madison-Avenue Baptist, St. George's Episcopal, and St. Mark's Lutheran churches. The Sermon of the REV. DR. FOSTER, on the *Abuses* of the Sabbath, was unwritten, and his health did not permit him to prepare it for the press. That of the REV. DR. SCHAFF has not yet been furnished for publication.

The Committee, under whose auspices these admirable Sermons were delivered, have conducted their reforms in a manner to have arrested the attention of reflecting men. The April number of the *American Theological Review* contains an able article on "*The Perpetual Observance of the Sabbath*," by Professor Smyth,

of Bowdoin College, Me., in which expression is given to the interest awakened by this enterprise. After glancing at the history of the New York Sabbath Committee's labors, Prof. S. adds :

"Such results are a sufficient proof of the wisdom and energy with which the efforts of the Committee have been conducted. They shed light also upon the true method of prosecuting reformatory measures under a free government. The success which in so large a measure has attended the enterprise to which we have referred, is manifestly, in great part, due to the conceptions its authors have entertained of the Christian theory of reform. Frankly avowing their principles, and tenaciously adhering to them, they have avoided theoretical entanglements, casuistry and logomachy. Aiming at feasible ends, they have made practical issues. No ground has been taken from which they have been forced to retreat. Every advance has been a victory. Relying upon the power of truth, they have wasted no time in crimination and recrimination. Believing in the instrumentalities divinely instituted, they have used them quietly and perseveringly, without adding or working any noisy machinery. The country at large has known little of their labors. Even in the city of New York, few appreciated the importance and power of the movement until the end was in many particulars gained. It is refreshing to witness this practical faith in truth, and in the efficiency of calm, quiet, manly, Christian action."

A brief sketch of the methods and results of the first five years of this Sabbath movement may not be without interest to the readers of this volume.

Thoughtful men were alarmed at the rapid drift toward popular neglect or profanation of the sacred day. The city had assumed the proportions of a great metropolis, attracting vast numbers of European immigrants, and outstripping the proportionate means of moral and religious culture. Demoralizing influences had fearfully

multiplied, with no adequate counteraction or restraint. Public sentiment had been corrupted or perverted by a vicious press and party intrigue. The machinery of government had largely passed into the control of the classes contributing least to its support, and most interested in staying the administration of justice. Law had lost its wonted supremacy, and our self-governing institutions were fast losing their prestige and power. Material interests overshadowed and supplanted the moral and spiritual. The Sabbath became in many quarters, and among large classes of the city, the gala-day of the godless; the harvest-day of avarice; the high-day of vice and crime. It seemed a hopeless undertaking to rescue it from even the grossest abuses of its civil rights.

But there were those who had sufficiently studied the history and relations of the Sabbath to cherish and act on the conviction, that its loss would involve not only irreparable injury to all moral and religious interests, but the inevitable sacrifice of our civil and social institutions. They had, indeed, to face the discouragements just alluded to, and the further circumstance that the repeated efforts to avert this and kindred evils, spasmodic and ill-judged as many of them were, had failed of their object, and only aggravated the disease they were meant to cure. This fact, however, rightly considered, was suited to inspire caution, energy and prayer. After years of reflection and consultation, a meeting of leading Christian citizens was convened, April 1, 1857; the subject was discussed; and a "COMMITTEE to promote the better observance of the Sabbath" was appointed, consisting of about twenty members, connected with eight different Christian denominations.